

15 Practical Steps to a Deeper Relationship with Jesus

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Christian Reflections to Build your Faith, By Melkisedeck Leon Shine

Embracing a Life of Faith: A Transformative Journey of Wholehearted Surrender to Christ

The pursuit of a life fully surrendered to Jesus Christ represents a challenging yet profoundly rewarding endeavor within the contemporary context. Christian discipleship, characterized by a profound love for God, unwavering faith, compassionate engagement with others, and resolute trust in divine providence, necessitates both commitment and deliberate intentionality. This discourse outlines fifteen practical steps, informed by biblical narratives and theological principles, to guide individuals along this transformative path. Key concepts underpinning this framework include theosis (the process of becoming more Christ-like), kenosis (the self-emptying of Christ), and the transformative power of grace as articulated within various theological models, including those proposed by Augustine and later reformers.

1. **Cultivating an Intimate Relationship with Christ:** Establishing a robust spiritual practice is paramount. This echoes the transformative encounters described in biblical accounts, such as Mary Magdalene's experience (Luke 8:2). Daily engagement with God through prayer, devotional practices, and rigorous scriptural study forms the foundation of a flourishing faith journey. This process aligns with the concept of *Lectio Divina*, facilitating spiritual formation through a methodical approach to scripture.
2. **Embracing the Process of Metanoia (Repentance):** Genuine repentance, exemplified by Zacchaeus's transformative act of restitution (Luke 19:1-10), involves a continuous process of confession, seeking divine forgiveness, and striving towards a life congruent with God's will. This aligns with the theological concept of metanoia, emphasizing a fundamental shift in perspective and behavior, rather than a single event. This ongoing process is integral to spiritual growth and maintaining a close relationship with God. The application of this is found in regular confession and seeking accountability within a faith community.
3. **Incorporating Humility and Servanthood:** Christ's example of humble service, as depicted in the washing of the disciples' feet (John 13:1-17), serves as a model for selfless devotion. Prioritizing the needs of others and demonstrating compassion underscores the essence of a Christ-like life, reflecting the principles of agape love and selfless service. This concept directly translates to volunteering in the community, serving within one's church, or extending practical help to those in need.
4. **Exercising Trust in Divine Providence:** Maintaining unwavering faith, even amidst adversity, mirrors Joseph's steadfastness (Genesis 50:20). This entails a surrender to God's sovereign plan, acknowledging that even suffering serves a higher purpose within God's overarching design. This trust requires acceptance of the unknown and a

commitment to faith even when circumstances appear inexplicable. This is an application of the concept of theodicy, grappling with the existence of suffering and evil in a world governed by a benevolent God.

5. Practicing Detachment from Material Possessions: The encounter with the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:21) highlights the potential impediments of material wealth to spiritual growth. Cultivating detachment from material possessions allows for a greater focus on spiritual priorities and fosters a heart posture aligned with God's kingdom values. This is in line with the concept of simple living and stewardship of resources.

6. Fostering Peace and Reconciliation: Inspired by Jesus's teachings on peacemaking (Matthew 5:9), individuals should actively pursue reconciliation and harmony within their interpersonal relationships. This involves conflict resolution, forgiveness, and the cultivation of empathy. This principle is crucial for building healthy communities and fostering positive relationships.

7. Extending Compassionate Love to All: Christ's command to love enemies and pray for persecutors (Matthew 5:44) transcends societal norms. Extending kindness and compassion, even to those who oppose us, exemplifies the transformative power of God's love. This is an application of the principles of agape love and demonstrating forgiveness even in the face of adversity.

8. Embracing God's Sovereign Timing: Abraham's unwavering faith despite prolonged waiting for God's promises (Hebrews 6:15) showcases the virtue of patient trust. Surrendering the desire for immediate gratification reflects a deep understanding of God's perfect timing and ultimate plan. This requires patience, trust, and a willingness to wait upon God's orchestration of events. This is an application of patience and having faith in a higher purpose that transcends our limited understanding.

9. Practicing Generosity and Stewardship: The widow's offering (Mark 12:41-44) illustrates the power of cheerful giving. Generous giving reflects a heart posture of gratitude and recognition of God's provision. This involves thoughtful and intentional stewardship of resources, recognizing that possessions are entrusted gifts, not inherently owned.

10. Cultivating Gratitude: The parable of the ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19) underscores the significance of expressing gratitude for God's blessings. A thankful heart acknowledges God's constant provision and grace, fostering a positive and appreciative perspective on life's circumstances.

11. Extending Forgiveness: The parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21-35) highlights the imperative of forgiveness. Granting forgiveness to others, as Christ has forgiven us, releases bitterness and fosters spiritual healing. This process is essential for personal well-being and building healthy relationships.

12. Living by Faith, Not by Sight: Peter's act of faith in walking on water (Matthew 14:22-33) demonstrates the power of trusting God's guidance, even amidst uncertainty. Stepping out in faith requires courage, trust, and a willingness to obey God's call, even when circumstances appear daunting.

13. Illuminating the World with Christ's Love: As Jesus declared, "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14), believers are called to be a testament to God's love,

radiating hope and illuminating the path for others. This principle requires intentional actions and a lifestyle that reflects Christian values.

14. Seeking Divine Wisdom: Solomon's request for wisdom (1 Kings 3:9) exemplifies the pursuit of divine guidance. Regular engagement in prayer and Scripture study provides wisdom for navigating life's challenges and making discerning decisions. This continuous seeking of wisdom is essential for navigating complex situations and making sound judgments in life.

15. Surrendering to God's Sovereignty: Complete surrender to God's will signifies acknowledging His ultimate authority and trusting His plan for one's life. This involves relinquishing control and embracing God's guidance with unwavering faith. This requires humility and a willingness to align one's will with God's will, recognizing His authority and wisdom that surpass human understanding.

Reader Pool: Considering the presented framework, what additional spiritual disciplines or practices would enhance the effectiveness of this transformative journey towards wholehearted surrender to Christ, and how might these be assessed through both qualitative and quantitative research methods?

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