

Let us look at Step 12, Part 1, as we look into the 12 Steps with God

Step 12 – Discipleship – Having come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and beginning this journey of faith with Him in a Bible-believing church, we share the gospel with others and encourage them to grow in Christ.

In this final step we want to take a few lessons to highlight the important themes: the journey of faith, the role of church in our lives, and the nature of discipleship.

In today's lesson, we focus on this journey of faith, and while that is a vast subject with lots of nuance and detail, I want to encourage you with the basics.

When you read God's Word, the "journey of faith" is actually referenced by one of several terms, but two of the most prominent are *sanctification* and *the faith*. Both highlight the progressive nature of our relationship with Christ.

The life of a Christian is a life of relationship. ***"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."* – 1 John 1:7.**

The context of this verse indicates a life committed to godliness, separating from sin, and living/walking in the light of His righteousness – that is a big ask. If we will do that then we have a good and open fellowship with God himself and that relationship is sweet, secure, and encouraging. But that is not all, we also enjoy sweet fellowship with others who are also walking in the Light. If I am pursuing godliness and so are you, then our relationship benefits from a common focus.

This brings up an especially important concept – separation from sin. This is known as holiness. Peter quotes the Old Testament when he writes,

1 Peter 1:16, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

God intends that His people walk apart from this world's sin. We should be ridding our lives of sin, and constantly distancing ourselves from it, though it is all around us. This part of the Christian experience is referred to as *sanctification* – being set apart to God.

1 Peter 2:1-3, "Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, and like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord."

1 Corinthians 1:30-31, "And because of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord'"

This verse equates sanctification with being in Christ Jesus. This is not just a statement of position, but also of progress in Christ Jesus. You see, to be in Christ is a lifestyle. In our spiritual infancy we struggle to know how this new life is to be lived. Because of Christian influences in society, we may feel immediate conviction about chemical abuse, bad language, adultery, etc. when we first get saved. But as we grow in our relationship with Christ, we get better and better at dealing with those "big" sins and become more and more sensitive to the sins we did not even know were there. You may become convicted about your lack of patience with people, your need to be involved with certain ministries of the church, your need to have a bolder witness at work, etc. It is vitally important that believers begin acting on those convictions and thereby mature in their spiritual life.

1 Corinthians 1:31 introduces the idea of boasting and boasting is normally a sin as it is tied to pride and self, but the related verse in the OT in Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 *“This is what the LORD says: “Let no wise man boast of his wisdom, nor let the mighty man boast of his might, nor a rich man boast of his riches; ²⁴ but let the one who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises mercy, justice, and righteousness on the earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the LORD.*

That intimate knowledge of God is the basis of our journey of sanctification.

In similar fashion, it is this life of faith that marks our journey. Now faith is an interesting study in the New Testament because it speaks to the means by which we are saved and in which we live.

Hebrews 11:1, *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”*

This faith is present in every human being. Every person believes in something. The fact that they believe something helps us recognize that there must be someone in whom we can believe. God created mankind with a natural ability and longing to hold a view about spiritual things – someone greater than ourselves.

For us as Christians, faith is the vital step to being saved.

Acts 16:31, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.”*

We lay our lives, our eternities, our very existence into the hands of Christ, acknowledging that He can keep us better than we can keep ourselves. We trust Him, we put our faith in Him.

Also, as Christians, faith is the route by which we continue in salvation.

2 Corinthians 10:15b, *“But our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged...”*

This increase in faith does not speak to quantity as much as it does quality. Our faith increases as we learn, as we grow, as we are refined, and as we become more like our Savior. We trusted that Christ could save us from our sin and now we trust that Christ is our brother, interceder, and advocate. Like sanctification, faith is a clear mark of the believer.

Consider and Confess:

1. A person who is truly born again pursues holiness. This work of sanctification is a marker of spiritual change or becoming more spiritually mature: are you growing in your relationship with Christ? Is that growth coming with removal of sin?
2. How healthy is your relationship with Christ? How would you categorize that relationship – is it close and growing closer? Do you agree with God about the sin in your life?
3. Is holiness important to you, do you think about it? When you evaluate your spiritual priorities, where does holiness rank? Are you set apart to God, separating yourself from sin in the world?
4. Have you noticed growth in your faith? As someone said years ago, “Your faith is only as good as what, or whom, you place it.” We all have our doubts from time to time, but we should come back to the reality that Jesus can take care of us. Do you believe that?
5. How are you feeding and strengthening your relationship with Christ? Name as many things as you can that are helping you grow that relationship. Name things you must improve to strengthen that relationship.

Looking forward:

In our next couple of lessons, we will talk about the church. It has been misunderstood through the years, has caused problems in people’s lives, has made terrible mistakes; yet Christ referred to the church as His temple and His bride. We must know more about this beautiful entity, because we are fellow members of the family of God.