

Active in the Harvest or Passive in the Pew

Is 55:10-11 ... “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it”.

My hope and trust is in this word – that God’s word for us will achieve that which He purposes – that we will be challenged and changed by it – that we will be infected with His passion for the lost. He loves the lost so much He sent His Son to die on the cross that they might be forgiven and share in His life. My prayer is that we will receive this word and go out changed people – fishers of men who will be active in the harvest.

Three Scriptures

Matt 4:19 ... “And He said to them, *Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men*”.

Jer 33:3 ... “*Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know*”.

2 Corinthians 2:14 ... “*But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place*”.

Three Things Present in Each Verse:

- **Action on our part** – “Follow Me”, “Call to Me”
 - **Action on God’s part** – “I will make you”, “I will answer you”, God “always leads us ... Manifests through us”
 - **Answer or Outcome** – he makes us “Fishers of men”, we learn “great and mighty things which we did not know”, He “manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place”.
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Let us briefly examine the three parts:

Part 1. – Action on our part: “Follow Me” ... “Call to Me” ...

First of all, what does it mean to “follow Christ” and to “call to Him”? It means we spend time in His presence in the word, in prayer and in worship; to hear what He is saying, to learn of Him, so we can obey Him and can grow in Christ, so that He can prepare us to be His ambassadors and message bearers to others in need. It is in the place of prayer that we go to get strength and direction.

To do this we must:

1. **We must be separated unto Him**, so that we are not distracted and can listen and learn from Him.

When we go to God in prayer the devil knows we are going there to gain strength against him so he does all he can to oppose us and distract us. His distractions include:

- **The cares and anxieties of the world** – the state of the economy, floods, earthquakes, terrorist atrocities, war, falling job market, can't find a job, unhappy at work, etc – learn to cast your cares on the Lord (1 Pet 5:7 ... *"casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you"*, Phil 4:7 ... *"And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"*).
- **The distraction of this age of technology**; TV, video games, internet, facebook, Skype, emails, etc – Satan will distract you and destroy you while God wants to bless you so you can enjoy abundant life. (John 10:10 ... *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly"*). Count up the hours each day or week that you spend on technology and compare it to the time you allocate to prayer, the word and worship – calling to God, following Him.
- **The deceitfulness of riches, chasing wealth** – 1 Tim 6:10 ... *"For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs"*, Prov 23:4-5 ... *"Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of it. When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings like an eagle that flies toward the heavens"*, Matt 13:22 ... *"the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful"*.
- **The "legitimate" distractions of home and family matters** – the elderly dependents, children or other dependents, gardens and house care, that demand all our time. Matt 10:37-39 ... *"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it"*. **The way of the cross is never easy, but it is always rewarding.**

There is always something that the devil will use to detract us from being separated unto the Lord. But we must learn to consciously put these things aside, keep them in right balance (time management) and draw near to Him. He wants a whole heart, not the dregs or left overs. Our time with Christ must be quality time.

2. **We must abide in Him**, for He alone is the source of life and all the answers for which we seek.

- **It's only in that place of abiding union that we will experience the real power and life sap that is essential for productive fruit bearing.** Keep plugged in to Him, keep the power on and the light shining. John 15:4-8 ... *"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for **apart from Me you can do nothing**. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they *"are burned"*. If you abide in Me, and My*

words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples”.

This abiding union is a 24/7 lifestyle of “practicing the presence of Christ”. You remain in constant communication with Him, talking and listening. “Following Him” is not a now and then matter, it’s not just an activity for Sundays, it’s a 24/7 lifestyle. It’s having the radio of your heart tuned into the broadcasting station of the Holy Spirit all the time. No matter what you are doing, and we all have daily duties, your hearts ear should be in “listening” mode, following Him and hearing what He has to say about the situation at hand. As you go about your daily duties you pray without ceasing; you remain in “praying in the spirit mode” bubbling like a stew gently bubbling in a slow cooker; being ever conscious of His presence, talking to him and listening, watching, hearing and obeying Him.

3. We must obey Him, for it is only as we obey that we allow Him to be seen in us through our actions and words.

Jas 1:22 ... *“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves”.*

Acts 5:32 ... *“And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him”.* If you want more of His anointing, an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in your life, try **obedience** and see what happens! At work the boss gives more responsibility and authority and promotion to those who are the most diligent about their work; to the high achiever. Similarly God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey His every instruction. The high achiever in God’s eyes is the one who obeys immediately and consistently. (Delayed obedience is disobedience).

Example:

Grace was the daughter of missionaries living in West Africa. One day, while she was sitting on a large rock in their garden, her mother came out to look for her and noticed a large poisonous snake right behind her. In her normal, calm voice, her mother said, “Grace, please stand up very slowly and walk slowly but steadily towards me.” Without any fuss or questioning, Grace immediately obeyed her mother and quietly went to her. When she was safe next to her mother, her mother said, “Now look around and see why I told you to come here. Look at that big snake. It was right behind you, but because you’re a good and obedient girl, you’re out of harm’s way now.” Grace had been taught by her mother to obey immediately. Her mother always spoke to Grace in a normal, calm voice because she taught her that when the Lord talks to us, He never raises His voice and shouts or says things like, “I’ll count to three and you had better obey.” You see, if Grace had not learned that obedience meant doing what she was told to do immediately, without questioning, she probably would have stomped her foot and whined and said, “Why do I have to come to you?” And then, if her mother had told her that there was a snake behind her, she probably would have looked around first to see if that was true and then she may have shrieked and jumped and caused the snake to be alarmed and bite her. Because Grace had learned to obey her mother straight away without asking why or taking time before she obeyed her mother’s calm instruction, she was safe.

Remember: delayed obedience is the same as disobedience. If Grace had waited a while before obeying

her mother, the snake may have crawled up and bitten her.

4. **We must believe Him and trust Him** - implicitly

Prov 3:5-6 ... *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight"*.

Is 55:9 ... *"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts"*.

It may not always immediately make sense to us in the natural, but as we obey and trust our Lord, we will eventually see and understand. But what is important is:

- Learn His ways and live them. Let Christ live His life out in you. Just accept and do what he says. Trust Him, believe Him.
- Our faith and trust in Jesus is a great force to beget faith in others who we are trying to reach for Him. Our testimony of faith can be seen by the sinner and it has great influence on him or her.

So **Action on our part** requires that we 1) must be separated unto Christ, 2) we must abide in him, 3) we must obey Him and 4) we must believe and trust Him explicitly.

Part 2. – Action on God's Part: ...*"I will make you"*... ...*"I will answer you"**God "always leads us"*

We can absolutely count on God honouring His promises, that if we follow Him then He **"will"** make us fishers of men", "He **will** always lead us in triumph" and if we call to Him he **"will"** answer us".

Don't think for a minute He will fail you – because "God is love" (1 John 4:8) and "love never fails" (1 Cor 13:8).

If the Lord listened and answered your heart cry for salvation when you were a sinner and enemy of the cross, how much more will He answer your every cry now that you are a born again child of His.

John 14:14 ... *"If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it"*.

Heb 4:16 ... *"Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need"*.

In leading us, in answering our prayers Christ promises to train us and equip us for His service. This is where we will see Christ's promise in John 14:26 come alive:

John 14:26 ... *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you"*.

Prov 2:4-5 ... *"If you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will discern the fear of the LORD and discover the knowledge of God"*.

The place of prayer and waiting on God is the place of revelation.

When we pray earnestly, when we follow Christ, we will find it is then and only then that He opens our eyes to see into the treasure trove of the great and mighty things God has in store for us.

It's through prayer and drawing near to Him that He will reveal Himself to us and conform us to His image. This is where he will transform us into true disciples of His.

Martin Luther once said: "to have prayed well is to have studied well"

It is so important that we ask God to stir us up to become serious about prayer and seeking Him. It's in the prayer closet that He will reveal His plans and release His power through us in ways we never dreamt were possible.

This is where he will open the eyes of our hearts to see "*what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe*" (Eph 1:19) and where He will bring us to "*comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God*" (Eph 3:18-19).

When we know the love of Christ and are filled up to all the fullness of God then He will be able to release His love and power through us in the harvest fields.

Part 3. – Answer or Outcome we will be "*fishers of men*", we will know "*great and mighty things, which we did not know*" and God will "*lead us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place*"

A 'fisher of men' in God's kingdom can be compared to a 'fisherman' out on the ocean who catches fish for a livelihood. The qualities of a good fisherman are as follows:

- A fisherman is dependable and trustworthy – he rises early goes out every day to bring back fish for the market
- He is diligent and persevering – he prepares his equipment before he goes out and then fishes until he has his catch
- He is alert and watchful – looks for the signs of where the fish are as well as for the rocks, the currents and other dangers.
- He works hard and is self-denying – some fish bite by day others by night
- He is daring and not afraid to venture out on a stormy day in rough seas
- He is successful – he cannot claim to be a fisherman if he does not catch fish.

This is the preparation Christ promises you if you will "*follow Him*" if you will "*Call to him*".

Sunday Club:

For a minute just think of your set of golf clubs, your tennis racquets, your basketball, or the equipment you use for your favourite sport or social activity.

We are considering these items simply to illustrate why so many believers fall into a trap that keeps them from being what God originally intended for them.

Tennis club, Golf club, Soccer Club. You may belong to a sports club, chess club, cooking club, all sorts of clubs. You attend once a week, or once a month, or for some it's occasionally. You do all the things that are appropriate at the club. You socialize a little while after the game then go home and it's just a good memory and you forget about it until the next time you go. At the most you may glance at a club magazine or publication relating to your sport once in a while. Some folks may even watch a video on how to develop a better swing, or serve etc. But that's it until the next time you go.

Now let's think about how this relates to our "church" experience.

Sadly, many believers are what I call "Sunday club" believers. Their Christian experience is basically lived out as if their local church is a club. They go there on Sundays, do all the things that are appropriate, go home and it's just a distant memory, soon wiped out by the next TV program they watch. Some go once a week, some once a month and some just on occasions. They may occasionally pick up a Christian book or magazine or even their bible and read a verse or two. They may watch a video or two on a subject that takes their fancy. Oh, not to forget a ritualistic grace spoken before meals when they remember to do this. But until their next visit to their "Sunday club" that's it. I'm forgiven, I'm going to heaven, I'll attend services on Sundays but don't ask me to do any more than that. Sunday clubber!

Millions of people are going to go to a lost eternity because the church has become insipid and ineffective. What is meant to be an abundant life, daily living the Christ-life, has been turned into a mere Sunday club experience.

We live in a world where many are self-pleasers and in a world of "instant everything" where we switch things on a off at our demand. God is not a dispenser of "instant" anything.

He wants us to be separated to Him, to abide in Him, to obey Him and to trust Him and be available and attentive to Him all the time. Not just when and where we please. Not just on Sundays and maybe one evening a week. The Christ-life is a life to be lived all the time.

*2Chr 16:9 ... "For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is **completely** His".*

You say "oh I read my Bible, I know the word of God, but I ask you "do you know the God of the word"?

Are you "following Him" continually; daily, moment by moment? Are you "Calling to Him" and "praying without ceasing"? Are you allowing Him to transform you into the image of HIS son? Are you following Him so he can make you a fisher of men?

The highest form of thanks we can give to God for our salvation is to share the gospel with a sinner who is lost. He loved us so much He gave His only Son to die for us and to give us His life. The best way we can thank Him and tell Him we love Him is to share the John 3:16 message with someone who is lost.

Will you choose to be separated to Him, to abide in Him continually, obey Him and trust Him implicitly and be productive, bearing the fruit of the Spirit and sharing His love with the lost? Will you follow Him as He leads you in triumph in Christ, and manifests through you the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place?

Or will you choose to restrict your Christian experience to being a mere Sunday club activity and do your own thing and end up like the unproductive branches we read of in [John 15:6](#) that are gathered up and thrown into the fire?

Cor 3:9-15 ... *"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire".*

2 Cor 5:10 ... *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad".*

One day we will all face Him. For the unbelievers, those whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of Life, it will be a time of judgment and they will be thrown into the lake of fire for all eternity. For believers, those whose names are in the book of life, it will be a time where our works, our fruitfulness for Him, will be judged. We will **receive rewards**.

Picture that moment. We will look into His loving eyes, we will see the nail holes in His hands, the scars from the crown of thorns on His head, we will see the huge scar in His side from the spear, and will see the huge scars from the whippings and scourging on His back. The whole event from Gethsemane's betrayal through to the court where He was judged and beaten and on to Calvary where He was crucified will flash before us. We will then understand the pain, the suffering He went through and **the magnitude of His love for us**. That while we were sinners, enemies of the Divine, He loved us so much He gave His all for us.

If you have not heeded His call here and now to "Follow Him" to "Call to Him"; if you are not separated unto Him, if you are not continually abiding in Him, if you are not obeying Him, if you are not trusting Him and are not being transformed and becoming active in His harvest you will have nothing that will remain out of the judgment fire that tests your works. What then will you say to Him?

For all he has invested in you, such great love - will you stand there and stare Him in the eyes and say, "I it was too cold to go out to pray for the lost". "My favourite show was on TV I had to watch it". "I was

not an early riser and when I got back from work I had things to do around the house and then I had to watch the footie finals and then I was too tired to pray". What will you say?

Rev 3:15-16 ... *"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth".*

Ezek 22:30 ... *"I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one".*

One thing I know for certain, I don't want to stand before my Lord on that day and have Him say, "I looked at you, I tried to get your attention, but you were not available, you were too busy doing your own thing.

I want to hear Him say, "Well done you good and faithful servant". Here's your reward, enjoy it.

John 15:8 ... *"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples".*

A poor attitude to prayer or following Christ is basically telling God that what was begun in the Spirit we can finish in the flesh.

Will you change that position today? Will you ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to the magnitude of the Father's love for you and for the sinners who need the message of His love? Will you let Him transform you and make you a fisher of men and will you present yourself to Him for His service?