



How do we become victorious in emulating Christ in our lives as believers?

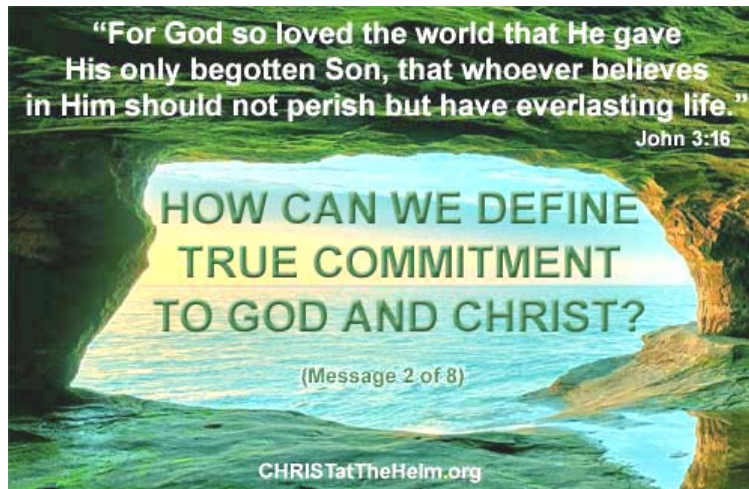
Paul in Rom 8:29 enjoins us to grow in the faith and to conform ourselves to Christ, through applying the principles that He gave us for powerful victorious living. In 2 Cor 3:18 he added, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

In essence, we must learn from the Word of God the principles Christ gave us to become His true disciples. Why? Because as Gal 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

1Peter 4:1-2 adds, "Arm yourselves also with the same purpose... so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human lusts, but for the will of God."

Here are seven basic Christian principles to live victoriously for and under the power of the Spirit of Christ: Be committed, trust and have faith in God, seek and acquire knowledge through His Word, get discernment, be vigilant, pray, and last but not least, love, just as God loved us. Are we in?

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Who is the greatest example of true and purposeful commitment? God, in the Old Testament, promised us a Savior who would come to deliver His people. While they expected a King, a Lion to rule over the world, He sent Christ, His only Son Jesus, as a Lamb to die on the cross to take our penalty, and who willfully submitted to the Father.

This is commitment to a degree that proves our loving God honored His promise to save His people. How then do we in turn commit to God and Christ? Jesus answers in Mark 8:34-35, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it."

Why? In Luke 9:62 He added, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." 1Kings 8:61's command is clear; "Let your heart therefore be loyal to the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments." Gal 5:24-25 adds, "And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

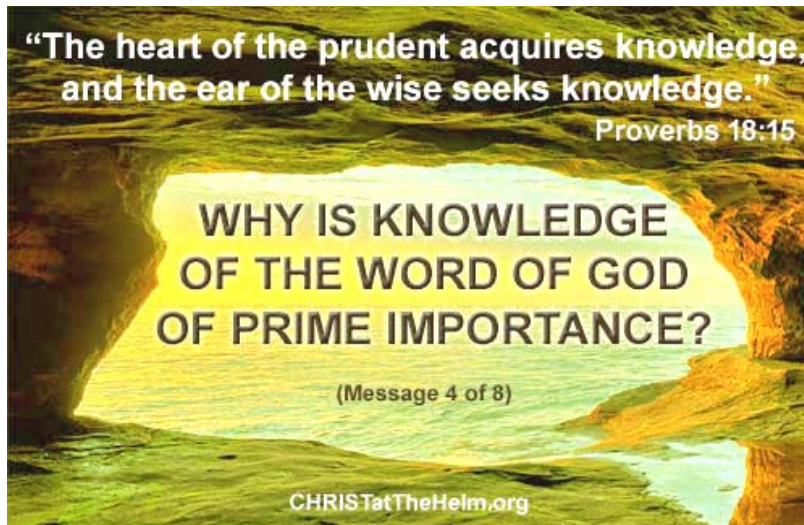
Is our commitment only in words, or is it in truth and action?

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How strong could we say our faith in God and Christ is right now? Having surrendered our lives to Christ at salvation, obviously we must trust that whatever He says is not only the truth, but that there isn't a shadow of a doubt that God will always keep His promises to us. That's why Pro 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." Additionally, God through Joshua gave us this direct command: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God *is* with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9) Indeed, God is always around those who belong to Him through Christ, and we must heed the call to apply the strong principle of faith to our lives. In John 14:1 Jesus is quoted, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me." Then in verse 6, He gave us the reason when He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Do we trust God and say like the Psalmist, (Psalm 9:10) "For You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You?" Is our faith built on the "Rock" or sand?

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How does one get to know who God really is and what He wills for mankind?

Pro 15:14 says, "The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools feeds on foolishness." Hosea 4:6 says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Since knowledge refers to the result obtained from educating ourselves to acquire information, where do we get knowledge from God?

2Tim 3:16-17 tells us that "All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." In other words, our only trustworthy and true source of knowledge is the bible, the very Word of God.

While many might claim to speak for God, our responsibility is and always will be to verify and seek the truth in the Word of God. That's why Paul said in Rom 12:2, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Do we steadfastly study the Word of God to get sound knowledge, so as not to be fooled and deceived by the world's false teachers?

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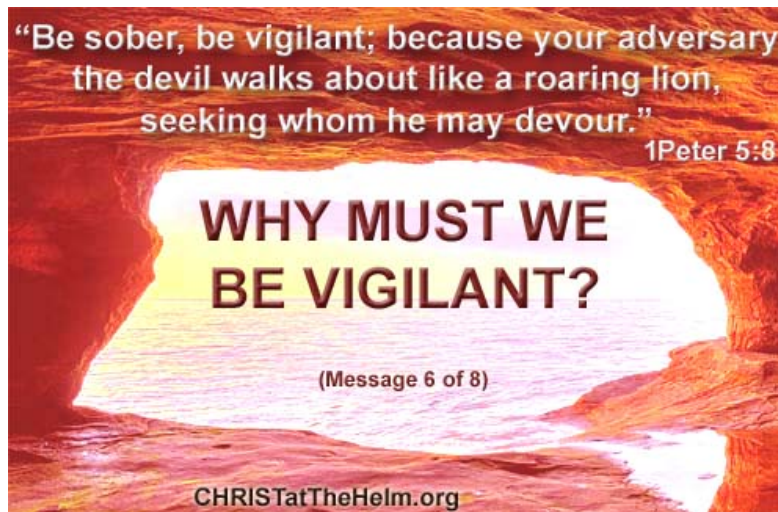
What is the purpose of discernment in life?

Discernment is defined as the ability to make a valid judgment through insight and understanding. In essence, discernment is necessary in evaluating right from wrong so as to make wise decisions throughout our life.

As related to God, discernment is what helps us establish what God desires that we live by. The reason we have the Word of God for knowledge to so guide us, as Heb 4:12 says, "The word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." That's why 1John 4:1 warns us to ensure we don't fall for deception; "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." As believers in Christ, "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God." (1Cor 2:12)

Will we seek discernment in God's Word and follow Jesus who said in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world; He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life"?

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Why must we be vigilant in relation to our faith in Christ?

Obviously, the enemy seeks to destroy us, but on a more subtle level, Jesus said in Mark 14:38 "Keep watching and praying, so that you will not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Temptations to draw us to the world's lusts are everywhere, under all kinds of stratagems of the enemy, even deceptions that can at times fool believers who fail to be fully equipped to face life's temptations.

That's why in Rom 12:2 Paul said, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." In other words, God's Word is our power to equip us to resist temptations.

What else must we do to live victoriously for the Lord? Paul in Eph 6:11 gave us the clear way to be so equipped and ready: "Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." And in the verses 12 to 20, he explains what the armor consists of and how to use it.

Would we be so foolish as to go to work without clothes? Then, why would we go on each day, and not be properly equipped with God's spiritual armor to face the world?

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What is the purpose of prayer and why is it so important in our walk with God?

Jesus in Mat 26:41 said, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak." In truth, no matter how much we can confess to love God, unless we entertain a relationship through prayer, we'd simply become prey for the enemy and deceiving ourselves.

Psalms 145:18 tells us that "The LORD *is* near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth." Prayer is indeed calling upon the Lord for help, knowledge and discernment. Jer 33:3 says, "Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known." Then, Jesus in John 15:7 added, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."

Clearly, prayer is needed to entertain that relationship that will equip us to face the trials of life. Christ our Lord, the very Son of God, is our greatest example for the need for prayer and did this continually, "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed." (Mark 1:35)

Will we follow the command of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ to pray?

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John 3:16 gives us the greatest example of love, love that emanates from the heart God, the One and only source of true love, the reason as well that love is an outstanding and powerful characteristic of God.

That's why Paul in Col 3:12-14 said, "Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection."

Love, in other words, is the bond that connects us to God's heart. Jesus in John 13:34-35 said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples." So, if we desire to be His disciple, love must be at the very core of our hearts.

How far must our love go? Luke 6:27-28, "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you."

Why is love necessary? 1John 4:8 gives this answer: "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

Do we channel God's love to the world?

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