BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

It is important to realize that the lessons that follow are not something to read through and then move on from. They contain eternal truths that are meant to change the way we live.

The purpose of these lessons is not simply to gain knowledge about God. It is to learn His truth, believe what He says, and put that truth into practice in our daily lives. Following Jesus means more than hearing His words; it means doing what He says.

When we hear God's Word but do not put it into practice, we can develop a false sense of spiritual growth. We may know what the Bible says without allowing it to change the way we think, respond, and live.

Our goal is not to follow a list of rules. It is to develop a deeper relationship with God, a greater desire to know and please Him, and a willingness to live according to His wisdom.

Jesus said in Matthew 16:24 that anyone who wants to follow Him must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Him. This means surrendering our desires and choosing His way over our own when the two differ.

As we learn to trust Him and put His Word into practice, God works in us to transform our lives and make us more like His Son.

The goal is not simply to learn the truth. The goal is to believe it, live it, and become more like Jesus.

PERSISTENT AND CONSISTENT

Our lives are often filled with activities, responsibilities, needs, desires, and possessions. We can become so occupied with everyday life that we leave little time for what matters most.

Oswald Chambers expressed an important principle: good things can become the enemy of the best things. We can fill our lives with worthwhile activities and still neglect the most important relationship we have—the one with God.

Persistence means continuing to seek God and put His truth into practice, even when we do not feel like it or when life becomes difficult.

This does not mean neglecting our responsibilities. It means putting the Lord first and trusting Him to help us establish the right priorities.

Consistency means regularly making time to read God's Word, pray, reflect on what we are learning, and consider how to apply it. We should not expect a deep relationship with God to develop if we give Him only our leftover time and attention.

As we persistently and consistently follow Jesus, our relationship with God can grow deeper. We can learn to experience His peace and joy even in difficult circumstances, and the qualities of Christ can increasingly become evident in our lives.

Growth takes time. We will not always respond perfectly, and we may still experience fear, worry, grief, or disappointment. What matters is that we keep turning to God, trusting His truth, and taking the next step.

Keep making time for God. Keep learning His truth. Keep putting it into practice.

One step at a time.

CORNERSTONE AND PRECIOUS STONES

Think of your life as a building. Every building needs a strong foundation if it is going to stand securely. Our lives also need a foundation that can be trusted.

Jesus Christ is the Cornerstone upon which our lives are to be built. God's truth provides the foundation for the way we think, what we believe, the decisions we make, and how we respond to life's challenges.

The teachings in these lessons are like precious stones that help us build our lives on that foundation. Each truth has a purpose. As we understand it, believe it, and put it into practice, it becomes part of the way we live.

But if we reject a truth, ignore it, or continue living as though it were not true, that part of our lives is not being built on the foundation God has provided.

For example, when we face a troubling situation, our first reaction may be fear or worry. We may focus on everything that could go wrong. God's Word teaches us to bring our concerns to Him, pray, and trust Him. Learning to respond in this way takes practice. We do not have to pretend that a problem does not exist; we learn to face it while depending on God.

The important thing is not merely to agree that a biblical truth is correct. We must allow that truth to shape our attitudes, choices, and actions.

As you work through these lessons, ask yourself three questions:

- What truth is God teaching me?
- Do I believe and trust what He says?
- How can I put this truth into practice today?

Learn the truth. Believe it. Live as though it is true.

That is how we build our lives on Jesus, the Cornerstone.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Spiritual disciplines are practices that help us grow in our relationship with God. They include reading and studying the Bible, prayer, worship, fellowship with other believers, and putting God's teachings into practice.

These disciplines are not ends in themselves, and we do not practice them to earn God's love. Rather, they help us turn our attention toward Him, understand His truth, and learn to live as Jesus did.

Jesus said in John 15:4 (ESV), "Abide in me, and I in you." He calls us to remain in close relationship with Him, depending on Him as we live each day.

First John 2:6 (ESV) teaches that whoever says he abides in Jesus ought to walk in the same way in which Jesus walked.

That is our goal: to grow in our relationship with Jesus and increasingly live as He lived.

Developing spiritual disciplines requires intention. We must make time for God and be willing to change familiar habits when they keep us from giving Him the attention He deserves.

But remember that our efforts do not replace God's work in us. We respond to Him by seeking Him, learning His Word, and obeying what He teaches. We depend on Him to help us grow and change.

As you develop these practices, do not become so focused on completing a routine that you forget the reason for it. The purpose is not simply to read a chapter, say a prayer, or attend a gathering. The purpose is to know God more deeply and allow His truth to shape your life.

Spiritual disciplines help us focus on Jesus, learn His truth, and put it into practice—one step at a time.

REPETITION AND REMINDERS

Learning a truth does not mean we will immediately live it consistently. We may understand what God says and sincerely want to follow it, yet find ourselves slipping back into familiar ways of thinking and responding.

That is why repetition and reminders are important.

We need to return to God's Word, revisit what we have learned, and remind ourselves of what He says. Reading Scripture, praying, worshiping, giving thanks, and spending time with other believers can help keep our attention on Him.

For example, we may learn to trust God instead of giving in to worry. A few days later, a new problem arises, and we find ourselves worrying again. That does not mean the truth was useless or that we should give up. It means we need to bring our attention back to what God has taught us and practice responding in faith.

We should stay alert rather than assume that learning something once means we will never struggle with it again.

And when we stumble, we do not need to remain discouraged or condemn ourselves. We can acknowledge where we have gone wrong, turn back to God, receive His forgiveness and mercy, and take the next step.

The purpose of repetition is not to keep us trapped in a cycle of failure. It is to help God's truth become more firmly established in the way we think and live.

Do not just learn the truth once. Keep returning to it until it increasingly shapes your life.

DISCIPLE PARTNER

A disciple partner is someone who walks alongside you as you learn to follow Jesus. This person can help you understand the lessons, answer questions when possible, pray with you, encourage you, and support you as you put God's truth into practice.

A disciple partner does not do the work for you or make your decisions for you. The purpose is to help you grow in your own relationship with God and learn to depend on His Word.

Your partner does not need to have every answer. What matters is a sincere desire to follow Jesus, a willingness to learn from Scripture, and a commitment to encourage one another in the journey.

You can work through these lessons together, paragraph by paragraph. Talk about what each section means, look at the Scriptures, ask questions, and discuss how the truth applies to everyday life.

Be honest about your struggles. Be willing to listen. Pray for one another, and encourage each other to keep taking the next step.

Jesus gave His followers the responsibility of making disciples and teaching them to obey everything He commanded (Matthew 28:19–20). This means discipleship is not just about our own growth. We are also learning how to help others follow Jesus.

The goal is not to become dependent on one particular person. The goal is to grow in maturity so that you can walk with God and help someone else do the same.

As you grow by following Jesus, learn to help others grow by walking alongside them.

QUIET, COMFORTABLE ENVIRONMENT

When you spend time reading God's Word, praying, and thinking about what you are learning, it helps to find a quiet, comfortable place where you can focus.

Try to reduce distractions. You might choose a particular chair or room and set aside a regular time each day. Putting your phone aside and turning off unnecessary distractions can help you give God your attention.

The goal is not to create a perfect environment. Life does not always allow us to find a quiet place, and we can turn our attention to God wherever we are.

This is simply a practical way to help you slow down, listen carefully to what you are reading, reflect on what it means, and consider how to live it.

Do not let the search for the perfect place or time become an excuse for not spending time with God. Begin where you are and use the opportunities you have.

The purpose is to focus on God, understand His Word, and put His truth into practice.

DON'T BE IN A RUSH

These lessons are not a race. The goal is not to see how quickly you can finish them. The goal is to understand God's truth and learn to live it.

You may be able to work through a lesson in one sitting, or you may need several sessions. Sometimes one paragraph will give you enough to think about and practice for a while.

If you are working with a disciple partner, decide together what pace will be most helpful. Generally, it is best to follow the lessons in order because each one helps prepare you for what follows. However, if you are facing an urgent question or struggle, it may be helpful to address that need as well.

Pay attention to the action steps, illustrations, and Scripture passages. Ask yourself what God wants you to understand and how you can apply it to your life today.

You may need to return to a lesson more than once. That is perfectly fine. Learning to live God's truth is a process, and some truths require more time and practice than others.

Do not measure your progress simply by how many lessons you have completed. Consider whether what you are learning is changing how you think, how you respond to others, and how you live.

Take the time you need to understand the truth and begin putting it into practice.

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S ROLE

God does not expect you to make these changes in your own strength. The Holy Spirit is present to help you understand God's Word, grow in your relationship with Him, and learn to live as Jesus did.

Jesus spoke about the Holy Spirit in John 14:16–17 and 14:26. He described Him as the Helper who would be with His followers and teach them.

The Holy Spirit is not simply a feeling or a source of information. He is God at work in us, helping us understand truth, correcting us when we need correction, and enabling us to follow Jesus.

As you grow in your relationship with Him, you will learn to recognize His guidance more clearly. This takes time and a willingness to listen and respond.

It is also important to test what you think you are hearing or sensing against God's Word. Not every strong feeling, thought, or impression comes from the Holy Spirit. God will not lead us in a way that contradicts the truth He has given us in Scripture.

When you read the Bible, pray, or work through these lessons, ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand what God is saying and show you how to apply it.

When He brings something to your attention that needs to change, do not simply acknowledge it and move on. Respond to what He is teaching you.

Our responsibility is to seek God, learn His truth, and be willing to obey. We depend on the Holy Spirit to help us as we take those steps.

You are not walking this journey alone. The Holy Spirit is your Helper.

ONE FINAL WORD

As you begin this journey, remember that God's desire is not simply for you to know more about the Bible. He wants His truth to shape your life so that you increasingly reflect the character of Jesus.

That may mean changing some long-held beliefs, attitudes, habits, or ways of responding. It may mean rebuilding parts of your life on Jesus, the Cornerstone, instead of relying on your own understanding.

As you move forward, learn to trust God's wisdom, surrender your will to Him, and put your trust into action through obedience.

You will not always get everything right. When you stumble, do not give up. Return to God's Word, seek His help, receive His grace and mercy, and take the next step.

My prayer is that, as you continue this journey, God will give you an increasing hunger and thirst for Him, a deeper relationship with Jesus, and a growing desire to live according to His truth. May you learn to experience His peace, joy, and contentment even amid life's difficulties. May your character increasingly reflect Jesus, and may what you learn equip you to help others follow Him as well.

Remember, the purpose is not simply to finish a set of lessons. It is to become a disciple who lives God's truth and helps others do the same.

Know Jesus. Live His truth. Become more like Him. Help others do the same.

One truth at a time. One step at a time.

May God bless you as you begin this journey and lead you into the life that is truly life.