

A person wearing a red hat and a large backpack is seen from behind, standing on a vast, flat, white landscape. The person is holding a long, thin pole or stick. In the background, a large, translucent blue figure, resembling a person, is visible, appearing to be part of the landscape or a shadow. The sky is a deep blue with some clouds. The overall scene is surreal and evocative.

Trekking Deeper

COSTLY DISCIPLESHIP



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WEC TREK

WEC International

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INTRODUCTION

What is costly discipleship? It is submission and sacrifice. That may not seem very appealing because we often undermine those two words with negativity. In reality, we should mine the depths of those truths in all their positive fullness. It is our privilege to give all that we are and all that we have to our Creator and Saviour. We need to remember that Jesus said: "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). As we surrender ourselves to our Lord we can find it is the most liberating experience.

There are twenty studies in this booklet. The course is designed to take one month, but you can do it at whatever speed you choose. There are two free days each week, but I would encourage you to use these extra days to pray and to look more deeply at any particular topic the Lord has been speaking to you about. Alternatively, you may like to read and reflect on the Bible passages connected with costly discipleship that are listed at the end of this booklet.

Most days I have given a relatively long Bible reading. There are two reasons for this. First, every verse must be seen and read in its context. Secondly, the Bible is the only perfect and pure word of God. Therefore, the Scriptures are far better for teaching about costly discipleship than these or any other notes could ever be. It is better to take far more time over the Bible readings than my imperfect notes. Don't rush the Bible readings but allow the Lord to speak to you through them. Please note that all Scripture references are from the New International Version.

This module is dedicated to my daughter Hope. She is presently too young to understand about submission and sacrifice, but I pray that she will grow up to know and experience the fullness of life in Christ, including costly discipleship.

My prayer for you is that through your Trek assignment you will develop your relationship with God, drawing closer to Him, and learning more of Him and from Him.

Phil Grasham

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DAY ONE: DENY YOURSELF AND FOLLOW CHRIST

READING – MATTHEW 16:13-28

Verse 24 “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

This command is for *anyone* who believes in Jesus. Every believer must take up the challenge of sacrifice. There are three aspects:

- ◆ 1. We deny ‘self’ by giving ourselves completely and unreservedly to Christ.
- ◆ 2. We take up our cross by identifying with Christ in His suffering and death. (The image of accepting a cross reveals a willingness to accept anything, even death, for Jesus and the kingdom of God.)
- ◆ 3. We follow Jesus by learning to live like Him in holiness and obedience.

To follow Jesus is to follow a crucified Christ. The Lord asks us to give our lives for Him. This may be literal or, more likely, symbolic. If it is literal, we should remember that He gave His life for us. Jesus will never ask us to do or face anything which He was not prepared to do or face Himself.

If it is symbolic, it means giving up our own personal ambitions to serve Christ. We will need to surrender our own dreams or desires. In fact, we must reach the position of submitting every aspect of our lives. Why? Because the Christian should be far more concerned with God and with others than with him or herself (Romans 6:8-13).

If we spend our lives looking for safety, security and success, or if we make decisions based on selfishness, we will miss out on real fulfilment. The adventure of life becomes the drudgery of existence. Instead of soaring on wings like eagles (Isaiah 40:31), we end up running the rat race.

Isaac Watt’s famous hymn says it all: “Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small; love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.” You may never have thought about your life in this way. This is indeed weighty stuff! What is your response? Is following Jesus your primary aim or your secondary goal?



DAY TWO: DAILY OFFERINGS

READING – LUKE 9:18-27

Verse 23 “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

Let's spend another day on this crucial text. Luke's account includes one word that Matthew's and Mark's do not: *daily*. We must daily take up our cross. We have abandoned our old way of life, but that is not something that is done and then forgotten. It must be done every day.

Every thought, every word, and every action has either a positive or a negative effect. There is very little in life that is completely neutral. Even not doing anything affects others, because we're not affecting them for good or bad! Every facet of our lives should be committed to Christ with no exceptions (1 Peter 1:13-16).

We need to recognise that prayer is vital. We ought to pray that every day we will live for Jesus. However routine the task or ordinary the event, we should ask Jesus to be in charge of our minds, our mouths and our manners.

In *The Purpose Driven Life* (p.80) Rick Warren writes: “Surrendering is not repressing your personality ... Rather than its being diminished, surrendering enhances it.”

Our lives should be like bread at Communion. The bread is taken, blessed, broken, and given. Costly obedience demands that our lives are taken by God who will bless us. He breaks and shapes our characters and gives us to this hurting world as messengers of truth, love, and hope (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

Discipleship is a daily discipline because we follow Jesus moment by moment. We are bound to make mistakes, but because we live in Christ's presence, we can confess our sins and keep on going. As we grow in our relationship to Christ we won't need to sit down and think about what Jesus would say or do. We will know more instinctively and respond genuinely in the way of Christ. How about you? Is your life given over ... daily?



DAY THREE: DO YOU WANT TO SAVE YOUR LIFE?

READING – MARK 8:27-38

Verses 35 “...whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.”

We are disciples of Christ, yet we still have a choice: we can live for ourselves or for Jesus. There is a price to pay for true discipleship and it is right that we count the cost (Luke 14:25-33). This is just one of many biblical paradoxes: if we live for ourselves, we will lose ourselves, but if we lose ourselves for Jesus, we will find ourselves. Do you need to read that again?

Too often the gospel is presented as the solution to all our problems, as though belief in Jesus is all about our happiness. Christ-centred living is not about becoming healthy or wealthy but about giving honour and glory to God. In fact, it is not about us at all. It is all about Jesus.

Our motivation for sacrifice is important. It should be tied to sincerity and integrity, not to personal compensation as if Christ owed us something in return for our obedience (Luke 17:7-10). Christ does everything for us and we should show our love and commitment by putting Him first. Jim Elliot was a modern martyr. He died aged 29 at the hands of the Waorani Indians in Ecuador. In his journal, he wrote: “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” Before he ever had a chance to share the gospel he was murdered. This seemed a senseless tragedy. But from it came a powerful testimony of God’s work in Jim’s life and in the lives of many others. This included a number of Waorani Indians who would later accept the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The work of the Holy Spirit is crucial to all this. We must be open and allow the Holy Spirit to reveal specific issues and act upon what He is calling us to do or not do.

What choice have you made? Who is number one in your life? Are you going to rely on God or on yourself? Are you willing to give what you cannot keep to gain what you cannot lose?



DAY FOUR: **LIVING ON THE ALTAR**

READING – ROMANS 12:1-21

Verse 1 “...offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – which is your spiritual worship.”

The springboard into all that follows in this passage is the recognition of God’s incredible mercy. God could have dealt with us in righteous anger. Instead, He chose to deal with us in mercy. This should inspire us to present our bodies to Him and allow Him to do in us and with us all that He decides according to His will (Philippians 2:12-13).

The Lord wants us to offer our bodies. He does not want us to offer just things: possessions, time, or abilities. He wants us to offer ourselves. In His grace, He does not just take them from us. We are to actively offer ourselves to our great and awesome God. This is where trust is crucial. We won’t sacrifice ourselves to God unless we trust Him. We won’t trust Him unless we really know Him. Our two greatest allies in this are prayer and Scripture.

General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, was asked the secret of his amazing Christian life. Booth answered, “I told the Lord that he could have all that there is of William Booth.” This is a living sacrifice! As a follower of Jesus it should be our continuous response. Our lives are to remain on the altar but we don’t just lie there: we give ourselves as holy and pleasing offerings.

This sacrifice is true worship. It does not consist only of outward and official actions, but comes from the very depths of our minds and hearts and influences all we do.

Jesus Christ was the perfect living sacrifice because He actually died in obedience to His Father’s will. However, He rose again and is now in heaven interceding on our behalf (Romans 8:34). You belong to Jesus because He laid down His life for you. He has the right to ask you to lay your life on the altar and live exclusively for Him. Are you willing to do this?



DAY FIVE: ARE YOU HAPPY TO SACRIFICE?

READING – MATTHEW 4:12-25

Verse 23 “Jesus went ... teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news ... and healing every disease and sickness.”

As we end our first week on the topic of costly discipleship we must be careful how we think of sacrifice and obedience. While it can be difficult and demanding, it is certainly not dismal and depressing. It is our privilege to know Christ; consider all that He has done, is doing, and will do; and give ourselves willingly and eagerly in response to our Lord.

The world around us supposes that sacrifice is a burden and submission is an ordeal. Some of these naive presumptions can also affect the way we regard these matters. We are not immune to our society's opinions and they can wriggle their way into our subconscious. So, when people talk about a life of sacrifice and submission, we think that must be hardship and misery indeed!

How wrong this is! Someone has said that sacrifice is both liberation and creativity. We turn away from certain things which divert and distract us, so that we can walk freely with the most exciting Person who ever lived: the Lord Jesus Christ.

Imagine being one of Jesus' disciples: it must have been incredible! Here was majestic God and perfect man in one incomprehensible union. Christ lived a holy and obedient life which was filled with action and exploits. How could anyone describe Jesus' life as limited or uninspiring? The people around Him accused Him of being a glutton and a drunkard (Matthew 11:19), so He hardly sat at home bored and lonely all the time.

As we contemplate denying ourselves and becoming living sacrifices, we need to appreciate that life in Christ, and life with Christ, lived in the power and tenderness of the Holy Spirit is awesome. We don't revel in obedience because we see it as restrictive; it is the world's expectations that shackle us but the truth of Christ that sets us free (John 8:32).



DAYS SIX AND SEVEN: **MY DECLARATION**

A young pastor from Zimbabwe wrote: “I’m a part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have Holy Spirit power. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. I’m a disciple of His. I won’t look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future secure. I’m finished and done with low living, sight walking, smooth knees, colourless dreams, tamed visions, worldly talking, cheap giving and dwarfed goals. I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits or popularity. I don’t have to be first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean on his presence, walk in patience, am uplifted by prayer, and I labour with power.”

Wow! How about writing your own declaration? But you must mean it! This young pastor was later martyred for his faith in Jesus Christ.



DAY EIGHT: OUTWARD OR INWARD RIGHTEOUSNESS

READING – PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11

Verse 7 “But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.”

Paul writes in verses 4-6: “Look at me! Here is my past religious life. Consider my religion, my nationality, and my pharisaic devotion to the Law. Remember my spiritual enthusiasm and my outward righteousness.” Perhaps more than anyone, Paul could have trusted in himself and all his achievements.

But, having listed all the things that were supposedly to his advantage, Paul reckons they add up to nothing, in fact less than nothing (verse 7). He does not simply reject these things; they disgust him. He calls them waste or scraps, like the food left over at the end of a meal that is scraped off the plates and thrown away. It was not because there was anything wrong with his advantages, but he believed they stood in the way of his personal relationship with God. They were human and not divine associations or accomplishments. Remember, people look on the outward appearance while the Lord looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). Outwardly, Paul was all that a person could hope to be. But when Christ broke into his life on the road to Damascus, Paul discovered that everything he was and everything he had done had not brought him one step closer to God.

In verse 8, reflecting on his former and latter positions, Paul states that his experience of knowing Christ was so much greater and more significant than everything else he could think of. In fact, he was willing to give up everything for this relationship – his citizenship, his status, his friends, and his wealth. Why? So that he might know Christ and become like Him.

What a challenge! Are you a person of outward righteousness or of the righteousness that comes from God? What would you give up for Christ to bring you closer to Him? Is there anything you would not give up for God?



DAY NINE: LOVING YOUR FAMILY LESS

READING – LUKE 14:25-35

Verse 26 “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother ... he cannot be my disciple.”

What’s this? Jesus told his disciples that they must hate their father and mother! Surely, this is a mistake? Jesus cannot possibly have said that, could He?

We must realise that this is not a literal statement. Jesus has already commanded His followers to love their enemies (Luke 6:27, 35). He is not likely to now command His disciples to hate their families. “To hate your father and mother” was a Jewish expression signifying the amount of love and total commitment a disciple must have for God. It is such a complete dedication that, in comparison, a person’s feelings for his or her family actually appear to be hate. Therefore, the word “hate” has the sense of “loving less” rather than “detesting”. Your commitment to Jesus must outweigh every other claim (Luke 9:57-62).

Jesus was stating that discipleship meant a willingness to put His directives higher than those of both family and self. You might have your own plans, and your family might have their ideas of what you should or shouldn’t be doing, but you need to put whatever Christ is saying above all that. If Jesus’ opinion conflicts with yours, or your family’s, then Christ’s standards must always be your emphasis and your objective.

Were you given a hard time for going on a short-term overseas assignment? Mission work can be misconstrued. Your family and friends might have asked when you are going to realise how unrealistic, arrogant and unnecessary it is to “go and change other people’s religion”. If this is your experience, well done for both standing firm and stepping out! May this be your continual resolve.

Jesus promised His disciples that no one who follows Him will ever lose what is truly important. Are you really a disciple of Jesus? Is Christ’s perspective the basis of your life?



DAY TEN: IS ANY SACRIFICE TOO GREAT?

READING – EPHESIANS 5:1-21

Verse 2 “... live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Jesus Christ has set us an example of what it means to live a life of love. Christ’s fervent love is as far removed as you can get from slushy emotion. His love for humankind meant offering Himself as a sacrifice to God (1 John 3:16).

With His life, Jesus rescued us and now we are to imitate Him and behave how God wants. We are to copy God’s own character, living a life of sacrificial love.

Christ’s surrender was absolute because it was not forced upon Him. Christ chose to be our sin offering, so that what we could never achieve in or through ourselves, He willingly did for us. Christ has done it all! Our salvation is through Christ and only because of Him. However, our salvation is not passive; our commitment doesn’t stop. Salvation is not getting hold of a ticket to heaven, rather salvation is active and it’s getting hold of a ticket for the most incredible ride of our lives (John 15:5-8).

Ephesians 2:8-10 reveals that on the one hand “it is by grace you have been saved, through faith ... not by works, so that no-one can boast.” On the other hand, we find that “we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works ...” We are saved by grace; we are saved for good works.

The motto of WEC International is CT Studd’s famous maxim: *“If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.”*

Jesus is our Leader, which means He’s in charge! When Jesus commands us to do or not do something, it is natural to obey and unnatural to disobey because Jesus is our King of kings and our Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16).

Does Jesus rule and reign over your life? How do you understand your salvation? Are you fulfilling the good works God has prepared in advance for you to do?



DAY ELEVEN: LOVE AND OBEDIENCE

READING – 1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-13

Verse 3 “If I ... surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.”

Amazing! Great acts of faith and sacrifice amount to nothing if we do not have love. If someone becomes destitute in order to help others or is prepared to endure a shocking death, but does not have love, they are empty gestures. It is true that others may actually gain from such acts, but they are useless in God’s eyes. Love is “the most excellent way” and must be our spiritual motivation (Mark 12:28-31).

Love for God makes obedience a natural impulse. True love is never out to please itself, but only to please God and others. God does not want us to disobey Him but neither does He want us to obey out of nervousness or necessity.

The reason we can love God is because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Now we must let God’s love surge through our lives. This happens through obedience, as the only proof of love. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15). He also said “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you” (John 15:12).

His commands are not a pain in the neck, because His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30). Obedience gives us opportunities to show our love. Love for God is ethical obedience rather than an emotional experience. Love is active and practical. If we love God, we must love all His people. Love for God and love for our brothers and sisters in Christ are not the same but they are inseparable (1 John 4:19-21).

Our passage reveals what love is. Therefore, what is sacrifice without patience, kindness, or hope? Conversely, what is sacrifice when accompanied by jealousy, pride, and anger?

Have you discovered the unbreakable bond between love and obedience? Are you being obedient to the command to love God and to love others?



DAY TWELVE: CHRIST-LIKE ATTITUDE

READING – PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

Verse 8 “... he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!”

This is arguably the most profound poem ever written. It is profound because it unveils the motivation of our Saviour and gives us a glimpse of the biggest picture. Jesus did not cling to His position in glory, but willingly stepped from power to weakness by becoming a human. He came as a humble servant in surrender to God and ended up submitting to the agony of the cross. But through His awesome resurrection He was given the position of supreme authority. Jesus did not come as a king or a warrior, but as a servant. Yet through obedience and submission He overpowered the devil and crushed death itself.

Paul remarks, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (verse 5). If humility, obedience, and servanthood were the characteristics of Jesus’ life, then they must also be the traits of those who trust in Him.

As we noted last week, we should not focus on the negative side of our faith. While it is true that following Jesus can mean pain, loneliness, and rejection, following Jesus can still be a life of celebration filled with deep meaning and eternal purpose. Life with Christ is not the easiest life – Jesus never said it would be – but it is the most rewarding and fulfilling. We live in Christ and can face the skirmishes in our lives with His presence and the touch of the Holy Spirit. The seeming contradiction is that in our obedience and submission we can also be conquerors in Christ.

How do you face your personal tussles? Do you have the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus? Can you rejoice in the Lord whatever is happening around you? Ask the Lord for His encouragement, His resources and His strength. Do you have the desire to love, the humility to serve, and the strength to follow Jesus, so that your life might reflect His life in you?



DAYS THIRTEEN AND FOURTEEN: **PRAY FOR THE WORLD**

It is crucial we pray for world evangelisation. However, we also need to stand with our brothers and sisters who suffer for their faith in Jesus Christ. Wherever you are, how about interceding for the Persecuted Church:

- ◆ 200,000,000 Christians around the world are persecuted for their faith each year.
- ◆ Persecution for Christians includes death, kidnapping, imprisonment, mutilations, torture, beatings, rape, death threats, insults, family break-ups, confiscation of children and/or belongings, the inability to earn a living, or receive education and jobs that non-Christians have access to, etc.

Pray for Christians around the world to:

- ◆ stand strong in the face of opposition
 - ◆ persevere for their faith
 - ◆ be bold and discerning in their witness
 - ◆ know the love of God for their persecutors
 - ◆ know the peace of Christ in their suffering.
-



DAY FIFTEEN: SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES – SELF CONTROL

READING – ACTS 13:1-12

Verse 2 “While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul ...’”

Obedience is fundamental to our life of faith. Two important pledges can help. The first is a commitment to the spiritual disciplines of self-control. (We’ll look at the second tomorrow). These spiritual disciplines include solitude, simplicity, and silence. Along with these, as in our passage, is fasting. The disciplines of self-control indicate abstaining from a normal desire in order to help us to become more like Christ. They may mean giving up some of our social activities so that we can devote time and energy to them. This is not because pleasure or leisure are in any way wrong. However, there is a huge difference between the pursuit of God and the pursuit of recreation (2 Timothy 2:22).

Fasting is a symbolic act. We redirect our physical appetite to spiritual hunger. Although people talk about fasting from all sorts of things, like TV or sleep, the Greek word for fasting is *nesteuo* which means “abstaining from physical nourishment.” The main motive for fasting is to gain a greater intimacy with Jesus. We abstain from food so that we can spend more time in the presence of the Lord and place ourselves in a position of openness to God’s Spirit. Why not skip lunch one day and feast on a New Testament letter instead? [*Word of warning – if you are in a hot climate don’t forget to drink lots of water!*]

It is good to recognise that biblical fasting is linked to humility as it helps us to focus on God and not on ourselves (Ezra 8:21-23). It is important to realise that fasting does not automatically lead to extra blessings. Someone has said that we fast to seek His face, not twist His arm!

As you practise these disciplines, you will find that you begin to understand more about your awesome, loving God and what He is saying to you. Do you need to make a commitment to the spiritual disciplines of self-control?



DAY SIXTEEN: SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES – ACTION

READING – MATTHEW 20:20-28

Verses 26-27 “.. whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant ... whoever wants to be first must be your slave.”

The second important pledge to obedience is a commitment to the spiritual disciplines of action. This is the counterbalance to yesterday’s study. If you abstain from something, (eg. food) it is so that you can devote effort to something else (eg. prayer). The disciplines of action are more functional. They require participation, not abstinence.

These disciplines include prayer, worship, and study. The example in our passage is that of service, and serving others is part of your obedience to Christ. Service may take physical effort and/or spiritual energy. It may involve all sorts of menial tasks or acts of compassion or a thousand and one other things. Ephesians 6:7 says, “Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men.”

There may be great feats of service like short-term mission work (!), but service should not only be at certain times or in certain places. The Lord calls you to be a servant at all times – in your family, in your church, in your community, wherever you go and to whoever you meet. The discipline of service is literally a lifelong commitment (Deuteronomy 10:12-13).

This brief look has not even begun to consider the depth of the spiritual disciplines, but is enough to see that a disciple must be disciplined. In *Hearing God* (p.188) Dallas Willard writes: “...grace is not opposed to effort. It is opposed to earning.

Commitment is not sustained by confusion, but by insight. The person who is uninformed or confused will inevitably be unstable and vulnerable in action, thought and feeling.” You do not become like Christ by doing nothing; you need a plan of action!

Do you need to make a commitment to the spiritual disciplines of action? Do you need to examine your life of service?



DAY SEVENTEEN: PRAISE, HELP, GIVE

READING – HEBREWS 13:1-21

Verse 16 “... do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”

While there is no longer any need for blood sacrifices, there are other sacrifices that we can make. These offerings are not to secure salvation, but to please God.

Firstly, there is a sacrifice of praise. This is a sacrifice of bold witness. We continually testify to the name of Jesus and share all He has done in our lives. We praise the Lord for His majesty and power. We stand up for what we believe and are open to sharing and showing the gospel. We are prepared to give an answer for the hope that we have (1 Peter 3:15). There are times when this will demand a lot from us and it will feel like a sacrifice especially if the result is rejection.

Secondly, there is the sacrifice of doing good to others. An early Christian writer said, “Compassion shown to men by men is a bloodless sacrifice and holy unto God.” We need to be people who love and help, those who will chafe their hands to make a difference in this aching world. 1 Peter 2:12 says, “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”

Thirdly, there is the sacrifice of generosity: we are to share what we have. That may mean money and possessions, but it may also mean time or abilities. A study of all the recorded revivals that have taken place in history has shown that there are two common denominators – prayer and generosity. Remember you can’t outgive God!

These sacrifices work side by side. We offer praise and thanksgiving and, because of our worship and gratitude, we show love to others through good deeds.

The result of your sacrifices is that God is pleased! What can be better than that? What spiritual sacrifices can you offer?



DAY EIGHTEEN: THE GREATEST NON-SACRIFICE

READING – GENESIS 22:1-19

Verses 9-10 “When they reached the place God had told him ... he ... took the knife to slay his son.”

The story of Abraham and Isaac is the greatest sacrifice that never took place! This test of Abraham’s faith could have torn him apart. Stop for a moment and try to imagine the emotional and psychological turmoil going on in Abraham’s head and heart. Abraham may well have expected Isaac to be resurrected (Hebrews 11:17-19), but this takes nothing away from his willingness to obey the Lord to the point of laying his one and only true son on the altar.

Abraham’s obedience was pitted against his own love for his son and his hope for the future. Seemingly, there was no contest. We find that Abraham obeyed completely. The Lord spoke to Abraham and “early the next morning” Abraham set off with Isaac to fulfil his commission. After three days, during which Abraham seems to have simply focused on the task ahead, he and Isaac climbed Moriah.

Abraham built an altar and prepared to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. Often the Scriptures are frustratingly concise, but here there is extensive detail. The knife was raised, but before it swung down, the Lord called out and Isaac was spared. Abraham had his faults and these have been recorded elsewhere in the book of Genesis. Nevertheless, Abraham was a man of obedience. When God said, “Go,” he went. He gave up his extended family, his friends, his home and his land. When God said, “Sacrifice Isaac,” he was prepared to kill his son.

Take time to reflect on this story of Abraham’s obedience. He obeyed immediately and he obeyed willingly. That is how it should be with us. There must be nothing between us and our commitment to God. When God speaks, do you obey instantly and enthusiastically? Are you prepared to give everything at the Lord’s command?



DAY NINETEEN: OBEDIENCE AT ALL COSTS

READING – ACTS 5:27-42

Verse 29 “Peter and the other apostles replied: ‘We must obey God rather than men.’”

To be united with Christ means we must be prepared to obey God rather than people, and handle the consequences. The Apostles had not changed their convictions despite their imprisonment. They obeyed God and trusted Him to take care of the outcome. They were under a commission from their Lord and they spoke boldly to the highest Jewish religious court. The Spirit of God empowered them and they were not afraid. The Holy Spirit has not changed. He can empower us too, whatever situation we are in (2 Timothy 1:7).

Tradition has it that the Apostles continued to obey God. Of the thirteen Apostles, (including Matthias, who replaced Judas Iscariot, and Paul) twelve of them were killed for their faith. John was the only one who died a natural death, and he was tortured and exiled on the Isle of Patmos. These men strode out and bravely preached Christ in North-East Africa, India, South-West Europe, and all across the Middle East (1 Thessalonians 2:4).

Our modern life has not replaced the need to obey God at whatever cost to ourselves. This is especially true for those working with Muslims. I know from personal experience the enormous suffering that can take place when a Muslim becomes a Christian. Yet many testify that it was still the best thing they ever did. Their steadfast loyalty to Christ is our challenge.

One missionary said, “You cannot work among Muslims unless you are willing to die. That is what it will cost them to follow Jesus Christ. They will lose family and jobs. They will face prison and beatings. They will lose their very lives. If you are not willing to do the same, they will see through you in a minute and draw the conclusion that your Jesus is not worth committing their lives to.”

Are you willing to face the future with Christ and accept that it may include danger, difficulties, and death?



DAYS TWENTY AND TWENTY-ONE: **SUCCESS**

Space below for notes or questions.

Meditate on this quote from Adoniram Judson:

“There is no success without sacrifice. If you succeed without sacrifice, it is because someone has suffered before you. If you sacrifice without success, it is because someone will succeed after.”



DAY TWENTY-TWO: **LIVING SIMPLY**

READING – PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23

Verse 12 “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation ... whether living in plenty or in want.”

Western civilisation is driven by materialism. In our affluent society what people have and do is now as important as who they are. As you read this, you may be in a country where the focus is quite different. But at some point you will return home.

We need to learn from Paul’s outlook and be satisfied whether we have a lot or very little. “Developed” nations offer people unlimited choice, yet coupled with this is the constant burden to own the latest and the best.

While consumerism promises much, it does not instil real joy or real peace. Western societies keep the momentum rolling because consumerism is addictive – there are always new and improved products to buy or new answers for health and happiness to try – and no one wants to be left behind! This can only bring frustration and dissatisfaction (1 Timothy 6:6-10).

One answer for the believer in Jesus lies in adopting a simple lifestyle. This is not only tremendously liberating, but we discover that the best things in life are free! First of all, there is our relationship with God. Then among other things, is the bond with our families and friends and a new appreciation of creation. In *Celebration of Discipline* (p.80) Richard Foster writes that we must “learn to enjoy things without owning them.”

“Developed” nations falsely state that a person’s identity is wrapped up in what they have. No way! Our identity is as sons or daughters of God! If we live more simply the focus swings away from the things we don’t have to the things we do have. This helps us appreciate God’s generosity and realise that every good and perfect gift is from our heavenly Father (James 1:17).

Are you influenced by your culture to possess things? Are you content whatever the circumstances?

**DAY TWENTY-THREE: SINGLENES AND MARRIAGE**

READING – 1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-39

Verse 8 “Now to the unmarried and widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am.”

Following the Lord may mean all sorts of sacrifices, not least that of marriage. We don't have to begin a vocation in a monastery or convent to be gifted with singleness. Every unmarried believer must tackle this issue: does the Lord want me to marry? We should not assume that either marriage or singleness is our destiny. We need to pray for wisdom to discover God's will for us and an openness to accept whatever the future holds. We should also be prepared for our situation to change. Singleness, or marriage, may be just up ahead or they may be many years away. In and through it all, God is in control.

If we remain single, we are free to concentrate on serving God with exclusive devotion. Verses 32-35 explain that a married person has other concerns and divided interests, but unmarried people can single-mindedly focus on the Lord and the work He wants them to do.

It should be stated that marriage is not a right and singleness is not second best. The Lord directs people along different routes and so one person might marry and another might not! (Matthew 19:3-12).

The Lord said He came to bring life in all its fullness. As an unmarried man, Jesus knew perfect joy and peace and showed that satisfaction in life is not chained to wedlock. Or take Paul, who was probably a widower without family ties. He was able to be God's travelling emissary, because he had been released from "relative" responsibilities.

If you do marry, praise the Lord for your husband or wife and all you will achieve together with Him. If you remain single, praise the Lord for your singleness and all you will achieve on your own with Him. Remember that married or single, the Lord calls you to keep your eyes on Jesus, the foundation of your faith.



DAY TWENTY-FOUR: WHAT IS YOUR PROFESSION?

READING – LUKE 5:1-11

Verses 10-11 “... from now on you will catch men.’ So they ... left everything and followed him.”

Simon was overwhelmed! Jesus had been teaching the people and then He suggested to Simon that they go fishing. Simon had been busy cleaning the nets after a disastrously unsuccessful night on Lake Galilee. So it's not surprising that there was a note of irritation in Simon's voice when Jesus told him to let down the nets. Simon knew that you caught fish at night in shallow water. You didn't catch fish during the day in deep water. Normally that was true. What Jesus asked Simon to do cut across all his training and experience - but nothing is normal when Jesus is around! Simon obeyed and he and his friends caught so many fish that two boats nearly sank under the weight!

Simon had probably had contact with Jesus before, possibly many times. Now, having listened to His teaching and personally experienced a miracle, Simon realised the difference between the extraordinary man in front of him and his own ordinariness and sinfulness. When Jesus commissioned Simon to catch men, the response of the whole group was to leave everything. Isn't that interesting: they left the biggest catch they had ever made, probably the greatest catch they had ever seen and followed Jesus. Why? The bulging nets full of flapping fish were not as important as what they showed them about Jesus.

Simon and the other apostles followed Jesus for the rest of their lives. They were committed to the Lord and His strategy to see the world know and trust in God. In fact, Simon never went back to a life of fishing.

How about you? Is the Lord asking you to leave your profession or your livelihood for the task of seeing men and women know and trust Him? This may be for a short time, or like Simon, you may never return to your previous occupation. Does this thought excite or alarm you?

**DAY TWENTY-FIVE: COMMISSIONED TO GO**

READING – EXODUS 3:10 - 4:13

Verse 4:13 “But Moses said, ‘Oh Lord, please send someone else to do it.’”

Moses was the faithful servant of God and dynamic leader of the Israelites. He achieved remarkable things through his faith in God. However, before his incredible exploits, Exodus 3 and 4 reveal a man trying to think of every possible excuse not to leave his father-in-law’s sheep. Despite offering several protests, he obeyed and later led the Israelites towards the Promised Land.

Gideon was instructed to defeat the Midianites. He too made excuses and sought signs from the Lord (Judges 6-7). In the end, he obeyed and the Midianites were trounced and never again troubled the Israelites.

Jeremiah was chosen before his birth, but he also came up with a reason why he should not fulfil God’s commands (Jeremiah 1). Finally, he obeyed and was a faithful prophet during some of the darkest days in Israel’s history.

These are three examples of many. The important element is not that they objected, but that they obeyed.

God has commissioned you too! Before His ascension, Jesus commanded His disciples, both then and now, to go into all the world and make disciples. What is your response? You may question and even argue, but ultimately, you need to obey. Maybe you feel like Winston Churchill. When he took up the challenge of leading Britain he said, “I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat.” If so, God says, “Great, I’ll supply everything else!” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Moses, Gideon, Jeremiah, and many others obeyed. The world needs more people who will step out in faith to accomplish God’s master strategy (John 14:12). This is not done alone, but when you go Christ will be with you ... and He is all you need.

What is the Lord saying to you? Is the Lord commissioning you to serve Him overseas?



DAY TWENTY-SIX: FOCUSED ON ETERNITY

READING – 2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-18

Verse 8 “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed but not in despair ...”

Flogged and jailed or preaching to thousands – short term mission trips were all together different in the first century! Paul had only one aim: to be a faithful and useful servant of Jesus Christ. Paul was God’s ambassador, but he still battled against every kind of human imperfection and misery. Paul endured physical, emotional, mental and spiritual struggles. He had personal difficulties and other believers caused him much distress. With God’s help he was able to defeat his personal problems and point to Jesus. Nowhere does Paul deny the pain or pressures of life: look at 2 Corinthians 6:3-10. Paul doesn’t explain why he went through such torment. He may not have fully understood himself why he did. Maybe we won’t always find out the reasons for our troubles while here on earth.

What kept Paul going? He looked ahead into eternity and thought “Wow!” He believed that all his difficulties were minor when measured against the future with his Lord. Paul knew that at some point the struggle would be over and he would live forever with Christ.

Are you experiencing difficulties? Has your time overseas brought hassles, maybe even hazards? It is important to realise that as you serve God faithfully and obediently, your “light and momentary troubles” are achieving for you an eternal glory that far outweighs all your problems (verse 17).

How do you see eternity? If you have really grasped the truth of your future – you will be forever with God – it will put this world into perspective. It will also give you hope and help you to endure anything. You may have to sacrifice a lot, but Christ “will reward each person according to what he has done” (Matthew 16:27).

Christ is coming back and when He does, everything will change. There will be perfect love, joy and peace. Fantastic!



DAYS TWENTY-SEVEN AND TWENTY-EIGHT: **RULER OF ALL**

Did you know:

- ◆ Mercury is the planet closet to the Sun at an average distance of 36 million miles (58 million kilometres). Its year, the time it takes to go once around the Sun, is equal to 88 Earth days.
- ◆ Pluto is the planet farthest from the Sun, lying an average 3,660 million miles (5,890 million kilometres) from the Sun. One year on Pluto lasts about 248 Earth years.

Do you know what? The Lord rules over both!

Space below for queries and comments.



FURTHER READING

We can learn a lot about costly discipleship by reading and studying portions of the Scriptures. Below is a small selection, but do not be limited by the ones listed here. Read the passages and discover what you can about sacrifice and obedience. How do these accounts help you in your own life of discipleship? Praise God for His Word and pray in recognition that “This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome...” (1 John 5:3).

- ◆ **Genesis 4:1-26**
- ◆ **Deuteronomy 6:1-25**
- ◆ **Deuteronomy 30:1-20**
- ◆ **Psalm 119:1-88**
- ◆ **Psalm 119:89-176**
- ◆ **Jeremiah 11:1-23**
- ◆ **Luke 9:46-62**
- ◆ **John 14:15-31**
- ◆ **Romans 6:1-23**
- ◆ **Ephesians 6:1-24**
- ◆ **Hebrews 10:1-39**
- ◆ **Hebrews 12:1-29**

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NOTES

Trekking Deeper is a devotional discipleship programme specifically written for short-term volunteers. The aim of the Course is to help “Trekking Deeper” keep their focus on Christ and to grow spiritually during their placements.



Trekking Deeper consists of a series of nine booklets:

The ABC of Preparation *	Practical Faith
Costly Discipleship	Living Holiness
Dynamic Prayer	United in Discipleship
Exploring God's Word	Returning & Advancing *
God's Guidance	(* new titles)

“Refreshing, stretching, packed with helpful insights, I found the Trekking Deeper booklets an excellent tool for personal discipleship.”
Glenn Myers (author of the Briefings series)

“I learnt a lot about prayer and it was good to have notes with short-termers in mind.” **Gillian Thom (Mexico)**

“I learnt stuff I didn't know before.” **Jeremy Estabrook (Senegal)**

“The questions made you analyse and pray about your feelings rather than just pottering on.” **Lindsey Hale (Mexico)**

“I learnt things that I could apply and think about and they weren't boring!” **Alison Davey (Sierra Leone)**