

Study and Discipleship

Where does study fit into my relationship with Christ?

- When we talk about walking with Christ, it should not be a mysterious or bewildering thing
- This walk is not just something we feel or privately experience without the ability to identify what has happened
- To walk with Him means something
- Discipleship is a concrete thing
- When it is happening, there are observable components to it

- Whatever God is doing on the inside works its way out
- It can be seen and known
- But it does begin inside a man
- Our first passage helps to explain...

Colossians 3:1-4

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.
2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.
4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

- Everything has changed for the man who has faith in Christ
- His affections have changed
- His life is altered
- What he is now is different than what he was before

- To have these affections on "things above," is to have our minds directed toward them
- And the things above are all those things related to Him
- Because He is our life
- Not just the life we live here on earth, but the life we will live in eternity with Him

- So, everything we think and everything we are should be based upon and directed toward Him
- If we turn back one chapter in Colossians we'll find more details...

Colossians 2:6-8

6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:
7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.
8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

- There is teaching that contributes to this walk with Christ
- Not worldly philosophies or traditions, but that which is after Christ
- That which comes from above

- Another passage in the New Testament may help...

1 John 2:3-6

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

- We know what He commands based on the scriptures
- And we know how He walked, based on the accounts of Him in scripture
- We think on things above, by directing our attention to that which came from above, His word

- Our relationship with Christ is strengthened and deepened when
- Our hearts are turned toward His word
- And our lives are shaped based upon His word

- There are two passages from the Old Testament that I want to focus on...

Psalms 119:10

10 With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.

- There has been an investment of heart and mind in scripture
- As a means of seeking after God
- The fear of the one seeking, seems to be straying from God's commands
- That could be both straying from obedience
- And perhaps straying from the words themselves
- For no doubt the first will follow the second
- The heart's desire expressed is to seek God
- To do so there must also be a seeking of what God says
- For how will we know more of His person without His communication to man?
- To be a follower is to first know where He wants us to go
- And then to simply go
- That is the desire expressed
- And should be our desire

- What's more...

Psalms 119:11

11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

- There seems also to be a desire to avoid any action that would take us farther from God
- That's what sin does for a believer, interrupts fellowship
- And so the believer seeking God hides His words in their heart
- So there may be no interruption of fellowship through sin
- The memorization of scripture is for change of character leading to obedience
- Because there is a desire to please God
- Again, a heart for Him, that leads to the study of Him
- And this has results...

Psalm 119:12

12 Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.

- This person with a heart for knowing and pleasing God desires teaching from Him
- They realize He is worthy of praise and honor
- Seeing no one else of worthiness
- They ask for more knowledge of Him
- So they look to His statutes
- And they repeat them as well...

Psalm 119:13

13 With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.

- Another translation reads this way...

"I will repeat the laws we have heard from you."

- His words are worthy of repetition
- Because of their great value
- And their great usefulness
- But also because they have impact for all others hearing
- They are repeated for us
- For our memorization and for our reminder
- But also for others
- But there is something more...

Psalm 119:14

14 I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.

- Obedience to His words have been cause for rejoicing
- And a great deal of rejoicing
- Indeed, as much as other (not seeking God) rejoice in their riches

- This may be a startling thought
- That strict adherence to scriptural principle and command would bring happiness
- But not for the one sincerely focused on pleasing Him
- For this man's desires have become God's desires for him
- And so he rejoices
- His happiness radiates
- And he commits once again...

Psalm 119:15

15 I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.

- The scriptures will be this person's meditation
- His eyes will be fixed on what God says
- As he holds every word in high regard
- Enough to study them carefully and often and seriously
- In fact...

Psalm 119:16

16 I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

- The person who delights in something has a difficult time forgetting
- For his heart has been turned to it
- His appetites are for it
- And he returns regularly for more delight
- That is what is happening here
- And there is another request...

Psalm 119:17

17 Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.

- Life and health and good are requested not so the one requesting can live for self
- Not so that they can consume more for their own enjoyment
- But so they may remain faithful and continue in obedience
- You see, when a man's heart has been turned to these precepts
- He lives for the God of the precepts
- And wishes to continue that living
- To glorify His God and turn others to Him
- And...

Psalm 119:18

18 Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

- No matter how long a person has followed God
- And studied His word
- And live according to His word
- He remains hopeful that scripture will reveal yet more wondrous things
- For it is never exhausted

- And our eyes never fail to be partially closed to it
- Because we live in the bodies of flesh
- So we may beg God to open those eyes
- To be capable of seeing something else wonderful
- About His person and His work
- Our lives should be devoted to this
- God's people have always known this

- One of the key passages in Israel's history makes it clear...

Deuteronomy 6:4

4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:

- There is only One True God
- And that is Jehovah
- Therefore we are not to survey and select from all the world's wisdom
- This One True God has spoken by His word and through His son
- And those who know His son, follow His word
- It is the text by which we judge all the world's wisdom

- That is what we will see in upcoming verses, starting with...

Deuteronomy 6:5

5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

- This is a familiar phrase
- Jesus quoted this text when He was asked "which is the great commandment in the law?"
- He answers...

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

- This is the starting point for a life of study
- We must be a disciple of Christ
- One who loves God with everything
- From the very center of our being, with who we are, and with what we think
- Then we may go about exploring and then expressing His word to others

- As His totally committed followers
- Believers are not simply people of a common creed
- We are one family, with one Father, living according to truth He gave us
- Because when we do, He sets us apart to work for Him
- And His service is our life's mission
- Like us, Israel was to hear and obey...

Deuteronomy 6:6

6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

- This is referring to the whole discourse of Moses
- Everything he passed along to Israel from God
- It was to be more than just a guidebook for them
- It was to be remembered, because it was to be hidden within the heart
- These are more than simple words on a page
- They have become words to live by for God's people
- His dictates would be their way of life
- And what a blessing this would be
- They are told, and we are often told, that to follow is to have joy
- So what comes next is no great surprise...

Deuteronomy 6:7

7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

- Such life-giving, joy-inducing, wisdom-providing words ought to be taught
- And the home is the logical place to begin
- Our children need to know
- Our families need a foundation
- Commitment to the One True God and adherence to His word must be that foundation
- But His words must be spoken over and over
- For we all forget
- Life is filled with dissent and distraction
- Our children need this text to be an ever-present part of their upbringing
- This won't happen without a depth of understanding
- We won't know how to talk about what He said unless we are clear on what it means
- Questions will be asked
- And we will need to know how answers can be found
- The answers will not be ours, they will be His
- But with honest heart and careful attention, we will find them

- There are many ways we will go about all this...

Deuteronomy 6:8-9

8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

- We need to find ways to remind ourselves
- As we speak about the scripture daily
- We shall also make it a part of our décor and even our wardrobe
- In whatever ways we can, we must promote it
- And teach it, and live it
- This is our life of study

- Society will find this full immersion unusual, at best
- Perhaps bad
- People may mock it
- Others may disdain it
- Governments may make laws against it
- And they may impose fines or jail time or worse
- There is much precedence for this
- But it must not alarm us
- The One True God has spoken
- We can do no less than listen and repeat

- This will give us joy
- It will give us an education
- It will give us a strong family
- Ready to live, and if necessary die, in His service