

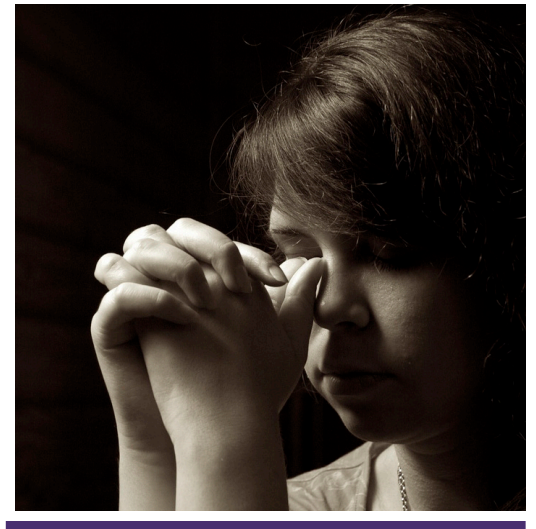


Worksheet 9: Living the Christian Life

What is a Christian?

The Christian Faith proclaims the gracious God whose covenant love is expressed in Jesus Christ, and whose Spirit calls all people into fellowship with God. Jesus calls people to believe in him as Lord and learn from him what it means to live in harmony with God's purposes.

A Christian is a person who is responding to Jesus' call to discipleship and through baptism has "put on Christ." In the power of the Holy Spirit she/he seeks to live a new life in Christ. As a member of Christ's body, the church, Christians express their discipleship in worship, witness and service.



Living as a Christian:

In Acts 2: 42-48 we see a model of what living as a Christian entails. Living as a Christian is "life in the Spirit" and through centuries of experience, Christians have learned that certain disciplines and practices help them to maturity, "to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Ephesians 4:15). These disciplines are not God's rigid requirements for a holy life. They are tested means by which a person grows in their awareness of God's presence and purpose for human life. A spiritual discipline takes a specific part of a person's life and turns it toward God. When practiced faithfully and regularly, it becomes a habit that repeatedly brings them back to God and opens them up to what God is saying to them through the Holy Spirit. Christian devotional practice is squarely centered on Jesus Christ as found in the New Testament. When Christ is not at the heart of a practice, it may still be beneficial in some way, but it is not being practiced in a Christian way. Christian practices assist people "to confess the faith of Christ crucified and to be his faithful servant" (Basis of Union par 13).

One Woman's Story:

In the words "in the upper room" there is a sense of retreat and set-apartness, of rising above one's daily concerns, of peace and detachment. Now I have my very own upper room, and it is just that, a room we created out of our massive roof space when we bought this old house and renovated it. It is mainly a kid's hangout room: there is an old brown sofa up there, a fold out couch for guests, the television, bookcases full of old children's books, board games seldom played, and jigsaw puzzles no one has done for ages.

This is the room where I go to pray. I have set up a small prayer corner, in which there is a box covered with a white cloth, a mat where I sit, a cross, a candle and a bowl of water."

[Clare Boyd-Macrae, Lacuna: Space for God: UCA Synod of Victoria & Tasmania, 2003 page 32]



Note

This sheet is part of a series on theology in the 21st century. It is prepared for the National Assembly by the Working Group on Doctrine as a discussion starter for small groups, in congregations, faith communities or other settings. It may also be used for personal reflection. Low resolution copies of this sheet can be downloaded free of charge from the Doctrine website: www.assembly.uca.org.au/doctrine.

Quotes

"Because [Christian] faith is countercultural, those who would walk this way need not be surprised that they must assume new practices...The joyful adventure that is called discipleship requires the formation of people who are able to resist the powers and principalities in all the tempting guises by which they present themselves. Through the words and practices of the church, such as tithing, worship, forgiveness, prayer, devotional reading, and self-denying service, the church deconstructs the socialization and spiritually stultifying conditioning of the world, and gives people a new means of living in the world."

[William Willimon, Pastor: Abingdon Press, 2002 p.215]

Books to read

Simply Christian by Tom Wright

Why Christian? by Douglas John Hall

Following Jesus in a Culture of Fear
by Scott Bader-Saye

Celebration of Discipline, by Richard Foster:

A Hidden Wholeness by Parker J. Palmer

Lacuna: Space for God: UCA Synod of Victoria & Tasmania, 2003



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Christian Disciplines:

Among the traditional Christian disciplines that have been recognized down the centuries, the following are counted as basic and essential for a healthy Christian life.

1. THE COMMUNAL DISCIPLINES: (shared with others in a community of faith)

- Regular worship and participation in the life of a Christian community
- Frequent use of the sacraments: regular recalling of one's baptism and participation in the Lord's Supper
- Fellowship with other Christians in relationships of mutual trust and learning

2. THE INDIVIDUAL DISCIPLINES

- Study of and meditation on the Scriptures
- A time for daily prayer: using some form of office or regular pattern is often helpful
- Living a healthy bodily life (which may include times of fasting)

3. THE SOCIAL DISCIPLINES

- Living one's life as a vocation of witness to Christ in daily life
- Serving others who are in need particularly through personal involvement
- Sharing one's wealth with others in an intentional and planned way
- Seeking justice and peace for the world

These disciplines are not to be undertaken out of guilt, nor should they engender a sense of failure. No one earns God's approval according to his/her success in doing any of these things. They are undertaken out of freedom to help the Christian on their way to a Christ-like life.

Every believer a witness

Dear God,

We pray for balance and exchange.

Balance us like trees. As the roots of a tree

shall equal its branches so must the inner life

be equal to the outer life. And as the leaves shall nourish the roots so shall the roots give nourishment to the leaves.

Without equality and exchange of nourishment

there can be no growth

and no love.

Amen.

Common Prayer Collection: ©Michael Leunig: Collins Dove, 1993

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Note

Image of girl praying by khrawlings.

Image of crosses by abcdz2000.