

FOLLOWING JESUS

If any man serve me, let him follow me... (Jn 12:26)

Lesson 2

The Three Keys of True Discipleship

Outline

An Introduction to the Three Keys of Discipleship

The Three Keys of Discipleship

- I. Depending
- II. Asking... in Faith
 - A. Clarifying the difference between Key 1: **Depending** and Key 2: **Asking**?
 - B. Asking honors God in at least four ways...
 - C. The critical life principle of **ASKING**
- III. Sanctification (Separating)
 - A. What is sanctification?
 - B. Sanctification, like a coin, has two sides (senses)
 - 1. Positional Sanctification
 - 2. Personal Sanctification
- IV. Summary

PART 2

God, through his servant James, gives us the 2nd **key** to living the life of a disciple, a life of spiritual victory totally energized by the indwelling Holy Spirit! And that critical 2nd Key is...

II. Asking... in FAITH!

A. Clarifying the difference between Key 1: **Depending** and Key 2: **Asking**?

As we just discussed, the first Key—Depending—is making ourselves available to be used by God, and then trusting God to use us. To help us understand the concept of “Depending” we considered the analogy of a state-of-the-art aircraft given to us to use 24/7/365. All we have to do is to climb aboard that plane, take our seat and buckle up. “Depending” is making ourselves available and then having absolute confidence in God’s ability and in His desire to use us to build His Kingdom. The Prophet Isaiah demonstrated “dependence” when he cried out, *Here am I...* (Is 6:8). Isaiah anxiously made himself available to God!

But once we are in the plane, seated and ready to go, how do we get the Pilot to start the engines, taxi out, and take off? Well, Isaiah said something else, something very important in that scripture. Isaiah finished the statement with this phrase: *...send me*. God teaches that **we have to ask!** **Asking demonstrates the genuineness of our dependence upon God.** Asking says, “OK Lord, I’m willing, wanting and ready to go. But I need you to start those engines and take off” (i.e., to lead and empower me!). “Let’s roll!”

And not only does God want us to ask Him for our needs, for guidance, and for empowerment, ...He commands us to do so! When we ask in faith, those engines ignite, we leave the runway, the afterburners kick in, and God propels us through this life accomplishing those things that will build His Kingdom, bring Him glory and, at the same time, spiritually enrich our lives. With God, its always Win-Win!

[NOTE: An important point to make here is that the focus of discipleship is not to make us rich, happy, comfortable and emotionally complete! **Discipleship is the process God uses TO BUILD HIS KINGDOM and Christians are to be workmen in that process.** Discipleship usually means that we will be called upon to sacrifice what we could have gained in this life (money, material things, positions, fun, carnal pleasure, ease) in order to build the Kingdom, and actually gain spiritual rewards for all eternity!]

- Actually these first two keys—Depending and Asking—can be pictured as two sides of the same coin.

- The 1st Key—DEPENDING—is a state of mind; it is FAITH or TRUST!

- Dependence is demonstrated when we realize and admit to God that without Him **we ARE nothing!** Without our Creator, we don't even exist materially... and logically, we have no reason to be here! Only our Creator, and His plan for this life and eternity, makes existence meaningful.

- Second, depending is admitting to God that we **have nothing!** We “bring nothing to the table”, nothing that God NEEDS! We have nothing to contribute, no talent, no resource, no strength, no wisdom... unless He provides it! Without the Lord we don't even have air to breathe, food to eat, water to drink, and light to see with!

- Third, depending upon God is realizing that **we can do nothing**, of any spiritual value or impact, unless He empowers us and works through us to accomplish it. Remember Jesus was very clear, *...for without me ye can do nothing* (Jn 15:5).

This third nuance of “depending”—the doing part—is where so many Christians get into trouble, disconnect and then fail in their life of discipleship. Most believers realize that without God and eternity, our existence is meaningless. Most believers have no problem admitting that all resources and provisions for life come from God. But many believers then turn right around and attempt to live the Christian life in their own strength; they attempt to do the work of God by and through their own talents and abilities! They think to themselves: OK, I've got to get the done!

Suddenly they forget that God has to be 100% involved in the “doing” as well as in the logistics of supplying! They are like the strong man with the rope around the plane's nose gear, attempting to do the work of God in and through their own ability and talents. Even “good works”, if they are accomplished only through our own ability, will be accounted “works of the flesh” when we stand before the Lord. The Holy Spirit has to be the One doing the work THROUGH us or it will not be acceptable to God.

- **Therefore, DEPENDING is essentially trusting God in ALL things; in BEING, in HAVING, and in DOING. It is living by faith!** Depending is believing God's promises. Depending is having confidence in God. Depending is understanding that God will take care of all our needs and carry us to our destination IF we will put ourselves into His hands. And finally, dependence is understanding that God will do the work through us. Again to use the aircraft analogy, **depending** is like getting on that powerful jet plane and buckling our seat belts.

- The 2nd Key—ASKING—engages the engines!

- Think again about that powerful jet analogy. Until we ASK the Pilot to engage the engines and take us to our destination, the plane just sits on the tarmac! Asking engages the engines; asking is engaging our faith in God!

- So... Key #1, **depending**, is a state of mind; it is the acknowledgment that God is the Provider, the Empowerer and the Guide in our life of discipleship. Depending is like getting on the plane and buckling our seat belt.

- And then, Key #2, **asking**, demonstrates to God that our dependence is more than just classroom theory! When we step out in FAITH—like those obedient priests stepped into flooding Jordan—it is us stepping down, out of the way, so the Spirit can get into the pilot's seat. Asking engages our Divine Power Source (the Holy Spirit).

- James teaches a profound principle in v 4:2; he writes, *...ye have not, because ye ask not.* FRIENDS, WE HAVE TO ASK GOD! GOD DEMANDS THAT WE ASK FOR OUR NEEDS AND DESIRES! I want you to turn to Matthew 7:7 and follow along as I read Jesus' command:

Jesus commanded, “Depend, *and it shall be given you*; Depend, *and ye shall find*; Depend, *and it*

shall be opened unto you..." (Mat 7:7; Lu 11:9).

Wait... is that what Jesus commanded? I don't think I read that correctly, did I?

Jesus actually commanded... **ASK**, and it shall be given you; **SEEK**, and ye shall find; **KNOCK**, and it shall be opened unto you... (Mat 7:7; Lu 11:9).

Depending is critical; it shows God that in our hearts we know HE has to be the Provider, Empowerer and Guide. But we have to go beyond just depending! Let me give you an illustration that makes that point.

One Wednesday evening after church and after making a visit to my wife's mother's rest home apartment, we stopped at Food Pyramid for some quick grocery needs. When Cathy returned to the car, it wouldn't start. The battery was faulty and it had died! It was late; nearly 10 PM! At that point I needed to call someone for a "jump start" and I immediately thought of Bro. Scott Kelsey. As a minister he was always available to be taken advantage of and he had to smile and take it. Furthermore, I figured that would have a set of jumper cables! Now, I had confidence in Bro. Scott and in my heart I was certainly **depending** upon Bro. Scott to come and get our engine started. But... what good would my dependence have been if I had not even called Bro. Scott and **ASKED** him to come help us? I activated our "rescue" by **asking**! And then he responded.

But you might be thinking, "Well, sure... you had to call Bro. Scott because he needed to know you were stranded; he isn't omniscient. But God is omniscient; Jesus Himself taught that God already knows our needs **even before we ask**!

- **Mat 6:7, 8** *But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. 8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.*

So why then do we need to ask God if He already knows our needs and desires. It doesn't really make much sense to the natural man!

Well, the very best answer I can give you is this: **Jesus told us to ask!** There in the model prayer Jesus teaches us to ASK even for our daily bread (our daily needs)! But doesn't God already know we need to eat? Sure He does. But very simply, God wants us to ask! And I believe He wants us to ask because **asking admits and demonstrates our dependence upon Him!** We have all known people so stubborn and independent that they were too proud to ask for something they needed. And so, ...they went without!

B. Asking honors God in at least four ways...

- Asking **demonstrates our dependence** upon God!
- Asking **demonstrates our humility** before God!
- Asking **demonstrates our faith** in God's promises! And finally...
- Asking **demonstrates our obedience**. God commands us to ask, and so when we do, we honor God.

So, let's finish up Lesson 2-2 with an in depth study of ASKING! I call it...

C. The critical life principle of **ASKING**

- **The critical life principle of receiving God's empowerment through asking** is taught in two passages in James. The first is vv 1:5-8,

- **James 1:5-8** *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ASK of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith (i.e., in DEPENDENCE), nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. 8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*

The second passage is vv 4:2-4 where James amplifies his own teaching,

- **James 4:2-4** *Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. 3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. 4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that **the friendship of the world is enmity with God?** whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

Now, some explanation of the context of vv 4:2-4 is necessary for us to understand and make proper application. James was writing this to Christian Jews! So we can pretty safely assume that they were not out LITERALLY killing each other and waging war on each other. These Christian Jews were, at the time of this writing, living scattered and persecuted lives because of their faith in Jesus (see James 1:1). They had been forced to flee Jerusalem, their homes and their livelihoods.

But instead of crying out to God for provision and empowerment it seems that they were attempting to eek out a survival in and of their own power and ability. And so, as they failed to procure what they felt they needed and certainly what they wanted, they fell into the trap of committing the grievous mental sins of lusting (probably referring to coveting material needs and food) and hating (which is committing murder in the heart, no doubt because they saw non-Christians living far better and with no persecution!) and then fighting and battling in real, life-and-death struggles with the World.

And James said they were experiencing all of these frustrations and failures, which resulted in sin, **BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT ASKING GOD TO HELP THEM!** Their lives were chaos and they were being defeated by their spiritual enemies (the unbelieving Jews and Rome) because they failed to ask God to help them become spiritual victors in their battles!

- So... what should they have done? They should have engaged their smart-bomb, their horseshoe in the boxing glove, that inner Dynamo called the Holy Spirit! And here is how they should have, (and how we can), do that.

- First, James says that born-again children of God **must get serious with God**; we have to repent of our sins with a contrite heart and then break off our spiritually-adulterous liaisons with the World! Note in v 4:4 that James calls these people spiritual *adulterers and adulteresses!* This is evidently because they were trying to evade persecution by becoming friends with the World! They were attempting to lessen the World's animosity and mitigate the attacks of the ungodly through doctrinal and behavioral compromise and Worldly associations! They had forgotten however that making the World a friend automatically makes God their enemy!

Think about the practical nature of this principle! When you and I are in need we probably don't go to enemies or strangers for help... right? And neither do we feel comfortable going to a friend or family member who is "put out" with us! Do you remember when you were a child and were disobedient to your parents? During that state of estrangement in fellowship, were you comfortable approaching them and asking for favors and things you wanted? Of course not! When we were being disobedient, we wanted no contact with mom and dad! "Out of sight and out of mind" was a good survival principle during those times!

Well, it works the same way with God! James explains that when we are living worldly lives, lives of compromise and even flagrant sin, we make God our adversary; we break fellowship. And then we become ashamed to cry out to Him for help, because it requires us to swallow our pride! So we attempt to solve our own problems and survive with our own abilities and smarts.

- Second, **after getting serious with God by setting ourselves apart to truth and holy living**, we need to cry out to God, **ASKING** for His empowerment, and then **having faith** (not being double-minded, i.e., a vacillator, James 1:6, 7) that God will take care of our issues.

Did you know that God loves and wants to give us good things. Again read Jesus' challenge in Mat 7:7-11.

- **Mat 7:7-11** *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: [Note the progression of intensity. Like the woman before the impious judge, God expects us to be serious about our asking!] 8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. 9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? 10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them*

that ask him?

God wants to give us the very best, spiritually speaking! And He will! What God gives is always the best! **But we must realize that the best things are spiritual things!** The best things are almost never material and monetary affluence, comfort and ease!

The best might even be martyrdom; it was for For Jim Elliott, Roger Youderian, Pete Fleming, Ed McCully and their pilot Nate Saint. On January 8, 1956, on the bank of the Curaray River in the Ecuadorian Amazon, these five men were speared and hacked to death by the Huaorani (Auca) Indians, the very people they had planned to evangelize. One of the most famous of all Christian quotes was coined by Jim Elliott: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." Their story is dramatized in the film, *End of the Spear*.¹

- So, let me be frank and ask, "Do we believe this... or not?"
 - Do we want to be successful in that project at work or school? Well, have we separated ourselves from the World? Are we **depending** upon Him (Key #1!) to give us wisdom for the task? And then... have we **asked** Him (Key #2!) for wisdom, guidance and empowerment?
 - Do we want to be effective parents and influence our children for Christ? Well, have we separated ourselves from the World? Are we **depending** upon Him to lead and guide us? And then... have we **asked** Him for wisdom, guidance and empowerment for this awesome task?
 - Do we want to live a God-honoring life; do we want to be "overcomers" in the midst of life's daily trials, and have full assurance of our eternal salvation? Well, have we separated ourselves from the World? Are we **depending** upon God to lead and guide? And then... have we **asked** Him for wisdom, guidance and empowerment for this physically impossible task?
 - And now to the present task at hand... Do we want to become effective servants; do we want to become genuine **Discipo-stewards** of the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, have we separated ourselves from the World? Are we **depending** upon Him to give us wisdom and spiritual strength for the task? And then... have we **asked** Him for that wisdom and spiritual strength? Well... have we?
- Now, while I don't want to seem harsh and legalistic in teaching this absolute necessity of separation, we must be black-and-white clear about what God demands from us if He is going to work in and through our lives. God DEMANDS separation! And without it, we will not succeed!

Remember what James wrote in v 4:8, *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.* Yes, we must ask, but James is "in your face clear" about this one condition for asking: **if we expect to receive the empowerment of God to live the Christian life and to become genuine disciples, we must be ultimately serious about our separation from the world and its sin.**

John concurs in I Jn 2:15. He writes, *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* John makes the solemn point that if we claim to love God, then all God (or anyone else) has to do to test that claim is watch how we interact with the World and its materialism and sensuality in our private lives.

Our God is a jealous God and He will not tolerate worldly, spiritually adulterous disciples any more than we would tolerate unfaithful fiancées or spouses! How would you feel if you discovered that your fiancée was flippantly cohabiting with several other people? You would not only be hurt, but you would be incensed, and then most likely enraged! God feels the same way when His blood-bought children are unfaithful to Him and involve themselves in all kinds of worldliness. God labels this behavior "spiritual adultery".

So separation from the World is a critical and fundamental Bible doctrine. And it segues us right into Key #3...

III. Sanctification (Separating)

¹ <http://endofthespear.com>