

EVEN IN DEATH WE DO NOT PART

(a lesson series on commitment)

How to Use This Pamphlet

When the New Year comes, the emphasis tends to be on what is new, new life, and other related themes. This series of lessons, however, focuses on *continuity*. This means that what we want to highlight is the fact that we must continue in our faith in Christ. In the words of Paul, we must continue to run the race with perseverance (Heb12:1-3) until we finish and receive the prize prepared for us (Phil 3:14). Whatever comes our way this year, we must make our hearts and commitment steady.

Each lesson has an introduction, points to talk about, and suggested questions for discussions. In each point in the lesson, the leader can choose from among the provided questions what to ask to the group for discussion. Because the Word section is geared toward being finished in 45 minutes, I suggest that only one question per point is dealt with. But of course, if there is enough time, the leader has the prerogative to ask more questions for discussion.

The monthly attendance sheet at the end will help the leaders monitor their small group/s and keep track of who are in need of encouragement and prayer.

This series is written by Dick Eugenio © 2016.

Lesson 1

Foundation of Commitment¹

Bible reading:

Mark 6:30-44, esp. 32-34; Ps 42:1-4

Objective:

At the end of this lesson, members should be able to evaluate the degree of their commitment to follow Jesus Christ, and be renewed in their love for him.

Introduction

Even today, Jesus Christ is perhaps still the most famous person in the whole world. Although there are many complaints against Christians, there are no complaints about Jesus Christ. He is recognized by all as a compassionate and wise prophet whose example deserves to be followed. But his global fame does not mean that he is followed by all in the world. In fact, there are still many who consciously reject him.

I. Passionate for Jesus

Mark 6:33 writes that although Jesus and the disciples planned to escape from the people because they wanted to have time to eat and rest, they ran after Jesus and followed them where they went. They had an intense desire to be with Jesus that they had to run 10-13 kilometers just to reach where Jesus was.

¹ Please be advised to read <http://dieucross.blogspot.com/2015/08/foundation-of-commitment.html>.

(Tikling to SM Megamall is 10.4 kilometers.) They were so passionate for Jesus that no amount of exhaustion kept them from running.

- *What are common reasons why people follow Jesus Christ?*
- *Is it alright to follow Jesus with wrong motives?*

II. Why Not Follow?

As the people run 13 kilometers to be with Jesus Christ, they faced many challenges. Their feet were probably already blistered. Their muscles were probably already cramping after running the third kilometer. Their lungs were probably almost out of breath. They were probably running not on good roads but on sand, making it more difficult to run. They were inhaling dust and bad sweat odor. They were probably navigating through thorns and thistles and shrubs. Yet, amidst all of these challenges, they kept on running.

- *What are common hindrances or obstacles to running after Jesus Christ?*
- *What personal or internal reasons do you usually face that discourage you from running after Jesus Christ?*
- *What challenges do you usually face from your friends, family, or anyone that discourage you from running after Jesus Christ?*

III. Following to be Followed

From Tikling to SM Megamall involves four cities—Taytay, Cainta, Pasig, and Mandaluyong—which is why we can understand when the passage says, “the people ran on foot from all the towns” (6:33). We can perhaps imagine that the number of people from Bethsaida was 3,000, but because they were running along the shore and across towns, they attracted other people to run with them. This is one of the fruits of commitment: when people see that we are passionate about something, people begin to ask what is there? When people see our commitment, they are infected by the virus of our faith.

- *How can our passionate commitment to God be evident in our daily lives?*
- *What actions and speech are evidences that we are not passionately committed to God?*

Application

Perhaps the most important question we must ask is this: How do we know we are still passionately committed to God today? One of the most tragic experiences of Christians is for them to lose their first love (Rev 2:4) or their spiritual fervor (Rom 12:11). When they have first met Jesus Christ, their fire are burning like crazy; but as time goes on, their fire slowly dwindles. We must always engage in honest self-introspection about our love for God.

Homework

In preparation for next week's meeting, read Mark 6:30-44 and John 15:1-8.

Lesson 2

Evidence of Commitment²

Bible reading:

Mark 6:30-44; John 6:60-71; and John 15:1-8

Objective:

At the end of this lesson, members should be able to evaluate their commitment to Jesus Christ, and perhaps renew their covenant to remain in Him.

Introduction

Commitment is such a big word. Aware or not, people are actually always committed to something or to several things. Some are committed to their sport, or to their online game, or to a goal. What are the evidences that we are committed to something? In this lesson, we are going to deal with what it means to be committed to a person. Although there are similarities, there are also differences in the evidences of our commitment to persons and to things.

I. Call to Remain

Going back to the story in Mark 6:30-44, we learned that the people ran 10-13 kilometers just to be with Jesus (v. 33). When Jesus saw them, He had compassion on them so “he began

² Please be advised to read <http://dieucross.blogspot.com/2015/08/evidence-of-commitment.html>.

teaching them many things” until “it’s already very late” (6:34-35). This means that the people, having already ran a long distance (hence, tired) also remained in Jesus, listening to His teachings. If the foundation of commitment is passion to be with Jesus, the evidence of commitment is remaining in Him.

- *What is the importance of remaining with Jesus Christ?*
- *In our world today, and in the light of our different situations, what does it mean to remain in Christ?*

II. Warning against Backsliding

Christianity is not only just about finding Jesus Christ or coming to Him as our Lord and Savior. Finding and meeting Him is just the beginning of our relationship with Him. We are also asked to remain. The Bible is full of admonitions to remain in God. (*The group can read passages like Deuteronomy 13:4; Joshua 23:8; and John 15:1-8*). This admonition is repeated in the Bible because there is indeed a possibility for people to not remain in their faith and commitment to God. In Jeremiah 13:11, for example, God complained that His own chosen people, the Israelites, did not listen to His call to cling to Him.

- *Today, what does it mean to backslide?*
- *What are the evidences that someone is in the process or backsliding?*
- *What are the evidences that someone has already backslided?*

III. Challenges to Remain

In John 6:60-66, it was recorded that many of previously followed Jesus Christ no longer followed Him. This is the reality of the Christian life. Many people can choose to not remain in Him. In our story in Mark 6:30-35, for example, the people who followed Jesus faces challenges while they were with Jesus. They were in the meadow, so there was no comfortable chairs. They were in the open air and beside the sea, so it was probably so hot and humid. Probably, there were also bugs and mosquitoes. They were also probably thinking of their own families and work they left behind. Whatever it is, there are always [worldly valid] reasons to quit remaining in Christ.

- *What are the common reasons why Christians quit following Christ?*
- *What are the things in our lives today that challenge us to keep following Christ?*

Application

If we are admonished to remain committed to Christ, what are the ways we can do, in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that we do not fall away? What are available practices—personal and found in church—that we need to take advantage of?

Homework

In preparation for next week's meeting, read Hebrews 12:1-3 and Phil 3:8-14.

Lesson 3

FIXED EYES ON JESUS

Bible reading:

Hebrews 12:1-3 and Philippians 3:8-14

Objective:

At the end of this lesson, members should find guidance in how to move forward this new year so that we might be able to win the prize set for us as followers of Jesus Christ.

Introduction

The Christian life is a journey, and while we are still on earth, this journey continues. Like Paul, our goal is simple: to press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God called us in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:12-14). Some have been running the race for many years now. Some have been serving God for many years now. Some have already made great sacrifices for the kingdom. Some are feeling the exhaustion. But like the 15,000 people who ran after Jesus Christ along the banks of the Sea of Galilee, we are admonished to continue to run further.

But what must we do in order for us to be effective in running the race?

I. Lighten Your Load

The writer of Hebrews says that if we are to continue running the race with the goal to finish, we must “throw off everything that hinders” (Heb 12:1). He does not specify these things that hinder us from finishing the race, but we can categorize them into things: (1) baggages that are weighing us down and (2) things that are in our way. It is very logical: if we are on a journey with a heavy backpack, we are more prone to give up. Also, if we hit roadblocks, our journey is either delayed or we turn around and go back where we came from.

- *What are the baggages or things in our lives that are weighing us down so that our journey with Christ and toward Christ has become very difficult?*
- *What are the things in our way that are hindering us from moving toward Christ? In fact, these may be things that we have put on our doing.*

II. Cut the Entanglements

Aside from lightening our loads, Hebrews 12:1 says that we must get rid of the sins that entangle us. Quite simply, we cannot run the race marked out for us if our feet are entangled. We cannot run the race if our feet are trapped. But Hebrews is very specific. The things that trap us and prevent us from moving are sins. We can interpret this in two ways: (1) there are sins in our lives that we have to be set free and be forgiven from (1 John 1:9; Acts 3:19), and (2) there are sins against us that we must also forgive and let go (Luke 11:4; John 20:23).

- *What are the sins in our lives that we need to ask for forgiveness?*
- *What addictions and habits are preventing us in our journey?*
- *Who do we need to forgive so that our hearts may be free to meet God (Matt 5:23-24)?*

III. Fix Your Eyes on Jesus

One of the important things to think about is that faith itself can be refined (1 Pet 1:7) and perfected (Heb 12:2). We cannot claim that we have achieved the summit of perfection yet, and we have to grow in trust, reliance, and confidence in God every day (2 Pet 3:18). And because Jesus is the perfecter of our faith, it is important that our eyes are fixed on Him. Since our goal is to be like Christ in His fullness (Eph 4:13), we have to never lose sight of Him.

- *Why is it important that we fix our eyes on Jesus in our Christian lives?*
- *How do we fix our eyes on Jesus? What are the evidence that our eyes are fixed on Him?*

Application

Why do we do these things? According the Hebrews 12:3, it is because we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. People are looking at us while we are running the race. We want them to

see that we are running the race marked out for us with perseverance. We want them to see that our focus is on Christ. We want them to see that our faith is perfected.

Monthly Attendance

Leader: _____

Month: _____

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