



**Discipleship 101
New Believer Lesson #5
Spiritual Growth and
Sanctification**

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Introduction:

*Come, Desire of nations, come,
fix in us thy humble home;
rise, the woman's conquering Seed,
bruise in us the serpent's head.
Now display thy saving power,
ruined nature now restore;
now in mystic union join
thine to ours, and ours to thine.*

You really have to love Holy Spirit-inspired work in simple men. This second verse of John Wesley's well-known Christmas carol, *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*, beautifully incorporates several elements of the first four lessons in this discipleship series. God's perfect creation is marred during the awful story of the fall and the legacy of man's sin ([Lesson #2](#)). This *ruined nature* finds a Victor in the promise that the *conquering Seed* (Jesus) would win out by *bruising in us* the enemy, Satan's *serpent head*, thereby *fixing in us* His *saving power* (Salvation – [Lesson #4](#)) to *restore* the perfection of God's original creation ([Lesson #1](#)). Finally, Jesus completes His work by preparing *in us* a *humble home*. It is this *preparing* we will discuss in this lesson.

When we become believers and followers of Jesus, Christians, we embark on God's plan to restore His creation in us personally by becoming like His Son Jesus, a *mystic union* joined *thine to ours, and ours to thine*, to use Wesley's words. Becoming like Jesus is a lifelong road. The simple timeless words above from *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* are spot on, describing that lifelong road called *sanctification* – spiritual growth in Jesus.

Sanctification – Separated to God and away from Sin:

The Greek word *hagiasmos*, is translated in the bible as *sanctification* as well as *holiness*. It signifies being set apart or separated for God's purposes. Being set apart for God's purposes is a very big deal. Salvation stands alone in importance, but we are not a contributing member of the body of Christ, the Christian church, until we begin the process of sanctification. Make no mistake believer, sanctification has a price in your life, and the coin of the realm is selflessness; you must give up the right to yourself and let Jesus do with you what He will. I believe Oswald Chambers says it best.

“When we [pray to be sanctified](#), are we prepared to face the standard of [these verses](#) (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)? We take the term sanctification much too lightly. Are we prepared for what sanctification will cost? It will cost an intense narrowing of all our interests on earth, and an immense broadening of all our interests in God. Sanctification means intense concentration on God's point of view. It means every power of body, soul and spirit chained and kept for God's

purpose only. Are we prepared for God to do in us all that He separated us for? And then after His work is done in us, are we prepared to separate ourselves to God even as Jesus did? *“For their sakes I sanctify myself”* ([John 17:19](#)). The reason some of us have not entered into the experience of sanctification is that we have not realised the meaning of sanctification from God’s standpoint. Sanctification means being made one with Jesus so that the disposition that ruled Him will rule us. Are we prepared for what that will cost? It will cost everything that is not of God in us.”

Oswald Chambers – *My Utmost for His Highest*

“OK,” you may be saying, “that sounds way too serious. Aren’t you getting a bit intense about this ‘*set apart*’ stuff?”

It is vital for disciples of Jesus to understand the gravity of their commitment. In some parts of the world, this commitment will cost you your life. It may cost you your family, friends, and livelihood. In America today, that is not the norm, but it may become so one day. Don’t lose focus and intensity on your Christian calling because you currently are not the overt target of persecution. Christians are some of the most generous, compassionate, and joyful people on the planet, but those that minister out of love pay a price. If you ask them, to a man they will heartily agree it is worth it, but it is a lifestyle change, an extreme personal makeover.



Did you ever consider that growing up as a Christian would require personal sacrifice? Did you consider that being set apart for God’s use would cause your life to change? What did you expect your life would be like when you became a believer – give a few brief thoughts.

Sanctification – They Way You Behave in Public

1) What you Say:

As a believer transforming into the image of Jesus, you will have to talk; sorry, no monasticism for you. The words you say are now words of a Christian, and as such, carry more weight and meaning. You are speaking with the authority and responsibility of an ambassador. *“We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.”* ([2 Corinthians 5:20 NIV](#))

Set apart for God means your words reflect on Him, so as the ancient Templar Knight said, “Choose wisely.”

2) What You Wear:

This one may strike close to home, like in your closet. As a Christian, your appearance is a reflection of your ambassadorship mentioned previously. We learned about sin in [lesson #2](#), and in that lesson discovered that Adam and Eve were suddenly very aware of their attire (what they were not wearing). The bottom line for you disciple, is that clothing that does not

conceal, reveals. After all, that is the reason revealing clothing exists – to be noticed sexually; I mustn't mince words here.

As a Christian and ambassador for Jesus, attracting someone for sexual reasons is improper. The bible does not say sex is bad, in fact, someday we can discuss the Song of Solomon in a class for marriage preparation or as a marriage enrichment class. It is loaded with material related to intimacy – for those who are married or considering marriage. However, when you go to church, or to gatherings with other believers, or anywhere in public for that matter, you must avoid clothing that says, “Let’s go to bed and have sex.” [Proverbs 6:25](#) and [Matthew 5:28](#) are just two of many verses admonishing against improper sexual practices. Wearing enticing clothing tempts the minds of others (minds tainted by original sin) to think and possibly act improperly. That is something a Christian should do everything possible to avoid.

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. ([Ephesians 5:3 NIV](#))

Now, continuing the same topic with a new twist. Do not dress like [John the Baptist](#) unless God specifically tells you to. Wear clothing that is clean, properly washed, not revealing. Stylish is OK but with modesty guiding the overall look. Also, it is important to bath regularly. Unbelievably, I have seen some spiritual people feel that hygiene is way down the list. Your hair should be clean, your body should not emit nasty B.O., and please brush your teeth regularly. Again remember – you are an ambassador – act as if you care about your Savior and represent Him honorably and with class.



Have you seen examples of clothing, fashion, and even make-up that caused you to think about things sensual – even while in church? It is difficult enough to have the [mind of Christ](#) in the best of circumstances. What can you do personally to help others [keep their mind on things above](#) and not on earthly (carnal) things?

3) Whom You Associate With:

The psalmist says it best – “*Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.*” ([Psalm 1:1 NIV](#)) Those who you associate with as close confidants, as friends, anyone closer than simple business or social acquaintances, must have enough character, honesty, and class not to detract from your mission as a Christian (refer to “What Next” section following below). You will have to deal with all manner of people in this world, great and wonderful people as well as real “pieces of work” like those the psalmist refers to. Yet those who are close to you should be exemplary. Why? I’ll say it again – you are Christ’s ambassador – you must act like it.

4) Who is Watching – Two Audiences:

As you walk through life as a Christian, you will increasingly comprehend two audiences watching you. One should be obvious, and pleasing Him (Jesus) is paramount, surpassing all others. If you make Him happy, everyone else is irrelevant. Jesus Himself said, “. . . *for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.*” ([John 5:30 NIV](#))

The other audience you have consists of everyone around you – believers and unbelievers. The former will watch you and see how you progress, sometime offering “tips” based on their vast experience (some of which may even be helpful). Seriously, they are your brothers and sisters in Christ, so treat them with deference and respect. The latter will know your claim as a Christian, and be observing closely (even if you don’t notice) for inconsistencies. If they find your character jiving with your claim, you won’t ever hear a word, but if they find otherwise, you will know you’ve fallen short of their expectations for you as a Christian.

Sanctification – Your Relationship With Jesus:

Prayer is the way we grow close to and best learn to imitate our Savior. This topic is huge, easily filling the Library of Congress, and is the topic of [lesson #6](#). The very best method of becoming more like Jesus is to spend time with Him. One of my favorite verses in all of scripture tells how we can be the best ambassador, the best disciple, the best whatever Jesus needs us to be. We simply need to see Him – spiritually, realistically, and relationally.

“But friends, that's exactly who we are: children of God. And that's only the beginning. Who knows how we'll end up! What we know is that when Christ is openly revealed, we'll see him - and in seeing him, become like him.” ([1 John 3:2 The Message](#))

Learning to pray is like an infant learning to talk. We stumble, we struggle, we say it wrong, and often we don’t know how to say it at all. The best way is to simply talk, conversationally. It is one-sided when compared to our normal person-to-person dialogue, but you will begin to hear responses, answers, and questions generated by your “discussion” with Jesus. As the writer says above, keep it up, and you will become more like the Savior you are seeking to know each day.

Sanctification - What Next?

As you grow in Christ, you will have the opportunity to share with and teach others younger than you in the faith. This is a sacred calling. My favorite disciple teacher Oswald Chambers has the best way to express your new mission.

“Our work as His disciples is to disciple lives until they are wholly yielded to God. One life wholly devoted to God is of more value to God than one hundred lives simply awakened by His Spirit. As workers for God we must reproduce our own kind spiritually.” **Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest***

Signs You Are Well On Your Way:

As you grow in Jesus, you will begin to recognize traits, habits, and patterns in others that are sure signs of growth, clear indicators of spiritual maturity, and a life reflecting Jesus’ character. Here are some scripture passages you should consider as coming from those who are spiritually mature:

[Mark 9:24](#) *Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"*

[2 Corinthians 12:5](#) *I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses.*

[2 Corinthians 12:9](#) *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*

[Luke 18:13](#) *"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'"*

[Philippians 1:21](#) *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*

[Job 13:15](#) *Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him.*

See you in [Lesson #6!](#)

[Note – This lesson can be downloaded in PDF format for printing or sharing]