

Some conclusions, expanded; an expansion of the conclusions I have arrived at in my past year of Discipleship and in study with Steve Wolfe.

1. **My loyalty must first be to God.**

How else can it be said? God is a jealous God and will accept no less from His children. If there is something else I hold higher, then I cannot say truly I worship Him as Jesus my Lord above all other things. Considering His commands to the Apostles to “Follow Me.”, it seem clear He left them with little other choice. Notice He didn’t say “Hey, if you would like, come on along.”, or, “This is everything I have planned for you and the rest of the world; maybe you would care to join me?”

Jesus made it clear in that no kingdom divided can stand, and no one can serve two Lords. You’ve got to make your choice, pick sides, make a commitment. Otherwise, He will spit you out as lukewarm. Throughout the day, I must pass through a hundred forks in the road where I must make a choice between the Way and my way. Sometimes it is a plain choice concerning God v/s myself; more often, it is between myself and a God-directed, Bible-based principle. Any other choice but to follow God is no less than rebellion and a selfish rejection of Him.

Many situations arise in everyday life qualifying under this principle. Actually, this is probably one of the first requirements of Christianity and being a child of God. Situations arise throughout the day which call for a clarity of allegiance and a choice of priority. Any time something stands questioning my choice of obedience, especially when it is something “small”, watch out! It is more likely to be a “big” thing the Evil One has laid in my path to cause me to choose against God, even if it is only a minor infraction. Then before I know it, each grain of bad reasoning has grown into a wall of inequity destroying my walk with a God, who refuses to force me to choose.

The first step, as well as the ever ongoing task in the Christian life, is to strive to be ever faithful to God, just as Jesus did in full obedience as both our Savior and our example to follow. Never allowing myself to waiver is my goal, and if I am true to God in this way, all other priorities in life will fall into proper perspective.

2. **I must seek and learn the most effective ways of communicating my convictions of God’s Truth and how to apply it for my listener’s benefit.**

This is not necessarily the same as lovingly presenting a ‘fact’ of faith which may be distasteful to someone. Nevertheless, this is a tough one for me. However, the Apostle Paul had quite a bit to say about it. My experience as a Christian looking out to others, as well as looking in to myself as others might see me, tells me that the prideful ego is perhaps the one most leading hindrance to change in attitude. The prideful ego comes in many forms too, and may be hard to recognize as at the root of the problem. I know this due to my own heavy contribution to my knowledge of the subject.

Paul wrote of visiting people of differing cultures and customs as he took the Gospel to the Gentiles. Interestingly to me, he must have found himself in quite a number of strange cultural situations, especially to a strict Jew. And the people he spoke with were from life’s whole spectrum. Yet, he says he would find common ground with these people and convey the News in a way they could respond to, relate to. As Linda has pointed out, what good is the Message if the other party can’t (or won’t) receive it?

3. **The revealed Truth isn’t always intended to be presented in it’s ‘raw’ form.**

One of my last in-depth interactions with God brought me a lesson in this and the preceding principle. An inspired writing produced a pointed letter to a fellow believer who has seemingly gone a bit astray. While the points of fact were probably on target, the letter also was a stinging indictment. Sometimes I’m not sure if it was really right or wrong to present it in such a fashion, but I am sure it did not

produce the results I would have hoped for. However, I am not sure what God intended for her to do either. I am sure, however, that I came away with a valuable (though perhaps not conclusive) lesson on relating insights I believe came from God. I am also sure that I am not sure at all! I guess the thing to focus on is the end result; perhaps sometimes a direct approach is the best, yet other times more tact is required. In this case the Lord had a number of lessons bundled together for me: Convey the whole Truth courageously; know that the way in which the Truth is revealed may not be the way it is most effectively presented; be courteous of other's feelings, and do so in Christian love; keep the end result in mind, but remember that often, the end result is the Lord's to worry about, not yours.

4. **Always avoid the Sin of Omission**

My First Year seemed to be consistent in this: I am to finish my current assignment before moving on to the next. This is also a basic lesson of obedience too, isn't it? In procrastinating on God's direction, I stand in opposition to His Will; this means I am not doing as He Wills; this means I am not in obedience as I should be in following Christ's example, as His servant. What a terrible thing to do! What an indictment of my doubt in Him! It sometimes brings tears to my eyes as I consider my willful neglect of a faithful response in service to Him who would never do the same to me.

If I am to ever surrender to the Will of the Holy Spirit and do God's bidding, I know I must come to respond to His call without any regard for myself. I have a similar difficulty in our marriage, one of selfish response, lacking of a giving service to my spouse. In both relationships, how might I expect either to work well if I do not show faithful service on my own part? Granted, God is much more forgiving than any person might be, but the mechanics are similar in that we all have our responsibilities in our relationships.

A willful neglect of God's call is a grievous thing indeed; let me live the words of my Savior: "Not my will Father, but Your own be done."

My omission turned out to be a milestone in my First Year, in fact it marked the end of it. Still today I wonder if it caused the end of my first close walk with Jesus, or if it just coincided with it. It sure seems to be the first and not the latter at times. Whatever the case, it is certainly a Sin to not answer the call of the Holy Master. If not to follow His sure direction, then what is the discipleship about?

5. **If someone exercises their faith in a different way, it's not my place to be concerned – it's between them and God**