



***St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church***  
***Heliopolis, Cairo - Egypt***

# ***Follow Me***

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# Introduction

“Follow Me” is a call for all Christians to follow Christ in His purpose, love, actions and humility. Most Christians fail to follow Him as they rather do not focus on following Him. Everyone follows something: friends, family, popular culture, selfish desires, or God. We can only follow one thing at a time “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Mat 6: 24). Most assuredly, those who do not follow Christ will eventually follow other gods, their desires, media, models, money makers or become people pleasers. Following others will end up in a fake, void and tasteless life, which is sorrowfully, the life of most people living on earth. However, God states we are to have no other gods before Him “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exo 20: 3).

*To truly follow Christ means...*

*We do not follow anything else.*

Following Christ is the theme of being a real Christian, and being a true Christian means you are living for a mission for the salvation of everyone.

Thank God, this series of “9F” of “Follow Me” was given as lectures for the servants in St. Mark Church

Heliopolis, who are busy to guide people to the goal of their existence.

I am deeply thankful to my dear daughter *Dr. Shereen Seif* for her beautiful and sincere effort to produce this book and arrange the contents in an interesting way and for her significant contribution.

We gratefully acknowledge and express deep appreciation to all members of St. Paul Service and all the Coptic Orthodox servants and evangelists who are really following Him.

*Please pray for my humble self and all servants.*

***Fr. Daoud Lamei***

# Forward

*"Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me" (Mar 10 : 21)*

The word "**Follow**" is nowadays a common word, widely used among the users of the social media; when you open your profile you will see how many followers you have, and how many you are following? People you are following sometimes give an indication about your interests, thoughts, directions and way of thinking.

How about Our Lord Jesus Christ??!! Would you follow Him if He ever had an account on the social media?

Our Lord Jesus Christ said it: "Follow Me", He said it explicitly many times during His life on earth. And He is still till the moment calling us ALL, to follow Him.

***"Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men."** (Mark 1:17).*

He promised to show His Disciples how to fish for people! He had a vision for them – a mission that would

change their identity—no longer “fishermen” but **“fishers-of-men.”** This was a call to change.

***“They immediately left their nets and followed Him.” (Mark 1:18).*** Jesus’ call demanded priority even over the disciples’ own lives. This call would restructure their economic lives.

While crowds flocked to Lord Jesus to receive healing, such people were not His disciples. Demons fell powerless at His feet, but they certainly weren’t His followers. To follow Jesus means something deeper, it means giving up everything to do the will of God.

***“For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.” (Mark 3:35)***

***“So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”(Luke 14:33).***

Following the true Lord means surrendering our dreams, our jobs, our identities and finances to Him; and choosing His plans for us.

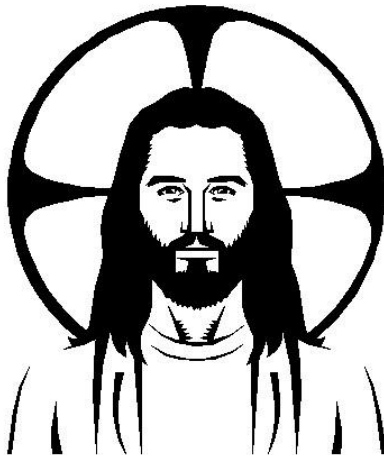
That’s not something you can do by simply pushing a button on your social media.

This book is a journey, where we will learn how to Follow Jesus Christ, by following His steps to learn from Him how to:

**Forget ourselves; Focus on the Mission; Find the Will of God; Favor Laboring; Fill your Heart; Farm the Land; Fish Fishermen; Fasten your Belt and Fight Back.**

Following Christ is the main target in our spiritual life; if any of us is asked what your main goal in life is. The answer should be: “I am here to imitate Christ and follow Him”. This should be our purpose.

Despite of the many obstacles that obstruct the way to fulfilling this purpose, we should be always ready to fight back in order to follow Him along the “straight way”.



# Steps of “Follow Me”

- 1) Forget yourself
- 2) Focus on the Mission
- 3) Find the Will of God
- 4) Favor Labor
- 5) Fill your Heart
- 6) Farm the Land
- 7) Fish Fishermen
- 8) Fasten your Belt
- 9) Fight Back





# Chapter 1

## Forget Yourself

In order to follow Christ we should forget and deny ourselves. It is written:

*“Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Mat 16 : 24)*

*When He had called the people to [Himself], with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me (Mar 8 : 34)*

*Then He said to [them] all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me (Luk 9 : 23)*

In all the above verses our Lord has put denying oneself as a necessary condition before carrying the Cross.

What we call “self-denial” or “forgetting one’s own self”, is that you totally deny and forget yourself. You might remember others but forget yourself.

The main obstacle which hinders people in general and ministers in specific is one's own **self**. This might be called Self Centricism, Ego, Pride or whatever name, this is the main thing which hinders following Christ.

You can clearly see it in the lives of many people around you, but the most important thing is to see it in your life, and to be aware how this problem stands in the way of your spiritual growth.

## Self-Centricism Challenges

What could be the problems of focusing all the time on oneself?

The below classification is not a scientific way, it is only a humble vision for the possible challenges and outcomes that could generate from self-centricism:

### **Neurotic Group**

**Worry, Anxiety**

**Tension**

**Fears, Phobia**

Being self-centered, you will have at least one symptom of the above group; if you are very much focused on yourself, you might suffer anxiety or disturbed sleep, tension, fear or phobia and you might even fall into depression.

However this does not necessarily mean that all the anxious or depressed people are self-centered, yet those symptoms are a definite indicator for being self-centered.

### **Aggression Group**

**Anger**

**Jealousy**

**Judging others**

Anger and aggression, jealousy from successful people, judgmental attitude and evaluating people come as a result of self-centrism.

### **Pride Group**

**Boasting**

**Daydreaming**

**Arrogance**

When you like to boast, when you talk about yourself a lot, when you are happy being the first, thrilled with people looking at you, achieving many things and even day dreaming about that, being arrogant and proud of yourself all the time; all these are consequences of self-centrism.

### **Group of Low Self Esteem**

**Comparison**

**Isolation**

**Depression**

Self-centrism does not only imply being full of pride at who you are; but also about being full of sorrow at who you are not. Low self-esteem is the flip side of the same coin of self-centrism: on one side is pride and on the other is low self-esteem. Eventually, it is all about self-centrism. This may cause you to spend most of the time, comparing yourself with others, unable to mingle with others and isolated, or depressed because you feel inferior all the time.

To follow Christ you have to forget yourself completely. We cannot follow Christ the way we should, because our ego is filling our minds most of the time. It is like you are driving a car while holding the brake, eventually the car will never run.

*But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God (Act 20 : 24)*

How does the Ego generate?!

**Upbringing**  
**Way of Thinking**  
**Environment**

We all have this Ego. It is a normal thing in our nature as humans. We are born with it and that is why the Bible says:

***“And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength’ This [is] the first commandment -And the second, like [it, is] this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mar 12: 30- 31)***

It is one of the Commandments in the Bible to love your neighbor as yourself. This means that it is indeed normal to love yourself. As a matter of fact, it is not normal for a human being not to love himself or to keep torturing himself all the time. Even the voice of the Holy Spirit within us never tortures us; it gently rebukes us for our sins to drive us to repentance.

However, our Christian upbringing helps us in getting out of this dilemma of self-centrism through continuously teaching us the great value of loving others. We learn that when the person loves himself and others, his self diminishes, till he reaches the real love of Christ and then his self disappears. This is the ideal situation.

However there are some defects because of the upbringing which might cause self-centrism to increase; if a child is spoilt s/he will be more self-centered, his own self will be his God. If a child is continuously rebuked from his family, s/he will turn out to be more self-centered, s/he will be over cautious about himself. Both extremes are not healthy

and both lead to self-centrism. While a healthy Christian upbringing helps the child develop into a healthy person with no hazard of this disease: self-centrism.

When you live with a family always thinking all the time that people are against them, or that they are the best, or imagining that they are always attacked by others ...etc., all this will eventually lead to self-centrism

Some of the environmental circumstances might lead to self-centrism, and might nurture your fear about yourself or your anxiety because of yourself, or your love to yourself.

**The Ego Increases in the absence of:**

**Security and Belonging**

**Love and Sharing**

**Appreciation and Encouragement**

**Achievement and Excellence**

People who live insecurely have no choice but to think about themselves, they care about their ‘selves’ more than the normal; the feeling of security helps the person to get out of himself.

Self-centrism increases in the absence of love and sharing which is a kind of getting out of oneself. That’s why children who have brothers and sisters learn the concept of love and sharing, while the ‘only’ child is more prone to be self-centered.

Moreover, many ministers cannot work in teams, while the good spiritual ministers, who do not have challenges of self-centrism, are always willing to work in teams.

Lack of appreciation and encouragement makes the one feel inferior; it makes the person encapsulated in his own self more and more.

Lack of achievement and excellence makes the person feel inferior. S/he will feel bad, and eventually will focus on himself more; his inner voice would be: “because I am not excellent in anything, I am not unique; I am just a one among thousands, a mere figure.”

# Why does the way start with Self-Denial?

Follow Me ..... Forget yourself  
If you do not forget yourself:

## **You will not Love God**

The meaning of love is that the focus of interest is outside you not inside you, to love means to get out of yourself. So if you are self-centered you cannot love God or follow Him

## **You will not love People**

I cannot care much about others and focus on their interest and salvation, because I am busy with myself

## **You will not accept the Cross**

No one who loves himself loves the Cross, because the Cross implies suffering and tough life; the Cross means pain, fasting, praying and watchfulness ...etc. So before carrying the Cross you should forget your life, forget that you are even there, and forget all about your interests.



## **You will not see Heaven**

If you focus on yourself you will focus on this life, while if you deny yourself you will easily focus on Eternal Life.

*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death (Rev 12 : 11)*

*By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as [in] a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise ; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker [is] God”.(Heb 11: 9-10)*

## Examine yourself regarding your Self Centrism??

Here are some indicators to examine yourself regarding self-centrism.

### **How much do you get happy when praised ...**

We all get happy when praised, this is normal; but how much do you get happy when praised? Are you waiting for it? Are you living for it? Those who live in self-denial, when praised, always think that this is a gift of God.

### **How much do you get annoyed when criticized?**

Those who are self-centered consider criticism a hurt for their ego. Those who live in self-denial, when criticized, think about ways to be better.

### **How much are you obedient ...**

Can you easily say Ok, even while not doing what you want? Some people make it in a reverse way, they convince others with what they want and then say Ok as you like. And of course this is not obedience. Self-denial is related to obedience and submission.

## **How many trials can you endure?**

The person who has the gift of self-denial is happy with everything: problems, trials, tough life, easy life, because, like St. Paul says, his life is not dear to him;

*“But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (Act 20 : 24).*

On the contrary, if someone has his own self dear to him, s/he will get easily annoyed and disturbed even with God.

The person who lives in self-denial has his slogan:

*“For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's” (Rom 14 : 8)*

## **How much do you think of yourself ... and how much to you think of the others around you?**

A mind indicator is how much do you think of yourself, and how much do you think of others. Our Lord Jesus Christ gave us an example when He said:

*“Foxes have holes and birds of the air [have] nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay [His] head” (Mat 8 : 20).*

He never thought what to eat or where to sleep; His mind was always preoccupied with the people and their salvation.

## **When the self deceives itself assuming self-denial**

Someone can deceive himself that he lives in self-denial by:

### **Serving hard -but with jealousy and furiousness – only to be flattered by others**

If you told this person we need you in another ministry, leave this one, he rejects and gets furious about it. He wants everything the way s/he likes even the ministry. Sometimes perfectionism is a form of self-centrism.

### **Letting go – but with a rigid unforgiving heart**

Sometimes one pretends/acts/behaves as if s/he has forgiveness, while s/he is full of hatred from inside.

### **Bearing insult – with the intention of showing off your virtue**

This person seeks praise; s/he accepts the insult only to be praised that s/he is persecuted for the sake of God.

### **Disobedience**

Refusing to take a responsibility claiming that s/he is undeserving

Deep inside this person feels s/he is the only one capable of doing the job, s/he enjoys hearing more words of praise from people that s/he's the only one capable of doing that. And we can easily figure that out, if we just agreed with him that he is undeserving, we will immediately see another face. True self-denial is not easy; it can have many fake forms.

### **Refusing God's forgiveness claiming that sin is terrible**

This is typical self-centrism; someone is focusing on himself to the extent that he does not forgive himself.

### **Self-Absorption**

It is when we see life only in relationship with our perceived "Me."

If "I" have a problem, nothing going on outside will matter unless that which "I" see outside "myself," helps "me."

Someone in that state of being cannot appreciate anything. That self-absorption does not allow life to continue on, but it stops at the wall of the “Me.” For most people, that is a very strong wall. **“I am hurt, thus the world does not matter.”** That is extreme self-absorption.

We could see it every day in people's faces. All hooked up to their devices, smart phones, tablets, etc. to be in another reality until “life is over.”

When someone is self-absorbed, to “do” and to “have” are important as long as they enhance the sense of “me.”

My family is important as an extension of me.

My possessions are important as a perceived status of me.

My body is important as an image of me.

God is important, as long as He helps me.

Service is important to feel good about me.

My thoughts about “me” will not allow “me” to appreciate “Me.”

That “Me” is truly your worst nightmare. Wake up to save yourself.

## **Satan's Garage Sale**

*Once upon a time, Satan was having a garage sale. There, standing in little groups were all of his bright, shiny jewels. Here were tools that make it easy to tear others down for use as stepping stones. And over there were some lenses for magnifying one's own importance, which, if you looked through them the other way, you could also use to belittle others, or even one's self. Against the wall was the usual collection of gardening implements guaranteed to help your pride grow by leaps and bounds: the rake of scorn, the shovel of jealousy for digging a pit for your neighbor, the tools of gossip and backbiting, of selfishness and apathy. All of these were pleasing to the eye and came complete with fabulous promises and guarantees of prosperity. Prices, of course, were steep; but not to worry! Free credit was extended to one and all. "Take it home, use it, and you won't have to pay until later!" old Satan cried, as he hawked his wares.*

*The visitor, as he browsed, noticed two well worn, non-descript tools standing in one corner. Not being nearly as tempting as the other items, he found it curious that these two tools had price tags higher than any other. When he asked why, Satan just laughed and said, "Well, that's because I use them so much. If they weren't so plain looking, people might see them for what they were." Satan pointed to the two tools, saying, "You see, that one's Doubt and that*

*one's Discouragement — and those will work when nothing else will."*

## **The Way to Self-Denial**

We all have some forms of self-centrism, but how can we treat it?

### **Obedience**

The very first thing to do is to train yourself to obey; your ego must not be too dear to you to the extent that makes you incapable of obedience.

*"Obedience is the grave of the will and the resurrection of humbleness. For the dead does not object or argue neither in good nor in evil, because The One whom you have submitted your soul to, in the love of God, will answer everything concerning your soul.. "* (St. John Climacus - *John of the Ladder*)

### **Exodus**

Get out of yourself; stop thinking of yourself and of your comfort. Exodus is a dynamic fight against being shelled in your ego.

**No "ME/IT" ... I need – I hate – I love – I'm tired**



Forget yourself, your own property, your own comfort. Do not think of what you want, or what you love.

### **The Bible – Meditation**

Any problem in our life has its solution in the Bible and in prayer.

***"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you" (Joh 15 : 3).***

The word of God liberates you from self-centrism, when you fill yourself with Bible and meditate in it you will become more pure day after day. Then your slogan will be:

***"He must increase, but I [must] decrease" (Joh 3 : 30)***

### **The Work of Grace**

**No one can deny himself completely without being covered by the Grace of God.** Self-denial is a gift from God, which comes when we sincerely ask for it. We just have to do our part and leave the rest for Christ.

***"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phi 4 : 19)***

# Prayer

Dear Lord,

I have figured out that, I am focusing most of the time on myself; it is a real problem I suffer from; that's why I can't enjoy your blessings or even notice Your presence around.

Please help me to forget myself, to deny my desires and wishes, in order to be able to focus on You ... and You Only.

Give me the Grace to see You all the time working on my weak self and working on others, touching everything with Your Holy Hands to make all the world blessed and sanctified.

Dear Lord, I need You to liberate me from the slavery of the Ego, to get me out of this prison named "ME", so that You may make better use of me, for the salvation of Your people.

Please accept my prayers, with the intercession of St. Mary who was always able to deny herself, and see no one but You.

*Amen*





# Chapter 2

## Focus on the Mission

Do you know the number one thing that stops people from getting what they want?

**It's lack of focus!!**

People, who focus on what they want, realize their goals.

As one matures and gets older, s/he will discover that the two most important things which have real value in Life are **Prayer and Service**;

*“And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”  
(Mar 12: 30- 31)*

It would be indeed wise to realize this fact as early as possible, instead of regretting your whole life saying I wish I could have spent more time in prayers and service, because this is everything that counts. This should be our life mission.

We have been born and are here in this world for a mission. The more we focus on this mission, the greater our success will be. The more diligent a person is in his mission, the greater the reward will be. However, being too preoccupied with earthly matters leads to sin and stands as an obstacle in the way of our mission, in the way God wants to lead us to, and in the way of our salvation.

## **The Christian has a Mission**

### **Without A Mission ... You are No Longer A Christian**

Each Christian should have a mission;

*“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.” (Mat 5: 13- 14)*

*“For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing” (2Co 2 : 15)*

Salt, light and fragrance are things which are used by others. The one who benefits from the existence of these materials is “the other/the receiver” of these gifts. Likewise,

as Christians, our lives should be devoted for the sake and benefit of others. Our lives should be devoted for the sake of our mission. If we lose our mission, we lose our Christian Identity – we lose our value. That is what Christ asserted when He said: ***“but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men”***. If the salt loses its nature, it loses its mission. Likewise, if you lose your Christian identity, you lose your mission; and if you don’t have a mission, then you are Christian by name only.

**Whenever the mission doesn’t have the first priority in your mind ... You lose yourself and your identity**

Whenever money comes before service, my rest takes place before the rest of others, my desires come before the salvation of my soul, at these moments I am not to be considered a Christian. Our day is a set of hours, and every hour is a set of moments. During those moments and hours you should be focused on prayers and service – on your own salvation and on the salvation of others. You are supposed to give the latter priority over all other interests. This is the ideal situation that you give your time from a pure heart. However, this is not always the way things are; most of the time you focus on your opinion, your personality, your rest and your interests. All these come first before your mission in life and what God wants from your life. It is then that you are off

track, and you are not living as salt of the earth or light of the world.

## **The Five Principles**

### **1) Not of the world ... Different**

Our Lord Jesus Christ has repeated it twice in His prayer that we are not of the world.

*“If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (Joh 15 : 19)*

*“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world” (Joh 17 : 14)*

The first principle in my being a servant/minister or rather a Christian is that: I am not of this world, I am different, and I cannot be just like others because I am unique.

### **2) The World has hated them ... Rejected**

Since we are not of the world, therefore the world hates us, and therefore we are rejected. Sometimes walking with integrity does not please people.



***“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before [it hated] you.***

***If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (Joh 15 : 18-19)***

### **3) I do not pray that You should take them out of the world ... Existing**

***“I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one (Joh 17 : 15)***

We cannot take a side and exclude ourselves from this world because we are different or because we are rejected. This is not acceptable, because our Lord Jesus Christ wants us to exist in the world. We, as Christians, are called the salt of the earth because our lives enhance and give meaning to this existence we call life. Our Lord Jesus Christ compared us to salt for a reason. Salt is a dietary mineral, used for flavoring and preservation - needed by all known living creatures. If abused, it can be harmful. However, it is also harmful to have no salt intake because it regulates the water content in our bodies.

Our Lord used salt to describe how Christians are needed to bring balance and hope to an otherwise dying world.

#### 4) But that You should keep them from the evil one ... Kept

*“I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one (Joh 17 : 15)*

*“Who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1Pe 1 : 5)*

Sometimes we might get disturbed being different and rejected, however remembering that we are being kept by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ from the evil one, gives us great faith and hope.

#### 5) As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world ... Have A Mission

*As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world (Joh 17 : 18)*

Being different, I have a mission;

Although rejected, I have a mission;

Existing, because I have a mission;

And kept by the Power and Grace of God, because I have a mission.

Eventually, being different, rejected, existing, and kept from evil, work together for the purpose of the life

mission. Your basic essential criteria for your life mission are those four principles: different, rejected, existing and kept from evil. While if you don't have a life mission, all these criteria become meaningless; it is not worth it to be different, just do like people do, then you will not be rejected, you will meaninglessly exist, but you will also lose the power, grace and protection of God.

## **What is My Mission?**

***“As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world” (Joh 17: 18)***

My mission is simply the mission of Christ. I exist to be Christ-like, to follow Him, to walk with Him, grow with Him and serve with Him. Christ's mission is the salvation of people, Eternal Life, abundant and better life for all, love and good for the entire world.

When Christ expressed His mission He said:

***“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (Joh 10: 10)***

Christ's mission is to give life. Most of the world around is dying. He who is living in his money and possessions is dying, and he who is living in ignorance and

poverty and does not have Christ is dying also. **So our mission as Christians is to give life to this dying world.**

*“He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” (1 Joh 3:8)*

The Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Likewise our mission is to destroy sin, atheism, paganism, corruption and evil. We exist for the purpose of continuing the work of Christ and destroying the works of the devil. It is an ongoing battle to challenge the darkness in this world with the light of Christ.

*“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.”(Acts 10: 38)*

Our Lord was going about doing good. Similarly our mission could simply be **“doing good”**. Doing good, not necessarily through money, but through hard work, nice words, or positive attitude.

## **Christ:**

We can conclude Christ's life mission in three words: **Shepherd, Teacher and Savior**. And this summarizes the idea of the mission.

### ➤ *The Shepherd*

*“So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, [son] of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You" He said to him, "Feed My lambs" ”(Joh 21: 15)*

When Jesus asked Simon Peter, do you love me, He told him "Feed My lambs", which means be like Me – be a good shepherd, as if He was telling him: live like Me, this is My Mission Peter; I came to feed my lambs, shepherd them, search for the lost sheep and endure everything with love.

*“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep” (Joh 10 : 11)*

Similarly, every servant should be a good shepherd, giving his life for his sheep, and the sheep should hear his voice; and he should call his own sheep by name and should lead them out. **It is your mission to be a Shepherd.**

## ➤ *The Teacher*

*The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, (Act 1 : 1)*

Our Lord Jesus Christ was called: “Teacher”. But He never taught something He was not practicing/doing. Likewise, you are a teacher too; not necessarily a preaching teacher. However, you can and should be a teacher through your life, deeds, attitude and guidance. It is your mission to be a Teacher.

## ➤ *The Saviour*

*“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (Joh 3 : 16)*

“**Savior**” means ready to give his life for the sake of others – ready to put the service of others first, the desires and needs of others before his needs, rest and even before his own life.

*For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it (Mar 8 : 35)*

It is your mission to be a savior.

## **Reasons of Losing Focus on the Mission:**

Losing focus has many indications; when you start to lose your commitment to the service time, or if you are careless in your preparation, or if you don't ask about your served ones, or when you give priority to unimportant things, all these are indications for losing focus; but what are the causes of losing focus?

### **1- Being always too busy**

The root cause of losing focus could simply be, focusing on something else which may lead to continuous distraction.

Sometimes the words and commandments of God are not within our scope of interest. We don't have enough depth. We are not connected enough with the Bible. We don't live the words of God. This leads to being disconnected with God. Hence losing focus on the mission, not knowing that this is all what my life is about. Thus, we lose focus because of distractions and because of being always too busy, although we love God and enjoy the service.

*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life (Joh 5 : 24)*

## 2- Other Objectives (Ambitions)

Sometimes our minds go astray and focus too much on our problems, on politics, on business, and on our living, and we forget what Jesus said:

***“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Mat 6 : 33)***

## The Power of Focus

*Long ago in India, there lived a martial arts teacher named Drona. He ran an academy in the middle of the forest where he taught the art of archery. Students traveled for miles and miles to learn from him. A boy named Arjuna wanted to be the best archer in the world. So he decided to study at Drona's academy. He lived in the cottages for students.*

*Drona showed his students how to hold a bow and arrow. He told them to focus, "Look at where you want your arrow to go. Nowhere else." He told them to concentrate, "Think only of what you want your arrow to do. Nothing else."*

*Arjuna listened intently. He practiced and practiced and practiced. One night while Arjuna was eating his dinner, a gust of wind blew out the oil lamp. Arjuna continued eating.*



*"I can eat in the dark because I know where my mouth is," he said to himself, "I don't need to look at anything else."*

*He decided to practice archery in the dark. He relighted the lamp and used it as a target. He thought, "I know where my target is and I don't need to look at anything else."*

*He picked up his bow and arrows and began shooting. TWANG! TWANG! The sound of bow strings filled the air. When Drona heard the sound, he came out of his cottage. The sight of Arjuna practicing archery delighted him. He blessed Arjuna, saying "May your arrows never miss their targets."*

*Soon other students grew envious of all the attention Arjuna was getting. "Why do you think Arjuna is the best among us all?" they asked the teacher. That evening Drona made an announcement.*

*"Tomorrow, there will be an archery competition to find out the best archer," Drona said. "When the sun climbs over the horizon, be ready with your bows and arrows."*

*The students polished their bows. They sharpened their arrows. Next morning they gathered in the yard. Glossy bows and pointed arrows gleamed in the sun. The wind was still but the students' hearts fluttered with excitement. Drona stepped out. In his hands was a bird made of clay. He laid it on a tree far from them.*

*"See that clay bird perched on the tree ahead of us? Aim at its eye," he said. Then he called the first student. The student plucked an arrow from the quiver, placed it on the bow, and pulled the string. "What do you see ahead of you?" Drona asked. "I see the sun, the clouds, the trees," the student replied as he released the string. The arrow shot forward and landed yards away from the tree.*

*The second student took his position. He plucked an arrow from his quiver, placed it on the bow, and pulled the string. "What do you see ahead of you?" Drona asked. "I see the tree, the branches, the leaves," the student replied as he released the string. The arrow shot forward and landed near the roots of the tree.*

*The next student came forward, plucked an arrow from his quiver, placed it on the bow, and pulled the string. "What do you see ahead of you?" Drona asked. "I see the bird, its legs, its wings," the student replied as he let the string go. The arrow shot forward and grazed the wings of the bird.*

*Finally it was Arjuna's turn. He plucked an arrow from his quiver, placed it on the bow, and pulled the string. "What do you see ahead of you?" Drona asked. "I see the eye of the bird," Arjuna replied. "What else do you see, Arjuna?" Drona asked. "Nothing. I see only the round black eye of the bird," Arjuna replied as he released the string. The arrow*

*shot forward with a swoosh. It pierced the center of the eye of the clay bird.*

Likewise, we should only focus on the Kingdom of God and the salvation of souls, and see nothing else. That was the main focus in St. Paul's life: to finish his race with joy.

***But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God (Act 20 : 24)***

***But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Mat 6:33)***

### **3- I do just like Others Do**

Sometimes instead on focusing on the mission, we imitate others involuntarily. We celebrate like the worldly people do. We consume while we are not in need. And if you ask yourself why you are doing this or that, you will rarely find a logical convincing answer. When we walk according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world we fall in the sin of lack of wisdom which is against the mission and is not in accordance to Christ's will. When we imitate the world, Christ becomes no more our role model.

*Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. (Col 2: 8)*

## 4- The Glitter of Honour ... Who is The Greatest?

*“Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave.” (Mat 20: 26-27)*

Examine your motives, why are you serving? To save people, or to become distinguished among people? To satisfy the needs of others, or to satisfy your ego?

Remember: whoever desires to be great, let him be your servant.

## How to Focus on the Mission?

### **Ask Yourself Daily**

- Why do I exist in this world?
- Why am I a Christian?
- Lord! What do you want me to do?

- Lord! Are my thoughts from You or from myself?
- How will I stand before Christ on Judgment day?

*Review your Priorities in reference to the goal ...*

*Sharpen the Saw*

- Clear Objective
- Time Management
- Regular Evaluation

St. Arsanius used to constantly remind himself, saying: "**Arsany ... Arsany remember what you went out for**"; so as not to lose the way, and not to deviate from the right path.

**Let all that you do be done with love (1 Cor 16: 14)**

- Prayer
- Service
- Evangelism

**To focus on the Mission you Must Have:**

- An open mind
- Attentive ear
- Pure heart
- Busy hands
- Ready feet

## **GLOBAL and PLEASE Framework:**

### **GLOBAL**

**G** :Go

**L** : Listen and learn the culture of who you serve

**O**: Observe meanings, actions, presentations, world views etc.

**B**: *Be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; (1Pe 3 : 15)*

**A**: Awareness of other cultural/spiritual emphases

**L**: Love, based on knowledge and understanding and involvement in other situations following the pattern of Christ's ministry.

### **PLEASE**

**P**: Presence - living, being present among who you serve

**L**: Listen and learn in order to understand (involving questions and sharing ideas)

**E:** Explain your own understanding and spiritual experiences

**A:** Awareness of different cultural and spiritual attitudes and understanding

**S:** Service, anywhere and everywhere

**E:** Expressing the message of the Gospel in relevant terms at the right time/place

## **Discover something meaningful to live for.**

### **Ask yourself:**

- What am I doing with my life?
- What is my life all about?
- What legacy will I leave behind when my time is over?

*We are not here just to make a living;*

*We are here to make A DIFFERENCE.*

# Prayer

My Lord Jesus Christ,

You came to earth because You loved us, You had a mission, a great mission indeed, to save all humanity.

You focused; You lived your entire life for our own sake, to teach us, to bless us, to redeem us and to pay our debts.

Help me dear Lord to focus on my mission, the mission You have created me for, the mission I am called for along the journey of my life.

You have generously given me all what I need for my mission.

Help me to see Your people with Your eyes, help me to think about all people with Your mindset.

Enlighten my heart to focus on the goal of saving all people, wherever they live, whether they do good or bad, no matter they accept me or reject me.

I need Your grace to blot out all my lusts, iniquities, and my worldly desires, to be able to clearly see the mission I am assigned for.



Give me Your humility and wisdom to preach Your Name, to deserve to be Your ambassador, to be able to show Your love to those who live in the darkness and in the wilderness of hatred.

Give me the heart of St. Paul to go everywhere, to speak every word, and do every deed, just for the sake of Your Kingdom.

Amen





# Chapter 3

## Find the Will of God

Finding the will of God is an important element in following Christ. In our service we face many situations where we find ourselves in deep need to know the will of God: upon making an important decision, upon having many alternatives and do not know what to choose, when we want to make sure that this service is our call, upon changing plans, when we are stuck with closed doors, or even when we find new open doors. We need to constantly make sure that every step we take is in accordance to the will of God.

**The shortest answer for the commonest question is one word.**

*Question:* What is the will of God in my life??

*Answer:* My Sanctification, i.e. to be a saint.

God wants us all to be His saints.

***“For this is the will of God, your sanctification”  
(1Th 4 : 3)***

Also God desires that all nations would know Him,

***“Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1Ti 2 : 4)***

God's will is to give life to people, in Him;

*"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have [it] more abundantly" (Joh 10 : 10).*

There is no life without Christ.

**Our Lord teaches us that sometimes our will stands against His will:**

*"Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luk 22 : 42)*

We need to be careful and always pray for His will to be done, not our will.

## **How then are we to find the will of God?!!**

### **1- Seeking the Kingdom of God**

In order to find the will of God we need to put His Kingdom as the ultimate goal, which should be clear all the time. We should never lose focus on this goal.

*"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Mat 6 : 33)*

Furthermore, if we do not seek the Kingdom of God, we will never seek His will. If we do not have the Kingdom of Heaven as a clear goal, we will never feel the necessity of finding the will of God. If you are not focusing on your salvation, you can never focus on the salvation of others.

We always pray: **“Your kingdom come.” “Your will be done”**. So He said to them,

*“When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven (Luk 11 : 2).*

His will is the salvation of all.

*“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Mat 7 : 7)*

This promise is not absolute if you are asking for worldly matters you might not necessarily be given what you ask for. However this promise is absolute if you are asking, seeking or knocking for the Kingdom of Heaven.

## 2- Lord, what do You want me to do?

This prayer can change many things, if you just pray for a moment asking God’s guidance before any matter, you will see things differently.

We need to exercise all the time on this prayer:

***“Show me Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths” (Psa 25 : 4)***

***“Restore us, O God; Cause Your face to shine, And we shall be saved!” (Psa 80 : 3)***

This kind of shining implies that you can see clearly the will of God. You can feel that what you are doing is exactly what He wants us to do. This clear vision all comes by this simple prayer:

***“He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday” (Psa 37 : 6)***

***Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies; Make Your way straight before my face .(Psa 5 : 8)***

### **3- Seeking Wisdom**

We cannot go seeking God’s will if we are not wise. Being wise simply means to be guided by the Spirit and doing God’s will all the time.

We need to continuously exercise seeking wisdom. Nobody will ever seek wisdom unless he feels he is not wise enough and that he is not up to the standard to take right

decisions in his life or service. We need to pray pleading our Lord to grant us His Holy wisdom,

***“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (Jam 1 : 5)***

We are not seeking earthly or sensual wisdom; rather, we are seeking heavenly wisdom which is a fruit of prayers.

***“This wisdom does not descend from above, but [is] earthly, sensual, demonic” (Jam 3 : 15)***

King Solomon was very young when he cried out and asked for wisdom,

***"Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" (1Ki 3 : 9)***

#### **4- The Word of God**

We can never know the will of God without probing into His words. When we read the Bible, we need to pray like Samuel prayed in his early days: '***Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears***'.

***“Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He calls you, that you must***

*say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears' " So Samuel went and lay down in his place" (1Sa 3 : 9)*

*The word of God is light, it is only when you put the light on , you can see where to go. "Your word [is] a lamp to my feet And a light to my path2 (Psa 119 : 105)*

The word of God is also sharper than any two-edged sword; it cuts short the way towards any decision,

*"For the word of God [is] living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."(Heb 4 : 12)*

If you listen carefully to the Word of God, you will be given wisdom and you will know God's will in whatever stage of your life.

## 5- The Commandment of Love

To find the will of God, you have to make sure that the commandment of love is your first priority, because the evil one might try to distract your attention or mislead you to a wrong path. If you are wise enough, you have to follow this commandment,



***“And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins” (1Pe 4 : 8)***

Any choice against love is against God’s will,

***“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law” (Rom 13 : 8)***

If love is not there, then we are all out of His will, if we do not have consideration towards others and love them from a pure heart, then we are not on the right track.

***“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (Joh 13 : 35)***

## **6-Guidance**

We always need to be guided by our spiritual leaders, our priests. Elders in Greek language is “Presbiteros” which is translated as priest.

***“Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to [your] elders. Yes, all of [you] be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble”” (1Pe 5 : 5)***

A humble heart, who asks guidance and is ready to be a disciple for his spiritual father, can never be led astray; but

will be always guided by Grace. Whenever you do not understand the will of God, you ought to resort to the Church – to your spiritual father, and he will feed you with knowledge and understanding.

***“And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding” (Jer 3 : 15)***

***“Remember the days of old, Consider the years of many generations. Ask your father, and he will show you; Your elders, and they will tell you” (Deu 32 : 7)***

## **7-The Appropriate Time**

Just give it enough time; never try to know the will of God while you are in a hurry. Remember you need to pray more, listen carefully to His voice, spend some quiet time with Him, to be able to know His exact will, and His perfect plan for your life.

***“To everything [there is] a season, A time for every purpose under heaven”***

***(Ecc 3 :1)***

Sometimes we may not know everything at the time we wish to. We always need to relent to His timing and His plans:

***“Jesus answered and said to him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this” (Joh 13 : 7)***

Moreover, many times, we do not have answers to many questions: why do I find closed doors, why isn't God helping me to change myself for a better quality of service? Why isn't He giving me the gifts and talents which I need in my service? Mostly we don't have a convincing answer, for who has known the mind of the Lord! However, we just need to have faith and to trust His wisdom, as said by St. Paul:

***“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable [are] His judgments and His ways past finding out! “For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?”. (Rom 11 : 33 - 34)***

## **God's Embroidery**

*When I was a little boy, my mother used to stitch a great deal. I would sit at her knee and look up from the floor and ask what she was doing. She informed me that she was embroidering. I told her that it looked like a mess from where I was. As from the underside I watched her work within the boundaries of the little round hoop that she held in her hand,*

*I complained to her that it sure looked messy from where I sat.*

*She would smile at me; look down and gently say, "My son, you go about your playing for a while, and when I am finished with my embroidering, I will put you on my knee and let you see it from my side." I would wonder why she was using some dark threads along with the bright ones and why they seemed so jumbled from my view. A few minutes would pass and then I would hear mother's voice say, "Son, come and sit on my knee." This I did only to be surprised and thrilled to see a beautiful flower or a sunset. I could not believe it, because from underneath it looked so messy.*

*Then my mother would say to me, "My son, from underneath it did look messy and jumbled, but you did not realize that there was a pre-drawn plan on the top. It was a design. I was only following it. Now look at it from my side and you will see what I was doing."*

*Many times through the years I have looked up to My Heavenly Father and said, "Father, what are You doing?" He has Answered, "I Am embroidering your life." I say, "But it looks like a mess to me. It seems so jumbled. The threads seem so dark. Why can't they all be bright?" The Father seems to tell me, "My Child, you go about your business of doing My business, And one day I will bring you to Heaven and you will see the Picture From My side, just follow My will"*

# Prayer

Dear Saviour,

Thank you for choosing my weak self to be your son and servant. I do not deserve to be your man, as I am still busy with my wishes not yours.

I live my life as if I possess it; I always forget that my life is not mine.

I follow my will blindly, although I have suffered a lot from this earthly human life, which has no taste of joy or purity, without Your presence in it.

Please Lord, help me to find Your will in my life, guide me to do exactly as You wish not as I wish.

When I pray "Thy will be done", give me the grace to say it sincerely, to walk my talk, to accept Your will and to search for it from all my heart.

Your will is always perfect, You see me with Your perfect eyes as the future saint You wish for, while I see myself the lost, the weakest, the least and the last, but with Your will and grace... Thy will be done.

Amen



# Chapter 4

## Favor Labor

In order to follow Christ, we have to try to see things the way He does, St. Paul said: we have the mind of Christ **“For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ” (1Co 2 : 16)**

One of the major themes of our Lord’s life is that He spent His life in labor rather than in relaxation; He had nowhere to lay His head.

*“Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, [that] someone said to Him, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go“. And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air [have] nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay [His] head”. (Luk 9 : 57 – 58)*

To be able to follow Christ we must think and behave like Him. We shouldn’t be worried about things like what to eat, what to wear, when and where to sleep, etc. We cannot spend our life in leisure while others are suffering; we cannot follow Christ if we are thinking about the earthly outcomes and gains of following Him. Christ’s priority was the

salvation of people and the benefit of others. He never lived for Himself.

Following Christ, we might be losing according to worldly standards. However, we are gaining Christ Himself.

*“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” (Mat 16 : 25)*

**How then can we favor labor, and this is against the human nature?!**

## **Motives for Loving Labor**

### **1- Imitating our Lord Jesus Christ**

If we put Christ in front of our eyes as our true role model, if we focus all the time on Him and how He spent His days, how He concentrated upon preaching the Word of God, how He reacted towards problem, it is then that we will value hard work rather than leading a life of leisure. When we try to imitate Him, we will automatically find ourselves favoring labor,

*“Imitate me, just as I also [imitate] Christ” (1Co 11 : 1)*



***“Then He came to the disciples and found them asleep, and said to Peter, “What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?” (Mat 26 : 40)***

Jesus said these words in a way as if it is strange for someone who followed Him more than three years, to be unable to stay awake with Him one hour. For servants and followers it is easy to spend the night in prayers. It is easy not to even think about rest and sleep. That is why St. Peter was blamed at that time. It is also our Lord’s message for each one of us during the time of laziness and/or indifference.

We need to deny ourselves, take up the Cross in order to be real followers for Christ;

***“When He had called the people to [Himself,] with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Mar 8 : 34)***

## 2- Loving the Cross

If we love the Cross, we will enjoy laboring for the sake of Him who was crucified for the sake of our salvation. The Cross is the icon of favoring labor. Our Lord has chosen it willingly and after all this painful suffering, agony and psychological pain , we cannot spend our lives fulfilling our desires and ignoring Him who died to give us His life.

***“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the [life] which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal 2 : 20)***

Being crucified with Christ means we are ready to labor, and enjoy exerting effort with Him for the sake of His people.

Pope Shenouda III used to say: “the priest who favors laboring will comfort his people, and the priest who favors comfort will cause struggle for his people”. The same applies for servants, if you enjoy laboring, your served ones will be saved, whereas if you prefer relaxation your people may perish.

There is no way to boast about something in life except the Cross, which is our real pride;

***“But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world”(Gal 6 : 14)***

***For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1Co 2 : 2)***

### 3- Focus on the Fruits (Salvation of Souls)

The fruits of labor are souls who are saved. If you have this solid idea at the back of your mind, you will spend your life in nothing but labor. ***“The hard-working farmer must be first to partake of the crops” (2Ti 2 : 6)***; the hard working servant is the one who will enjoy the crops, and only then he will forget his labor and toil.

***The outcome of labor is transferring souls from destruction to salvation, and the reward is always directly proportionate and even exceeds that of the labor;***

***“Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor” (1Co 3 : 8)***

### 4- Avoid Comfort

The time of comfort or relaxation could be the worst time in our lives. If you go through the Bible carefully, you will find that the major sins in history happened at times of comfort: when David didn't go to the war, he committed the greatest sin in his life. We have to avoid comfort, for comfort brings idle thoughts, laziness, lukewarm, lusts, hostility, gossip and much more. We need to favor labor and fear comfort;

***“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide [is] the gate and broad [is] the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it” (Mat 7 : 13)***

King Solomon clarified how comfort can gradually sneak in our lives, till we lose everything;

***“A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, And your need like an armed man”(Pro 6 : 10 - 11)***

When Christ talked about John the Baptist, He mentioned that he is the greatest among those born of women, but He focused specifically on His labor:

***“As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?. "But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is [he] of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You'. Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is***

*least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” (Mat 11 : 7 - 11)*

***St. Antony the Great said:***

"If a man sought to fix his ways and escape evil, armed with labor , through tears, humble heart, fasting, watchfulness, willful poverty, and lot of prayers, God will support him by His grace and liberate his soul from all pain."

## **Types of Labor**

### **1- The Labor of Spiritual Struggle**

The first and most important thing we need to work very hard on is to labor in prayer, Bible-reading, the Divine Liturgy, fasting, and in watchfulness. If you are not able to labor in these things, then simply you will never be able to follow Christ. This is the first type of labor, before dealing with people, and before teaching and preaching.

***“And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules” (2Ti 2 : 5)***

The rule of any spiritual person is to pray, to spend time with the Bible, to follow the commandments, to have a father of confession and to regularly partake of the Holy

Eucharist. Are you competing according to these rules? Are you doing any effort to live according to these rules?

***“But I discipline my body and bring [it] into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (1Co 9 : 27)***

**St. Antony the Great writes:**

"Favoring labor will save you from evil deeds; along with fasting, praying and watchfulness, because the physical toil brings purity for the heart and a pure heart causes the soul to be fruitful."

## **2- The Labor of Service**

When you spend time traveling from one place to the other, when you do not have a comfortable place to sleep, when you do not have a chance to get delicious meals, when you exert effort with kids or youth in trying to establish the idea that Christ is our King and Savior, this is the labor of the service.

A servant in his service is a shepherd who cares for his flock, feeds it, looks after it, carries the sheep which cannot walk, and gently leads it along the way to Eternal Life. Now all this is quite tiring.

***“He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry***

*[them] in His bosom, [And] gently lead those who are with young” (Isa 40 : 11)*

St. Paul, the perfect Evangelist gave us an example for suffering in the service night and day:

*“Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears” (Act 20 : 31). “Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, [in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.” (2Co 11 : 25 - 28)*

**St. Evram the Syrian said:**

“He who is able to labor and doesn’t bother to exert any effort, loses himself.”

### 3- The Labor of Warfare

The struggle against wars and problems is another important type of labor. We shouldn't panic when we find conflicts in the service. This is very normal. In fact there is no service without problems. There should be wars against the service from the evil one; otherwise, we wouldn't be serving or consider ourselves on the right track.

***“For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside [were] conflicts, inside [were] fears” (2Co 7 : 5)***

An essential part of hard work and labor is enduring hardships. St. Paul, the great Evangelist, endured many hardships and struggled so hard that he despaired and wished to die;

***“For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life” (2Co 1 : 8)***

In this warfare we are not fighting flesh and blood. Rather, we are fighting the powers of evil,

***“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age,***



*against spiritual [hosts] of wickedness in the heavenly [places] (Eph 6 : 12)*

**St. Augustine says:**

“If in the last day, you were not found a saint, at least labor so that you might be found a struggler.”

## 4- The Labor of Faithfulness

*“And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom [his] master will make ruler over his household, to give [them their] portion of food in due season?" (Luk 12 : 42)*

“**Faithful**” and “**Wise**”, those are the most two important words that will judge any servant at the end. Sometimes a servant can be very faithful and honest, but he is not wise enough, which implies that he could be losing many souls. Furthermore, a servant can be very wise, but not faithful enough in his labor, so he is also not gaining enough souls. A servant can travel many hours exerting tremendous effort to reach a place; another is lazy. A servant may spend long hours preparing the word of God he will preach; another reads a few lines/ words in few minutes. So eventually what matters at the end is, to which extent one has been faithful, and to which extent one has been wise.

The faithful servant shepherds the flock of God willingly and eagerly. The faithful servant is an example to the flock;

***“The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.” (1Pe 5 : 1 - 4)***

***“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God [which was] with me” (1Co 15 : 10)***

**St Isaac the Syrian says:**

"The soul that loves God does not find comfort away from Him. So, correct your ways and get liberated from every external bonding, to be able to bond your heart with God, because the liberty from materialistic life precedes bonding with God."

# Prayer

O' Lord, I like comfort, I don't like to carry burdens or suffer by any means. I always escape any labor; I exert efforts in things which sound pleasing and fulfilling to my desires.

Lord, You came from heaven to earth, you favored labor for my own sake, You have chosen the hardest way to live on earth, to save me and show me the way.

Please God, help me favor labor and keep away from comfort, give me the grace to endure the labor of love, and even look forward for it; I am only on the right track of Heaven, when I love You and love people, because the true meaning of love, as you showed it, is sacrifice and labor.

Lord, people around are always concerned by many things that could change their life to an easier and more interesting life, meanwhile the devil is directing them towards eternal suffering. So please help me to choose the suffering here on this earth, and carry the burdens now; my burdens and others', to be able to catch up with the joyful afterlife at the end of the day.

O' Lord of the Cross, teach me how to carry my cross, following You without complaints, teach me to enjoy serving others, the same way You did, for the sake of the eternal comfort of everyone. With the intercessions of all the Bearers of the Cross, please accept my prayer.

*Amen*



# Chapter 5

## Fill your Heart

To follow Christ, you need to **fill your heart**, which simply means to be someone spiritual. If you are spiritual you will by God's grace succeed in whatever you do, no matter how much gifts or talents you have, because simply your heart is full of the Lord's Holy Spirit. Filling our hearts is the cornerstone of any service we do.

To be filled with the spirit means to be planted by the waters,

*"Thus says the LORD: "Cursed [is] the man who trusts in man And makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the LORD. For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, And shall not see when good comes, But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, [In] a salt land [which is] not inhabited. Blessed [is] the man who trusts in the LORD, And whose hope is the LORD. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding*

*fruit. The heart [is] deceitful above all [things,] And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, [I] test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings." [As] a partridge that broods but does not hatch, [So is] he who gets riches, but not by right; It will leave him in the midst of his days, And at his end he will be a fool". (Jer 17:5-11)*

**St. Isaac the Syrian says:**

*"With the aid of continuous tears, peace dwells in the soul, and with the peace, the soul advances to the purity of the mind. And through the purity of the mind, the person approaches to see the mysteries of the Lord."*

## **The problem of filling the Heart**

This is the major problem in our spiritual life. We, as ministers, are always too busy with many activities and we usually fail to fill our hearts with the spirit, to pray to have enough time with the Bible, to enjoy repentance or to enjoy the Divine Liturgy. Hence we are not getting enough water.

*"Thus says the LORD: "Cursed [is] the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength,*

***Whose heart departs from the LORD.” (Jer 17:5)***

*Beware of allowing your heart, to depart from the Lord by:*

- Depending on people, or else your service will be dry
- Being scared from people, this means that your roots are not yet deep enough; you need to take more living water in order to be able to proclaim the word of God.
- Extra concern about people, when you care much about your appearance or the outer appearance rather than the inner, your inner spirit.

## **The Result of Spiritual Emptiness**

The result is a shrub in the desert. You can never see any fruits for your service if you are not rooted, and getting enough nourishment from the land.

***“For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, And shall not see when good comes, But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, In a salt land which is not inhabited” (Jer 17:6)***

When a minister ignores filling his heart, no matter how talented and energetic s/he is, s/he will suffer from:

- Spiritual poverty
- Being Fruitless
- Being like a deserted piece of Land

## **The source from where the heart gets filled**

If you focus on being filled with the Spirit you will be blessed,

*“Blessed [is] the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD.” (Jer 17:7)*

- Depend on God, spend most of your time praying, be always connected with the Lord, and always refer to Him.
- Trust every word; never skip a day without supporting yourself with the food of life.
- Focus on pleasing God, and doing His will rather than pleasing people.

## **Like a tree planted by the waters**

If you are rooted well, you will be able to endure trials and hardships without fear, because you will be sure



Christ will help you overcome all hardships, and that He will always fill you with His love, peace and joy;

***“For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.” (Jer 17:8)***

We pray for the idea of being watered daily in the Prime prayers;

***“Blessed [is] the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;. But his delight [is] in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly [are] not so, But [are] like the chaff which the wind drives away.” (Ps 1 : 1 – 4)***

When you plant the word the word of God within you, it will grow and make from you a nourishing plant,

***“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the***

*implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (Jam 1 : 21)*

*“Those who are planted in the house of the LORD Shall flourish in the courts of our God”  
(Psa 92 : 13)*

## **Spreads out its roots**

“Spreading out the roots” is the key phrase that implies depth;

*“For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.” (Jer 17:8)*

When you become like a tree planted by the waters, you will have:

- Depth in Prayer & Contemplation
- Toil in Service and in Giving
- Humbleness in Discipleship

## **Will not fear when heat comes, will not be anxious**

The comforting promise of being filled with the Spirit, is that no hardship can affect you,

*“For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.” (Jer 17:8)*

The key to conquer the world is to be filled with the Spirit;

*“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (Joh 16 : 33)*

When we are rooted enough we become more than winners or conquerors,

*“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rom 8 : 37)*

Even if you are weak, by the power of the spirit you will be strong;

***“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2Co 12 : 10)***

## **Deceit of the heart**

Sometimes a minister might think: I am fine, I am ready to preach and speak the word of God, I can solve problems ... etc. If you feel so, please do not go anywhere, but sit and examine yourself, lest your heart is deceiving you.

***“The heart [is] deceitful above all [things,] And desperately wicked; Who can know it?”(Jer 17:9)***

Those who believe they are powerful, are only deceiving themselves, because faithful servants always feel they are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, and that they are constantly in need of our Lord's Grace to cover their weaknesses;

***“Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' -- and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked”(Rev 3 : 17)***

Those who believe they are wise are only deceiving themselves;

***“Woe to [those who are] wise in their own eyes,  
And prudent in their own sight!” (Isa 5 : 21)***

***Be wise and fill your heart; “Those who [were]  
foolish took their lamps and took no oil with  
them” (Mat 25 : 3)***

## **He who searches the heart**

Our Lord never focuses on our faces; rather, He focuses on the heart and tests the mind;

***“I, the LORD, search the heart, [I] test the  
mind, Even to give every man according to his  
ways, According to the fruit of his doings.” (Jer  
17:10)***

If your heart and mind are with God, then you will really be a child of God and you will be fruitful in whatever you do.

Remember that what counts at the end of the day is the opinion of the Lord. So live your life with the prospect of being justified by God;

***“But with me it is a very small thing that I  
should be judged by you or by a human court.  
In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know  
nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by***

*this; but He who judges me is the Lord” (1Co 4 : 3 - 4)*

*“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;. And see if [there is any] wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.” (Ps 139 : 23 - 24)*

*"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks (Luk 6 : 45)*

## **A partridge that broods but does not hatch**

He who gets riches without being filled with the Spirit is like a fool;

*“As a partridge that broods but does not hatch, [So is] he who gets riches, but not by right; It will leave him in the midst of his days, And at his end he will be a fool”(Jer17:11)*

These hatches or fruits aren't yours, this dignity isn't yours, beware of becoming a fool at the end, because all glory should only be referred to the King of Glory.

# Prayer

O' God, The Creator, The Eternal and The Source of Life, You gave us Your Spirit to restore Your image in us, You made us Your people by dwelling in our bodies, so that we may become new altars for Your presence.

Now Lord, please fill our hearts with Your fiery Spirit, to heal us from this state of lukewarm.

Fill our hearts with the oil of light, so that we can see the truth clearly and enlighten the entire world.

Fill our hearts, with Your living water, so that we may not stay thirsty again, and moreover we may pour Your water on all the dry lands around.

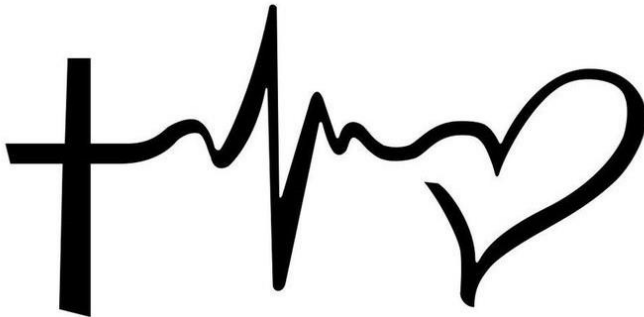
Please Lord, fill our hearts with Your Spirit of Peace, so that we can be peace makers for all the troubled ones.

Fill our hearts with Your Spirit of Love, so we can love even those who do not love us, and conquer their evil with Thy goodness.

Fill our hearts as you did with the apostles, so that we could live as salt for the earth and light for the world and spread Your fragrance on all generations.

With the intercessions of all my fathers, the apostles, please accept my prayer.

Amen





# Chapter 6

## Farm the Land

In our ministry we are working like farmers, and there is nothing more relevant in this context than the words of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself about the parable of the sower.

*"A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold" When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!". (Luk 8 : 5 - 8)*

### 1. The Sower spreads the seeds on all the land

As a minister or servant, you should always be ready to spread the seeds on all types of lands, wherever you go and whenever you meet anybody.

This good sower spread the seeds on all types of lands although he knew that some of these lands will never bear fruit. We should do like Him always. We should not be lazy in speaking the word of God everywhere, with everyone. We should never wait till we find the perfect listener. Contrarily, we should be ready to preach the Word of God wherever we go and under all sorts of circumstances.

***“Preach the word! Be ready in season [and] out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2Ti 4 : 2)***

Sometimes, those who we may think that they are not ready eventually turn out to be the best chosen vessels. We need to be faithful and learn from St. Paul how to always proclaim,

***"How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, (Act 20 : 20)***

## **2. The Sower knows the kinds of lands and can expect the results**

Although the sower must spread seeds wherever he goes, yet he must also know how to differentiate between different types of lands receiving the seeds.

***“And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it”.***

Our Lord knew that the wayside will not be productive. This is like people who are continuously distracted by worldly matters.

***“Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture”.*** He knew it was going to wither away, because there is no depth or any intention for change.

***And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it.*** He knew thorns were going to choke it, like those who just wish to be fruitful and be transformed but are very busy and worried about their earthly life.

***But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold.*** He could see the different types of lands, and He knew that this one in particular is the perfect land that will bear “hundredfold” fruit.

We need to gain the ability to recognize the listener’s defect, to distinguish the different types of listeners and to pinpoint the reasons for those not receiving, or for receiving within limits, and the reasons for not bearing fruits, and to face/try to solve the problem if possible.

### **3. The Sower focuses on the good ground**

Although the sower must spread seeds wherever he goes, and he must also know how to distinguish the different

types of lands receiving the seeds, yet he still should give more care for the good ground.

***"But other [seed] fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred" (Mar 4 : 8)***

This implies that the sower was following up this land; moreover, he was evaluating its fruits. Likewise, in our ministry we should give more care for these people who are good receivers, and prepare the chosen. In the same manner, our church chooses the catechumens, those who receive the word of God joyfully. They don't only receive it but they also take a step forward in their relation with God, and yield a crop, each according to his potentials, thirtyfold, sixty and hundred.

#### **4. The Sower waters, and fertilizes the land**

Farming the land is a continuous teamwork, which will help the land to be fruitful;

***"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (1Co 3 : 6)***

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

***"But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and***

***fertilize [it] And if it bears fruit, [well] But if not, after that you can cut it down". (Luk 13 : 8 -9)***

Caring for the land is a long process that requires much effort. By digging, a person ventilates his problems and opens up his heart. Through fertilization, you are adding catalysts like the word of God through devoting more care, more time and more concentration on service and in church.

***"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every [branch] that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.I am the vine, you [are] the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw [them] into the fire, and they are burned. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. " As the Father***

*loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (John 15 : 1 -9)*

The True Vine, prunes us, we are His branches, He prunes us till we abide more and more in Him and bear lots of fruit.

## 5. The Sower chooses the appropriate seeds for every kind of ground

Not every seed is suitable to all types of lands; we need to learn how to address the people we serve, in the most appropriate manner.

*All Scripture is suitable, but be clever to know what to start with, for who, why and how? “All Scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2Ti 3 : 16)*

You should be strong enough to use varied types of seeds for the different lands. Therefore you are called upon to enrich yourself with the Word of God – with the Old Testament and the New Testament – to be able to preach the word at all times and on all occasions.

*“Then He said to them, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is*

*like a householder who brings out of his treasure [things] new and old" (Mat 13 : 52)*

## 6. The Sower waits for the rain before the Harvest

The rain has a great role in nourishing the plants;

*“Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See [how] the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain” (Jam 5 : 7)*

This rain stands for the Grace of God. In and of ourselves, we can never help anyone change. We are nothing without Our Lord’s Grace. As good sowers, we should believe in this Grace and hope for it in deep and firm faith.

Moreover, we need to pray continuously that the Word of God might touch all hearts,

*“Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit”. (1Co 12:3)*

Being a good sower, you should not rush or push for the harvest ... never try to pick a fruit before its time. Leave it to ripen. Remember those who were baptized immaturely have got many problems, and many of them left the faith

again, because they were not mature enough before being baptized.

***“Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure” (1Ti 5 : 22)***

## **7. The Sower toils ... persists .... exerts effort ... and is delighted at the end**

The Lord Himself is working with us in this farming story. He will grant us whatever we ask for in His name;

***“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and [that] your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you” (Joh 15 : 16)***

If someone only planted the seeds, and another one watered, and another one reaped, God promised that all of them will gain the same reward at the end and that they would rejoice together;

***“And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together” (Joh 4 : 36)***



# Prayer

O'Lord of the harvest,

Thank you for giving me the chance to work in your lands, You have given me Your word, and You have given me the Power to seed Your word into the hearts.

Please help me to be the good farmer, who cares for your seeds and lands, widen my heart to see all the lands worthy of Your seeds.

Please Lord, prepare the lands to accept Your words, and to give fruits, thirty, sixty and hundredfold.

The world is Your big land O'God, and all the hearts need the truth to be fruitful.

Give me the patience to continue seeding, watering and caring for the land.

Give me the wisdom to seed the suitable word in the suitable land, at the most appropriate time.

Give me hope, so as not to lose heart with rocky lands, and the lands with thorns.

Give me love to all, so that I can see them as fruitful as saints one day.

My Great Sower, farm my land, so that I can farm  
other lands with Your Grace.

With the intercessions of all Saints, please  
accept my prayer.

*Amen*



# Chapter 7

## Fish Fishermen

One of the main goals of our Lord Jesus Christ was to fish for fishermen. He performed miracles, preached the word of life and focused on the Salvation of His people. But, in spite of this entire busy schedule, He was very much preoccupied with preparing calibers to carry on His mission. The most important thing in the life of the evangelist is to teach others how to be evangelists. If the servant spends his life in preaching, he will only prepare catechumens and that is it. However, if he taught others he will be preparing fishermen and evangelists who in turn will bring many more to the Christian Faith. If you spend half the time of any mission in training other servants and handing them how to be able to carry on with the service after you, then you are really working on preparing future fishermen.

Our Lord Jesus started to shift the concern of His disciples and developed their interests from catching money/fish to catching men.

***“And so also [were] James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men”(Luk 5 : 10)***

The disciples were crowned with the precious mission when they were called to start catching men.

***“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2Ti 2 : 2)***

This verse reveals four generations of discipleship: a) the generation of St. Paul the Evangelist; b) the generation of St. Timothy his disciple; c) the witnesses; d) and then the faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Our great church believes the same. None of us saw St. Mark; but we have seen Pope Shenouda III and Pope Tawadros II, who have the same spirit of St. Mark.

While fishing, recruiting and training fishermen becomes a priority, discipleship becomes a duty;

***“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mat 28 : 19)***

# **How can we fish for fishermen?!!!**

## **1- The Role Model**

The first element of fishing for fishermen is to be a role model in your life. Evangelism is not preaching; evangelism is life. The Evangelist is simply a true Christian who imitates Christ.

The Evangelist may breed evangelists without realization just by living a true Christian life: by being a person who enjoys prayer, sticks to the commandment of God, loves all the people and enjoys serving them.

Doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love and perseverance, those are seven major points in the life of St. Paul, which were not delivered in lectures, but were delivered through his daily life;

***“But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance” (2Ti 3 : 10)***

This is the way disciples should be built, and this is how servants should be prepared.

Our Lord trained His disciples by just being with them;

***“Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach”. (Mar 3:14)***

## **2- Private Teaching**

Disciples should have a more special teaching in a personal way – a different higher level of teaching. When our Lord Jesus Christ told the multitude the parable of the sower, He explained it privately to His disciples after the multitudes had left;

***“He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given” (Mat 13: 11)***

For the entire congregation we are preaching the word of God; but for the fishermen, we have to spend more time to explain things clearly, to discuss details, to clarify ideas and fix beliefs.

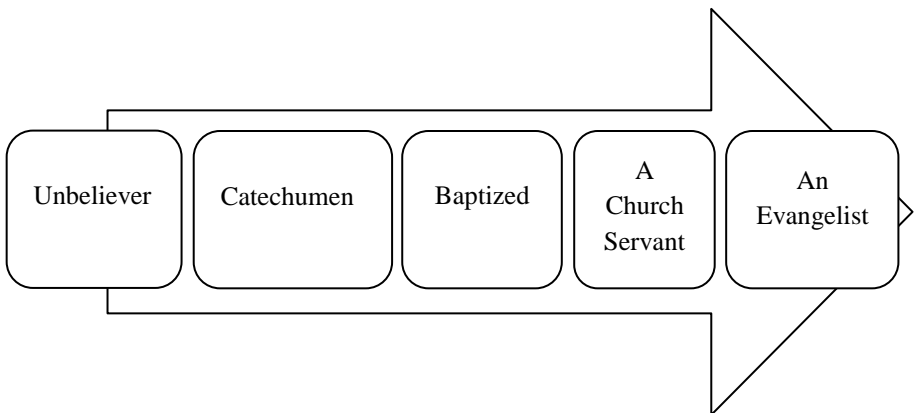
***“But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples” (Mar 4: 34)***

## **3- Discipline**

Discipline takes five steps: selection, discipleship, training, follow-up and empowerment. All these steps should be wrapped up in continuous prayers.

- ***Selection***

If you are preaching hundreds of people, you will select only a few of them to be servants. Upon selection, you carefully select with prayers and without rush: some non-believers to be catechumens, then from the catechumens' class you choose those who will be baptized, and from those who will be baptized you will choose the servants, and lastly from the servants you select evangelists.



- ***Discipleship***

After selection, more time should be spent with this special group – time that allows for higher level of communication. Our Lord Jesus Christ spent more than three years with His disciples.

During discipleship, focus on the level of submission. We are not aiming at having weak characters; but we are rather aiming at having saints who have good level of submission to God and to Church. You also need to focus if this person can live in fellowship and love with others.


- ***Training***

Christ sent them to the villages two by two, and they came back to Him discussing what happened in their service.

During training, you have to focus on the non-urgent but important matters, like prayer, spending time with the Bible and meeting with Christ in the Divine Liturgy and in quiet time. Urgent and important things will be imposed in your schedule without planning for them.

You also must learn to say “No” to those non-urgent and unimportant matters, like interrupting phone calls or unnecessary visits. And lastly you have to ignore any activity which is neither important nor urgent



|               | Urgent   | Not Urgent   |
|---------------|--|--|
| Important     | <br>necessity | <br>quality |
| Not Important | <br>deception | <br>waste   |

.During training you should also monitor and mentor their practice in love, to be able to correct the mistakes.

- ***Follow Up***

Jesus spent much time with the disciples only listening to them while they were giving Him a report about what happened during their service. He taught them how to report, how to evaluate themselves. Following up and evaluation makes re-planning and restructuring go smoothly.

- ***Empowerment***

Our Lord empowered His disciples and gave them His Holy Spirit, He told them just go and do exactly just

like I did. With empowerment, you build up responsibility and prepare those promising potential high caliber servants for greater duties of “fishing”.

# Prayer

Dear Lord,

Millions of fish are perishing every day, once they get out of the sea of this world; they find darkness and eternal destruction. Lord, You always love to fish fishermen to work with You using the same net You have used.

Please Lord, teach me how to use Your word to catch fish, teach me how to deliver Your love to everyone.

O'God, the sea is huge, the waves are high, and the wind is always strong, but I wish to see you always in my boat ordering all the fish to jump into the net and we, your fishermen, would be just working to carry the filled net and to throw it again and again.

I love You Lord, I wish to work with You, under Your commandment, I wish to move deeper into the sea, where there is plenty of various fishes, where nobody knows them.

I Love You Lord, You always accept me with all my weaknesses and consider my weak self as one of Your ministers.

Please Lord, make use of my short days here on this earth, to save people, with the prayers of all the evangelists and former fishermen who have been always doing Your will.

*Amen*



# Chapter 8

## Fasten Your Belt

No minister can succeed in his service if he is loose in his life. A minister without self-control is a fragile minister with a weak ministry. St. Paul was very serious and strict with himself. That's why his ministry was successful.

If you practice self-control you will be strong in your ministry, no matter how difficult your ministry is.

- Self-Control is the basis of any church minister success
- Self-Control is one of the Fruits of the Holy Spirit

***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” (Gal 5: 22- 23)***

If you are filled with the Holy Spirit, then you can easily control yourself; while if you are not filled with the Spirit, you cannot fight in your service.

Self-Control needs long continuous spiritual struggle; this is the story of our life time.

## **Let your waist be girded**

***“Let your waist be girded and [your] lamps burning” (Luk 12 : 35)***

“Girding the waist” means, controlling your desires, the “burning lamps” implies being preoccupied with the word of God and focusing on the Lord Himself. Those two things are the main indication for spiritual watchfulness and eventually for the success of the service.

The story of girding the waist, started with the Passover in the book of Exodus;

***“And thus you shall eat it: [with] a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It [is] the LORD's Passover” (Exo 12 : 11)***

That is why we should be fasting when we partake of the Holy Eucharist. We approach this Sacrament with a belt on our waist and with self-control because this is not a regular food for our flesh. It is The Spiritual Food that nourishes our spirits and causes it to gain Eternal Life. This who eats from the Lord’s Passover should eat it in haste to be ready to move forward to the Red Sea to pass over death.

St. Peter also mentioned that girding the belt, is not only related to the physical body or the stomach. It is related as well to the mind and thoughts.

***“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest [your] hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1Pe 1 : 13)***

Furthermore, controlling the mind means to fully concentrate our hope upon the Grace of God and not to worry or to be anxious about anything, having firm faith that our Savior is in full control of every single aspect of our lives.

## **1. Controlling the Tongue**

First way to fasten your belt is controlling your tongue. If we are not able to control our tongues, then we are deceiving our hearts and thus we can neither be called ministers nor can we call ourselves pious or religious.

***“If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion [is] useless” (Jam 1 : 26)***

The tongue is the mirror of the heart, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, as Lord Jesus has taught us;

***“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the***

*Day of Judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned". (Mat 12 : 35 - 37)*

**Exercises that help in controlling the tongue:**

- ***Listen more***

In order to control the tongue we need to exercise how to listen more, and talk less. No one can control his tongue when he is talking too much.

- ***Pray before you speak***

We also need to train ourselves to pray before speaking any word, whether in any aspects of our lives or in the ministry. Pray those words silently: "please God guide me, give me wisdom, tell me what to say, show me how to decide". If we speak a lot with God, we will speak with people less, and whatever we say will be right.

- ***Revise what you have said***

It is good to spend a few minutes before you sleep reviewing what you have said during the day.

- ***Accept criticism***

Sometimes one may approach you, blaming for a certain situation, try not to get defensive, but take the criticism, and learn from it, to be able to teach yourself how to control your tongue.



- ***Choose your words***

It is good to speak the truth, but it is better to express the truth in the best way possible, choosing your words very carefully; and this needs a lot of wisdom, so that you might gain the people with whom you are conversing.

- ***Be selective about what you read or hear***

We need to remind ourselves, that whatever we read or hear, fills our minds, and appears through our tongues. We can never speak purely if our minds are not pure, and our minds will never be pure if our senses are not secured.

## **2. Controlling the Eye**

The tongue expresses what is in your mind and heart. The way you look at people or things reflects what is going on inside you. If your eye is good, this reflects that your heart and mind are pure.

***“The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when [your eye] is bad, your body also [is] full of darkness” (Luk 11 : 34)***

Beware of the eye, because if you have darkness inside, this will seriously affect your service, how could darkness generate light?!

To exercise controlling the eye, beware the Looks of :

- ***Lust***

If you look in a lustful way, this reflects that your heart is full of lust. Avoid lustful looks on materialistic things. Do not let lust direct you. No one can preserve his heart pure if he has lustful looks.

- ***Greed***

Beware of the eye of greed that wishes to possess everything.

- ***Judgment***

If you have judgmental looks, or if you look down on people, this reflects that your heart is full of pride; you will never be able to pray sincerely, nor will you be able to serve with passion.

- ***Jealousy***

If you have looks of jealousy, this reflects that your heart is void of love.

You need to carefully revise yourself, to repent and confess about all the above looks.

You need to pray asking for God's grace to help you to purify your eyes, stand steadfast in prayer, and live your Holy Bible to be able to cleanse and purify your eyes.

### 3. Controlling the Mind

Controlling the mind, could be something very difficult. To be in full control of your mind you shouldn't allow any flying strange thought to rest in your mind. Rather you ought to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

***“Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2Co 10 : 5)***

When you train your mind to focus on good thoughts, you will then be able to capture good thoughts; hence you will be able to think like Christ;

***"Who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ (1Co 2 : 16)***

- Control your Mind by the exercise of the arrow-like prayer of Jesus name continuously.
- Purify your Thoughts by the power of the Word of God, which is powerful enough to repel any bad thought.
- Set your Mind free by being preoccupied about others and loving them
- Revise your Thoughts daily in your private room.

## 4. Controlling the Body

By disciplining the body we are tightening our desires, so that our spirits will move forward;

*“But I discipline my body and bring [it] into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (1Co 9 : 27)*

### **Remind yourself:**

- Comfort, luxury, and pleasures quench the Spirit
- Strict Fasting and fasting of the Senses kindles the Spirit
- The beneficial labor, and effort in prayers, Bible-reading and service disciplines the body

# Prayer

O' Great Lord,

You have commanded me to have my waist girded, but I usually fail to obey; my lusts drive my will and I usually fail to have control over myself.

My desires are louder than my spiritual wishes; my will is poor, although I am quite aware of the fact that, eating the food of the earth will drive me down to earthly matters, while eating Your words, will raise me up to enjoy Your spiritual richness.

Please fasten a belt around my head, so that I may only think about You and Your Kingdom.

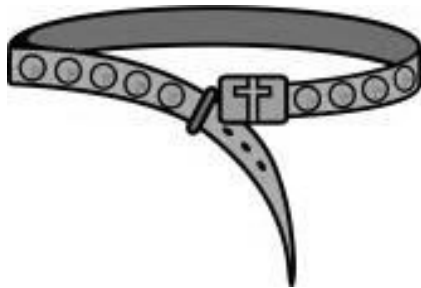
Fasten a belt around my senses, so that I may see You, listen to Your voice, and touch You through every person, and everything around.

Fasten a belt around my heart, so that I may love you with all my heart and soul, with no strangers or idols.

Lord, I wish to fasten my belt, so I can be watchful all the time, waiting for your *Second Coming* eagerly and joyfully.

Please give me the power, patience and wisdom to be able to do this, with the intercession of all Your beloved.

*Amen*



# Chapter 9

## Fight Back

Anyone coming to the service of God will be tempted; no one will find life easy.

***“My son, if you come forward to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for temptation.” (Serakh 2 : 1)***

So expect that you will be tempted by many ways. It is not easy to decide to giving up your life for your mission. The devil will keep resisting and attacking you.

***It is written by St. Paul:***

***You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin (Heb 12 : 4)***

Whatever we have been through, we have not yet reached the level of bloodshed. We may not have given our whole life in seriously struggling against sin. We still need to struggle more. We need to resist more. We need to fight back in order to follow our Lord Jesus Christ. Many obstacles will come on our way and we need to overcome all.

***“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able” (Luk 13 : 24)***

The way to Heaven is through the narrow gate, and likewise the way of the service is not easy. Most of the true servants suffer a lot, struggle a lot and pass through lots temptations because they have made it their mission to spread the word of God. That's why our Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples,

*"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me (Mat 16 : 24)*

*"Then He said to [them] all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luk 9 : 23)*

To fight back means to carry your cross – to be always ready for any attack and to be ready to fight back temptations. However, one has to be always sure that Christ Himself is with you all along, backing and supporting you always. In order to follow Christ you need to be ready to fight back with Him all temptations.

**Being a follower of Christ and a minister of God, you will pass through many battles.** Be ready for the battles of love, you have to fight back. The devil will not keep standing still watching a homogenous loving team serving in love together. He should resist that or else the result would be saving souls, which is against his will. You should be aware of all that,



***“lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2Co 2 : 11).***

When you find yourself not able to love your fellow servants or the people you serve, then be cautious, it is the famous battle of love.

**St. Antony the Great says:**

"Our life and death are with our neighbor. So if we won our neighbor, we win God, and if we stumbled our neighbor, we sin against Christ."

## **1. The Battle of Love**

### **1- Judgement**

You keep judging others, and getting into conflicts, and you are not aware that behind the scene is a devil throwing his arrows.

### **2- Jealousy**

You start comparing yourself and your talents with others and you become unable to love your fellow servants.

### **3- Not enduring the other**

You start focusing on the faults of others or even on the normal differences between people and become unable to accept these differences or endure anymore.

Living together and working all the time together is not an easy thing, even brothers and sisters from the same house would face troubles, so we need to be cautious because the battles of love are very common in the service.

## **How to conquer then??!!**

### **Arm yourself with the Commandment:**

Always remind yourself of the words of our Lord and His commandments that we need to love each other fervently with a pure heart.

*“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, (1Pet 1 : 22)*

Love means that we do not only focus on the negatives; we keep our eyes looking for the positives, looking at the good side of others. We respect others very much; we accept them as they are; we do not focus on their mistakes; we see them as saints. It is not easy but this is the commandment.

If you fail to love others, then you are a big failure; it is not about how much talented you are, or about the teaching you deliver, or about how many projects you are going to direct; if you want to follow Christ you must love your neighbour as yourself, no matter how difficult your neighbour

is. God has chosen and accepted all your fellow servants; He has selected them and He will work with them, and from this perspective you should respect them and love them too.

***"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love [his] brother abides in death" (1Jo 3 : 14)***

The only way to touch Christ during your service – the only way to see Him clearly – is to love others; and when the devil wants to strike the progression of the service, he beats it from the point of love and unity;

***I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me" (Joh 17 : 23)***

Thus, as long as love is not there, and we are not united, eventually the world will never know that Jesus Christ came to save us.

When we love each other we find grace in Christ's eyes and He blesses all the works of our hands.

***By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (Joh 13 : 35)***

We need to be ready for this battle of love. We need to fight our ego. We need to stand against our desires. We

need to struggle with our thoughts and minds in order to take a step forward and accept and love others.

***“Love suffers long [and] is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” (1Co 13 : 4 - 7)***

It is a challenge to love someone who has a major fault. But love covers all faults and makes you believe that God is working with your brother and using him for the glory of His Name.

Actually what hinders love and what makes us surrender easily in the battles of love is that we did not start with the first step of to “Forget Yourself”. We still think too much about ourselves; we still consider ourselves as great; we still focus on our ego; that is why we cannot achieve the necessary victory in the battles of love.

When the devil of anti-love throws his arrows, we need to defend ourselves with many weapons:

- 1- We are all soldiers in His army, it is totally His service and He is the only One in charge
- 2- I am the least and the worst among the servants and I don't deserve to serve.

- 3- The Grace of God will never work with me if I stop loving others from a pure heart>
- 4- I always need to see my faults and defects and the gifts and talents of others.
- 5- I need to pray more and cry out so God may fill my heart with peace, love and humility.

## **2. The Battle of Laziness and Boredom**

It happens when the service duration exceeds a couple of weeks, we start losing passion, and we start to do things routinely. Doing the same thing for a long period of time makes us feel bored. However this whole work is for the salvation of others. So we cannot imagine a surgeon doing an operation, and then he comes at some point and says I am bored I cannot carry on. Likewise, we are working on the salvation of souls we are saving others, so we have to fight and not to give up easily.

### ***1- Losing the Target***

When you become lazy, keep in mind that you have lost the track of your vision and target. The Kingdom of Heaven is not as clear as before and Judgment day is not as clear as before. That is why you lose your power and your will; Christ is not the same as before, He is not at center of all what you do, eventually you become lazy and bored. The reason we serve is to

reach Heaven and help people to reach Heaven too. When you lose the target you lose power.

## ***2- Feeling Burdened ... And Stressed***

At the beginning, you might have given your life up happily for the service, and you were excited about all activities you do. You planned not to sleep except a few hours. You thought you had enough power to change the whole world. However, after some time, you feel this is real burden, going to youth, kids and different people, serving in tough weather circumstances. You are not enjoying service anymore.

## ***3- Continuous Frustrations***

We should confess that we are not strong enough in our faith and in our love, which is why we are easily frustrated. For St. Paul, and the early missionaries, they were strong in faith and they faced lots of obstacles, problems and frustrations. They failed many times but still they lived their mission. Christ died on the Cross. His mission was not easy. He was very much frustrated from everyone, yet He completed His mission. So let us pray to be up to the level Christ is expecting from us.

## ***4- Incompatible Group (Unable to get along)***

If you are not compatible with the members, you can never make teamwork together. Passion and

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enthusiasm are always related to the power of love, the positive love, real love, and not just trying to endure the other.

## **How to conquer??!!!**

### **Arm yourself with the Role Model**

At the time of boredom and laziness, you need to focus on Christ Himself.

*“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of [our] faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12 : 2)*

Christ faced many frustrations. The Jews He served abandoned Him. His Disciples left Him alone. One of them sold Him; another ] denied Him. But He took up His cross, got over all these frustrations and completed His mission.

And when St. Paul said “I have finished”, he understood what Christ meant when He said "It is finished!".

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith (2Ti 4 : 7)*

So when Jesus received the sour wine, He said, "*It is finished!*" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit (Joh 19 : 30)

Service is not easy; however nothing in life could be better than service;

## **Service is joy.**

Christ endured the Cross for the joy that was set before Him; likewise we endure all hardships of the service for the joy of the Kingdom of Heaven that is set before us through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ waiting for the moment when we will be standing in front of Christ Himself and listening to His voice:

***“Well [done,] good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (Mat 25 : 21).***

For this reward you will be able to challenge yourself and overcome your laziness and boredom

***“Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears (Act 20 : 31)***

St. Paul had no time to waste, he had no time to rest, or feel lukewarm, or lose heart. He was always redeeming time, taking his mission seriously, and he was never frustrated because he was always connected by prayers, which is the solution for every single problem.



***“Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of [their] conduct” (Heb 13 : 7)***

When we look at all the saints and at all those who preceded us, and follow their lives, we will find out that none of them led an easy life. They all struggled hard in spiritual warfare.

***“Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world” (1Pe 5 : 9)***

### **3. The Battle of Desperateness**

#### ***1- Low Self Esteem***

Negative thoughts and negative self-talk that this is not my service ... I can never be a good minister ... this is not my call ... maybe I invited myself ... maybe I intruded on this service ... I can never be like those people who go and evangelize ... maybe I had over expectations in myself and in my capabilities.

#### ***2- Continuous Failures***

To lose hope! This happens when you spend some time without any achievements ... when you spend some time not able to do anything ... not able to win any person ... when you try many times and you fail

... when you start a project and after some time you find this project unsuccessfully and it fades away ... it is really not easy but it happens, and we should be ready to face this kind of battle strongly seeking our Lord's guidance and support.

### **Weakness & feeling helpless in front of sins and situations**

How come I could be a servant and I am weak in prayers?!!

I am so weak, I am full of sin!!

Sometimes this feeling comes from something personal or from an inner sin which is chaining you. This is a battle and we have to win by our Lord's Grace. Our Lord is happy to work with us, the unworthy sinners to purify us and to give us life. On the other hand, we sometimes fail to take the right action in some situations. This happened to St. Mark, our beloved apostle, when he experienced failure, but he did not give up and became our great evangelist.

### **3- *Continuous Criticism internally and externally***

When harsh and tough words of criticism touch your heart, you feel really desperate; you lose confidence in yourself and decide to withdraw from the service. But who said this is God's opinion about you? Let's be cautious about this external criticism and never lose heart.

*Could it be the devil at the back of the scene, using those words to let you lose heart and quit the service?!! However, some criticism may come internally from your heart, when you criticize and blame yourself; be ready to fight back all these thoughts which might be able to destroy your spirits. Stop thinking negatively! Think of Christ who has called you for this great mission. You know it from the start that you are weak. Remember how many times you prayed asking for His Grace and He granted. Remember how many times you prayed and said:*

*“For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes [are] upon You” (2Ch 20 : 12)*

Have faith that God has records for all your prayers, and He is working on them,

*“Although you say you do not see Him, [Yet] justice [is] before Him, and you must wait for Him” (Job 35 : 14)*

## **How to conquer??!!!**

- Arm yourself with Hope
- Characters that fill you with Hope

We have characters in the Bible that fill us with hope. So once we lose heart we need to look up to them in order to be lifted up. Amongst these are the robber who was crucified with Jesus:

*Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (Luk 23 : 42).*

When you look at Zacchaeus, or the Samaritan woman, you will be filled with hope. Who could have ever imagined that Zacchaeus, the tax collector, will repent one day and become a bishop!!! Who could have imagined that the sinful Samaritan woman will repent and be an evangelist!!!

If you direct your mind to think this way, you will stick to hope, and overcome all the negative thoughts.

## **Situations that cause Hope**

There are some situations, whenever you think about them, you will find hope. The situation of the prodigal son coming back to the bosom of his father, or Moses when he broke the two tablets of stone written with the finger of God; Moses broke a very precious thing, yet God was never angry about him; He wrote them again for him. God is so kind and so generous; He knows our weaknesses; He will never abandon us' He is insistent on our call and mission in life and He was never mistaken when He called us.

## **God's Promises**

The powerful word of God and His promises have a great role in fighting back the negative thoughts. When you feel hopeless, helpless or aimless, remember that you need to revise back God's promises for you. All His words are always true. He is honest in all what he says. If we are faithless, He remains faithful.

***“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8 : 37 - 39)***

St. Paul faced many hardships, and many frustrating situations, but in spite of these frustrations he said that we are not only conquerors; we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. He was always so confident. He had solid faith that God loves him very much. God loves us. He is watching over us. He is working in us and through us. Our Lord knows well what He is doing.

Those who follow Christ should be ready for any fight: for the battles of love, of will, or of hope.

We need to arm ourselves always with God's words. We need to follow the commandment of love regardless of how difficult people are. We need to be armed with His words to be strong willed and we need to stick to our firm hope in Him in order to overcome all the negative thoughts.

**Glory be to God now and forever and ever. Amen**

# Prayer

O' Lord of Hosts, save me for I am a sinner.

My Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me I am the sinner. The fight is tough, and I am weak, very weak, I easily give up, maybe because I am overconfident, I believe in myself that I can fight or struggle. I now admit, I lost all trust in myself, now I only trust in You, and it is only You who can fight all my battles.

Lord, I cannot control my thoughts, my emotions, my laziness, my desires and my doubts. I cry unto You: save me my Saviour; the devil has injured me many times, and gave me hard times, drifting away is easy, while rising up is so hard. Help me O'Lord, for You are my redeemer, my rock and my salvation.

I do not know anyone but You; You change my mind, and reign over my heart, to stand steadfast , focusing on Your grace and Your commandments.

You said I am the light of the world, I am only a ray of You, True Light, I know You want me to shine over this world, but the dark clouds are massive, and people

around are not cooperative, so please help me and strengthen my spirit with Your Holy Spirit, so that I will be able to see Your power, over all the powers of the enemy.

In Your name, with the prayers of all saints and martyrs, please accept my cries.

*Amen*





# Follow Me

## Conclusion

When the first disciples were called by Christ to follow Him, they left everything behind. It was a radical decision, but one that was necessary for the sake of following our Lord. How about us? Would we leave everything and go with Christ if He came to our door today and called us to join Him?

One of the most important things about Christianity is that it was never intended to be merely an intellectual exercise. Following Christ goes far beyond believing certain things about God. It gets down to the issue of faithfulness, commitment, and change.

Am I willing to have my life changed to reflect God's plan for me, or do I expect God to fit Himself into my own plans?

Imagine one of the first disciples saying something like this: "Yes Lord, I would love to come with you. But couldn't we just do everything in a way that won't interfere with the plans I already have in place right here?" Maybe that would have been a natural response at that time. But it wasn't

the way those first disciples handled it; they dropped their nets and left everything.

We often consider our plans and work to be so important, but what if God calls us to drop that work for something better? Then what? Many have heard the call and have made dramatic changes to correspond with God's call on their life. What about us? Have we ever made any significant change to follow Christ? Have we ever sensed that He was calling us to be His disciples?

Following Christ is not just about believing in Him; that is important, but this is not everything. Our Church teaches us that beliefs lead to correct living. And what could be more correct than following the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and doing His will? Yet, there are so many people who live their entire life and never even give God any serious consideration. Imagine that your whole life here on earth without even one day of walking with Christ, what a life could that be?!!

Our Lord told the church in Laodicea: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”(Rev 3 : 20).Do we hear Our Lord saying the same thing to us today?

We make the call. It's our door. It's our future. It's our life to lose, or to maintain. At the end of life, everyone sees why Christ takes all of this stuff so seriously. He would love

for us to take it seriously too, especially now while we still have a choice. The day is coming when that option will no longer be on the table, and the Savior will no longer be knocking at our door, so be wise and follow Him.

# Prayer

*My kind Lord,*

Let me follow You to wherever You go, follow You to the mountains to enjoy Your sermons and prayers.

Follow You to the villages to see how You heal the sick, and relieve all troubles, follow You to the Altar where You teach and preach, answer the questions and reveal the truth.

Let me follow You to the Cross and to the grave with no fears; You are there, The Living among the dead, let me follow You, like those who loved You and left everything, just to follow You.

Let me follow You like St. Peter, follow You in your transfiguration, and raise me up to follow You back after my fall and denial.

Let me follow You like St. Paul, who was stubborn and kicking against the goads, then he surrendered and followed You with all his heart.

Let me follow You, like the Samaritan Woman, Zacchaeus, the Man born blind and Mary Magdalene.

Lord, I love You, but I don't have enough power to follow You, please help me to change inside out, so that I can do it and follow you.

Amen



