

## Discipleship: How to Face Life-Changing Moments Part 2

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### I. Introduction

Many people live lives of quiet desperation, others in loud, screaming desperation, still others in apathy: there are problems in their jobs, marriages, and families and it's been that way for years. But since they believe there's nothing they can do about it, they accept their fate and suffer in silence. Others can't help but say something; their anger bubbles over every time they're confronted by one of their problems. They're not going to go quietly, so year after year they scream and yell. But nothing ever changes; the screaming only makes things worse. They've accepted their fate but very loudly. Then there are others who've lost their taste for life. They've learned that life can be brutal and if you let it get to you, it only hurts you more. So they opt out; they refuse to let life make them cry or laugh. Life becomes meaningless. They're just making time, waiting to die. What if you could live, truly live? What if you truly enjoyed the good times and learned from the bad times?

### II. Discipleship: How to Face Life-Changing Moments

God never intended life to be misery, whether misery you accept, misery you accept with rage, or misery that you avoid by numbing yourself. God has an answer to every upsetting moment. He says, "The Kingdom is here, *repent* and *believe* in the goodnews" (Mark 1:15). He's telling us, "Let Me show you what the problem is and how to fix it." Every time one of these life-altering events happens, it's an opportunity to change the course of our life, to learn from God how to live life successfully and not in quiet desperation, rage or apathy. When we repent, instead of accept it or avoiding it, we're asking, "Lord, how should I respond to this?" And as we analyze the critical event and listen, He tells us what the problem is. But knowing what the problem is doesn't fix it. Repentance shows us how God wants to change our life. But for change to happen we need a plan and action. So after we repent, we must believe.

**Believe: how to face Life-Changing moments successfully**, if we only analyze the event but never do anything about it, we learn nothing and we'll repeat the same mistake. In order for us to walk away wiser, stronger, and more confident in ourselves and the Lord, we have to actually do something about what God said. So once we understand what He said, it's time to answer the second question, "What am I going to do about what the Lord said?" Therefore, after you repent you have to put a plan together, have someone hold you accountable, then act on that plan. You're going to *Plan*, *Account*, and *Act*.

*Plan*, now that you've discovered with the help of your brothers and sisters what the problem is, you need to put a plan together so that you can do what the Lord told you. So once you believe, once you're certain of what God said, it's time to do something about it. It's time to turn your belief into concrete reality. People live what they believe. If you believe you're a loser, you'll live like it. If you believe it's impossible, you'll act like it. If you believe you're stuck in a bad job, career, marriage, etc., then you'll live and act like it. As Christians we're supposed to live what we believe: Hebrews 11:1-12. But you can't jump into action without a plan. Jesus didn't send His disciples out without a plan (Matthew 10; Luke 10:1-17).

To make your plan answer the following questions: what do you believe in and value; what has God taught you about Himself, life, family, and ministry? What's your goal, what do you want to accomplish with this plan? Are your priorities correct (#1 is God, #2 is Spouse/Family, #3 is Job/Career/Ministry)? What do you need to do and is it practical? If others are involved, will they follow the plan or do they prefer another way? By what date/time will you intend to do what's needed (set a definite time limit)? As you answer these questions, you're going to ask the Father about each one and you're also going to ask Him to move the mountains that you can't move (e.g., a great financial burden, overly busy schedule, etc.).

Account, in order for your plan to succeed, for there to be lasting change and growth, you need at least one person holding you accountable to make sure you follow through with your plan. Here are some things to consider and answers to objections some might have:

**Why burden someone else with our problems?** That's what God wants, for us to burden each other with our problems (1 Corinthians 12:26; Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 10:24; James 5:16). We weren't meant to face life alone; we were meant to seek help from each other (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). We're supposed to help each other grow in Christ.

**Will this get uncomfortable?** Yes, it will, after all, we're helping each other overcome something serious, perhaps even a character flaw that we've struggled with for years. So it may get very uncomfortable as we help each other face our flaws. But when we overcome our problem or flaw, our friend(s) will be there to rejoice and celebrate with us.

**I like to keep things private; what if they think less of me?** This is one of the things Satan uses to keep us in the dark, our own pride. We're afraid of how others will see us. But God says, "Confess your sins to one another....that you may be healed." (James 5:16). Letting someone else see our deep flaws is hard, but God's healing awaits us not condemnation. We're not supposed to keep our problems to ourselves in our own private world. Look at Peter (Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62), look at Paul (Acts 22:4; 26:9-11; Galatians 1:13), look at the Lord (Matthew 26:36-39; Luke 22:39-44), did they let us all in on their failures and struggles? Notice how God is not shy about putting our failures on display, especially the flaws of the heroes of the faith. Each one of them was willingly let God reveal their flaws for all to see so that everyone can see God's power to transform the worst of us (Acts 22:4-5; Philippians 3:4-11).

**Isolation is the original curse**, why must we reach out to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, because to do otherwise is to repeat the curse we experienced in the Garden of Eden. We were never meant to live in isolation, to deal with our problems on our own. This is what Satan taught us. Every time we live apart from God and His people, we're inviting ourselves to repeat the mistake of Adam and Eve. It is only when we reach out to God and His people that God frees us from our problems (Genesis 3). The goal of accountability is to help you not hurt you. It will help fix the problems that are causing you greater pain spiritually, emotionally, etc.

**We need to bring our problems into the light**, we need to be open, being open brings things into God's light where we can clearly see what's wrong and what needs fixing (1 John 1:5-10; Ephesians 5:3-14). When our struggle with sin, guilt, and shame (no matter how small) stays in the dark, Satan has us and we'll remain vulnerable. We need to come out into the light where God is calling us (Genesis 3:9).

**Accountability is not someone telling you what to do.** No one is going to force you to be accountable; rather, you're going to invite someone to hold you accountable. It's you asking someone you trust to help you fulfill your plan, to help you obey what God said.

It's a true friend who wants to see God's will for your life become a reality. You want them to remind you of what God told you and of the plan and steps you need to follow to obey what He said. You want them to encourage, challenge, and help you confront your weaknesses. This is how Jesus saw the disciples, as His close friends (John 15:15) and He helped them overcome their faults and failures, e.g., His friend Peter (Matthew 16:21-28; Luke 5:1-10; John 13:36-14:3 [cf. Luke 22:31-34, 54-62]; 21:15-17).

***It takes time to build trust and deep friendships.*** If you don't know a person who can be this kind of friend to you, someone you trust who will encourage and challenge you, then reach out and start to build these kinds of friendships. If you don't know whom to approach, ask the Lord for wisdom and for Him to bring this kind of friend into your life. You want someone who will not remain silent when they see you going astray (Galatians 6:1) for fear that they'll lose your friendship. Instead, you want someone who will challenge and confront you (Proverbs 27:5-6), who'll speak God's Word to you in a way that confronts without criticizing. God commands us to be these kinds of friends to each other (Hebrews 10:24). The disciples were this close to Jesus (Mark 5:37; 9:1-13; 14:32-42; John 15-17; 19:26-27). And to build these kinds of friendships we need to spend time together socially and otherwise.

***"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me"*** Jesus' invitation to be His disciple can only be done in community with Him, which means with Him and His Body, the Church (Colossians 1:24). Notice what Jesus invites us into: He wants us to hitch our life to His and learn from Him, Matthew 11:28-30—why do they put a young ox with an older more mature ox by means of a yoke? Jesus won't allow us to burn out, to make mistakes and if we do, He'll correct them.

Act, we're supposed to live what we believe (Hebrews 11), thus our action is supposed to come out of our confidence in what God has revealed about the problem and its solution. So once you have your plan and a friend to hold you accountable, the next step is to do it. The goal is life-change; you want the Lord to transform the way you live your life and react to it, especially during the critical moments. If you're having trouble following through on your plan, discuss it with your friend. If you have to go through the Repent steps (observe, reflect, discuss) again, then do so: ask yourself, "How did I react and why?" i.e., why did you fail to follow through on the plan? Have you reverted to the lies Satan told you about yourself? Or is it something else? Whatever it is, the Lord and those He brought alongside you will help you follow through and stick to the plan.

Plan, Account, and Act help you answer the other key question, "What am I going to do about what God said?" The more you repeat this process every time you face a life-changing event, the more you will learn to react to life the way Jesus did (1 John 2:6); His character will become yours (2 Corinthians 3:18). Jesus wants to be with you every step of the way, to give you advice on every decision you have to make, especially the tough ones, especially the confusing ones, especially the critical ones. He wants you to hear His voice and then obey it, to repent and believe. To put it simply: when a life-changing event happens, you will ask "How did I react and why?" and "What do I do and who will help me do it?" This is Repent and Believe as you and your fellow brothers and sisters walk together in the Lord's Kingdom seeking His guidance every step of the way.

### III. Conclusion

*"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*