

The Qualities Of A True Christian Leader

Matthew 20:20-22 [New King James] *“Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, ‘What do you wish?’ She said to Him, ‘Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.’ But Jesus answered and said, ‘You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?’ They said to Him, ‘We are able.’”*

Typical of a Jewish mother, [Salome] she wanted what was best for her sons, to rule with Jesus Christ in the Kingdom He had been talking about.

Jesus challenged the two sons by asking if they would *“drink the cup,”* [Matthew 25:39] referring to His crucifixion. **They agreed without really knowing what they were agreeing to.**

Jesus Christ then told them how they could prepare to rule with Him.

Matthew 20:25-27 [New King James] *“But Jesus called them to Himself and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. 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,’”*

Learn by personal attitude and action to be a servant of other human beings.

The Greek word used for “servant” was “*dōulōs*” meaning a bonds slave who had been purchased by his master.

Acts 20:28 [New King James] *“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which **He purchased with His own blood.**”*

Jesus Christ was about to pay the purchase price for all who became His disciples and eventually all humanity, [John 3:16-17].

All who became leaders in the early Christian Church introduced themselves with the same title, [Romans 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1; Revelation 1:1].

A bonds slave was a person with no personal “rights” only personal “responsibilities” towards his master.

All who are called by God the Father to be Christians in the New Testament and His servants in the Old Testament will have their chance to serve with Jesus Christ after His Second Coming.

Revelation 20:4-6, 11-13 [New King James] *“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” ... “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in*

the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.”

To prepare for that opportunity we who are true Christians must have certain attributes in our lives, the first and major attribute is that of a –

Humble, loving bonds slave of Jesus Christ –

Matthew 20:28 [New King James] *“just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*

Study and follow the example of Jesus Christ when He was a human being on earth at His First Coming.

There are in society two kinds of “leaders.” One kind uses the “authority” they have to compel people to obey him as his followers.

The other kind inspires, persuades by personal example for those he leads to follow him.

The authoritarian-type leader generally considers only themselves and the grandeur they hope to produce in their private empire or business, **not** giving proper consideration to the legitimate needs, wishes and hopes of his followers.

You may ask why must I be a leader in God’s Kingdom?

Revelation 21:3-4 [New King James] *“And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’”*

We will have a chance and be given power to make this world a better place, where love and compassion prevail in place of greed, hatred and all the resulting pain and tears.

Another attribute that is needed in a leader is diligence –

Matthew 25:14-30 [NIV] *“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ The man with the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.’ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ Then the man who had received the one talent came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the*

ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

Notice it was the two servants who worked hard to double what they had been given by their master while he was away who were invited into the kingdom, and a joy-filled future.

The lazy servant ended up in outer darkness, well away from the Creator God who lives in the light.

2 Timothy 4:2-5 [New King James] *“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry.”*

This expresses great diligence even if the people are still blinded by Satan to the message you are preaching, [2 Corinthians 4:4] for it will make us well prepared when Satan is silenced and people will respond to the same message, [Revelation 20:1-3].

2 Peter 1:1-11 [New King James] *“Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ: grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, **giving all diligence**, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control **perseverance**, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and **abound**, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”*

Note the words “*diligence*,” “*perseverance*,” “*abound*,” **nothing slothful about what is needed to enter into God’s Kingdom, [verse 11].**

John 4:34-38 [New King James] *“Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, “There are still four months and then comes the harvest”? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: “One sows and another reaps.” I sent you to reap that for which you have not laboured; others have laboured, and you have entered into their labors.’”*

There is an urgent need for our diligently doing the work of witness that we have been called by the Creator God to do.

Slothful people never seek work, and if it comes their way they seek to evade it; **every Christian worker who is effective is diligent.**

Look at the lives of the apostles; how diligent they were!

Think of the colossal amount of work Paul accomplished in his lifetime. Constantly travelling from place to place to preach the gospel message, in the face of great hostility and suffering. Even

when imprisonment restricted Paul's outward movements, it did **not** limit the effectiveness of his ministry as he wrote letters to the churches he could not visit.

At no time did Paul consider his work a burden but a great opportunity to serve his Master Jesus Christ.

Diligence is essential if we are to serve Jesus Christ but diligence is primarily an inward matter and is not measured by outward business.

2 Peter 1:15 [New King James] *“Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.”*

Peter is tirelessly diligent in order to secure diligence in his readers.

What we see in Peter is not just outward activity but an inner urgency, an urgency of spirit that will outlive his human life.

Let us, as dying people, give ourselves with all our powers to the dying people around us, dying in darkened ignorance of why they have human life, and the wonderful future that can be theirs if they yield their lives to the Creator God and seek to please Him.

Romans 12:1 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

Our Creator God is calling for a total surrender to Him so that through the Holy Spirit in us we can be re-educated in our preparation to receiving a place in His Kingdom, [**Romans 12:2**].

Such a surrender and re-education takes great diligence on our part.

Luke 14:25-27, 33 [New King James] *“Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, ‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.’” ... “So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”*

The Greek word translated “hate” is “*misēō*” meaning to love less by comparison.

Our personal salvation, as well as our present and future work as a true Christian, both need diligence on our part.

Stability is another quality that must be found in the life of every Christian worker –

Matthew 7:24 [New King James] *“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:”*

For our life to be stable we not only have to know the teaching of Jesus Christ but apply it to our lives. It is the founding on a rock, that is Jesus Christ Himself, that gives us stability.

Matthew 16:16-17 [New King James] *“Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.’”*

This revelation was given to Peter by God the Father. He could never have made this marvellous discovery by himself.

From the time of this revelation to Peter, Jesus Christ began to tell the disciples something of the sufferings that lay ahead of Him, [Matthew 16:21].

Peter's reaction, [Matthew 16:22-23] and Jesus Christ's rebuke took Peter from the heights of spiritual experience to perilous depths of being an instrument in the hands of Satan.

If Peter was ever to be used by Jesus Christ, he had to undergo a fundamental change.

Matthew 26:31-33 [New King James] *“Then Jesus said to them, ‘All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: “I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.” But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.’ Peter answered and said to Him, ‘Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.’”*

Peter was expressing his heartfelt desire, but he mistook himself for the man he desired to be. Jesus Christ knew why Peter responded as he did, [Matthew 16:41]. **Desire is not enough to have to discipline the body.**

Peter had a fundamental flaw in his character that made him unstable, he was governed by his emotions.

Some people may receive divine revelation but an unstable emotion governed character makes it a hindrance to being used for a divine purpose.

It is possible that our love for Jesus Christ can be little more than sentimental attachment.

Peter was brought through a personal breakdown to discover his own weakness, and his fall was deep enough to shatter his self-confidence.

Matthew 26:75 [New King James] *“And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ So he went out and wept bitterly.”*

When Peter's collapse showed him exactly what kind of person he really was, Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit began to refashion Peter.

Acts 2:4, 14-18 [New King James] *“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” ... “But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy.””*

This was the new Peter driven by an active Holy Spirit in him, not his own self-confidence.

A radical change has to take place in our lives, as in Peter's, if we are to be stable workers for our Saviour and Lord.

Proverbs 17:5 [New King James] *“He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker; he who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.”*

All people are created in the “image” of the Triune God and no-one is fit to be a servant of Jesus Christ who dislikes or despises any one of them.

When we see how the very Son of God, one Person of the Triune God, humbled Himself to become a human being, [John 3:16-17] we see perfect love for humans.

Philippians 2:1-8 [New King James] *“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfil my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”*

Jesus Christ became a human being out of His love for all human beings.

Love for all the human race is a basic requirement for every Christian worker –

For that is the very mind of our Saviour, [Mark 10:45; Luke 19:10; John 10:10].

How can we, who are sinners by nature, hesitate to forgive sinners?

How can we, who are weak, fail to understand the human weaknesses and shortcomings of other human beings?

In the three parables of Luke chapter 15 Jesus Christ shows just how important it is to the Triune God that even one person can receive salvation. Doesn't this show the intensity of God's love for every human being?

To be a true servant of Jesus Christ we need to see the place that every human being has in God's eternal purpose and love of the Eternal God for every human being who will ever exist.

No true Christian worker must ever have or convey the impression that they are doing others a favour by associating with them.

Philippians 2:3-4 [New King James] *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”*

God's servants must be so emptied of self that they are unconsciously humble in the presence of all people.

This same humble attitude must remain even when we are in contact with deceitful people and those of loose morals.

Where would we be today but for the grace of God?

By nature we are as sinful as any other human being, but we are sinners saved by the grace of God, [Romans 5:8].

Matthew 9:12-13 [New King James] *“When Jesus heard that, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: “I desire mercy and not sacrifice.” For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’”*

If we shun sinners what do we hope to accomplish by preaching the gospel message to them?

If we seek those who are “lost,” still blinded by Satan, [2 Corinthians 4:4] we begin to see the preciousness of all human beings to the Triune God.

Another of the qualities that is needed in a Christian worker is the ability to really listen to what people are saying –

Listen to people in an attentive manner with the object of hearing and understanding what they are seeking to convey to us.

We should be able to discern three kinds of speech.

The words being uttered.

The words being held back.

The words they cannot utter, that lie in the depths of their spirit.

In the first place, we must make a point of listening until you know what the person is trying to convey.

This means being quietly before God asking for the Holy Spirit to help us understand, patiently listening right through when the person is laboriously seeking to explain the difficulty.

Listening is *not* an easy matter as we first think.

Our ears must be trained to hear, for unless we are well-disciplined we are making premature conclusions regarding their problem long before they have ceased speaking.

Because we are so impressed with the importance of what we have to tell them, we are just waiting for an opportunity to break into the conversation and take up the role of speaker, hoping of course that they will be good listeners!

It is imperative that all Christians, as we prepare to be used by the Creator God, cultivate the art of listening to what people are saying to be able to understand the specific problem of each individual.

Also, when anyone in need talks to us, while they are speaking we must discern what they are refraining from saying.

It is not unusual for people to tell only half the story and refrain from divulging the rest that is necessary for us to know before we can truly help them.

We must **never** try to “*read between the lines*” of the story, inserting our own thoughts, that were never in the mind of the speaker.

The only solution to this is the working of the Holy Spirit in us, as only He knows the thoughts of the speaker that have not been expressed, [Psalms 139:1-4].

If we do not learn to listen with understanding, even if we become great readers and teachers of God’s Word, the Christian Bible, we will not be able to deal with the personal needs of people.

We must **not** be subjective for this is one reason people are bad listeners. If we have our own conceptions about people we will find it difficult to take in what they are saying because our own mind is already full of our own conclusions.

Psalms 19:13 [New King James] “*Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression.*”

Such a presumptuous attitude of mind is listed in God’s Word as sinful.

We need to learn to enter into the feelings of other people. Even if we listen intently to what the other person is saying we will still be unable to understand their need unless we can enter sympathetically into their circumstances, sharing their joy or grief.

Remember we are as Christians servants of other people, **not** only devoting our time and strength to them but also our affections, [**Matthew 20:28**].

Hebrews 4:14-16 [New King James] *“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*

Jesus Christ is well aware of human weaknesses, having been personally a human being, so going to Him in a time of need we know He is sympathetic to our needs.

As true Christians we also need to express patience and kindness towards others in need, by an active Holy Spirit producing these *“fruits”* in our lives, [**Galatians 5:22-25**].

This is the only way we can sense the true condition of any who come to us as Christians, to understand their condition beyond their own definitions of it.

Another essential quality of Christian leadership is being restrained in speech –

James 3:1-2 [New King James] *“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.”*

Instead of being powerful instruments in the hands of God, as teachers of His Word, the Christian Bible, our life will have little impact on account of unrestrained speech.

James 3:10-12 [New King James] *“Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.”*

If a Christian talks inadvisedly about all sorts of things, how can they expect to be used in teaching people from God’s Word, the Christian Bible?

If the Creator God has ever put His Word on our lips, then a solemn obligation is upon us to guard our lips for His service only, [Ephesians 5:2-5].

Oh, how some love to talk, and love above all to relay what others have said!

Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 [New King James] *“Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil. Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore let your words be few. For a dream comes through much activity, and a fool’s voice is known by his many words. When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed, better not to vow than to vow and not pay. Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands? For in the multitude of dreams and many words there is also vanity. But fear God.”*

A multitude of words is linked to the voice of a fool.

It is essential we exercise strict control over ourselves lest we become in turn preachers of God's Word and relayers of gossip. This tragic state of affairs is more than possible unless we take heed to our mouths we well as our ears.

We have to be watchful lest our natural curiosity betrays us into hearing more than is good for us to know.

If anyone shares their problems with us, that is a trust we must respect.

We **must** learn to safeguard every confidence placed in us by others, for people who cannot bridle their tongues cannot be entrusted with work given by the Creator God to serve other human beings.

Words that have once escaped our lips cannot be recovered, they may take on a life of their own passing from ear to mouth and mouth to ear spreading damage as they go.

A Christian leader in training must avoid subjectivity, that is a person who is so self-opinionated that they are almost unteachable –

There are endless lessons to be learned in the spiritual realm, so we must be prepared to receive help from the Creator God through the active presence of the Holy Spirit.

John 16:13 [New King James] *“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”*

For this to happen we must be led by the Holy Spirit, [Romans 8:14]. In fact unless this is happening in our lives we cannot be children of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ to the future planned by God the Father for all humanity, [Romans 8:16-17].

Inability to be guided by the Holy Spirit is one of the consequences of a subjective state of mind.

God demands instant acceptance of His Word, the Christian Bible, as the Holy Spirit opens it up to us, [John 16:13].

In Abraham's offering up of his son Isaac we get a beautiful picture of a man who was saved from himself.

If Abraham had consulted his own experience when God told him to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice, he would never have obeyed, [Genesis 22:1-13].

Unless our ego [subjectivity] has been laid bare to us by God and drastically dealt with, we cannot be fit instruments in His hands to deal with other people's lives.

Whether intentionally or otherwise if a person has **not** been humbled by the Creator God they will seek to impose their opinions on others.

They may pose as a great teacher or wonderful “*father*” of the flock, their impressive “*leadership*” will **not** express the divine authority or will of God because their lives are dominated by their own will, **not** the will of God.

Matthew 20:25-26 [New King James] *“But Jesus called them to Himself and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.’”*

A true leader in training to become a good shepherd of God's flock, His people, will have the mind of a servant –

A bonds slave of Jesus Christ, purchased by Jesus Christ's blood, [Acts 20:22; 1 Peter 1:18-19].

The Greek word translated "slave" is "dōulōs" meaning a bonds slave, one with **no** personal "rights" only responsibilities towards their master.

The apostles introduced themselves using the word "dōulōs," [Romans 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1; Revelation 1:1].

John 15:1-5 [New King James] *"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."*

Unless we are joined to Jesus Christ through the active Holy Spirit within us, [Romans 8:9 – "spirit of Christ"] we can accomplish nothing of lasting value.

Philippians 2:1-4 [New King James] *"Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfil my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."*

For only a mind like this is the "mind of Jesus Christ," [Philippians 2:5-8].

Romans 12:1 [NIV] *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship."*

This surrender to Jesus Christ has to be complete, the Greek word used for "bodies" is "soma" meaning whole life, physical body, mind and "human" spirit, [Job 32:8; 1 Corinthians 2:11; Proverbs 20:27].

Romans 12:2 [NIV] *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will."*

Only then will the Holy Spirit re-educate our minds to conform with that of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.

A leader in training is still in a physical body that needs to be disciplined –

1 Corinthians 9:23 [New King James] *"I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings."*

Paul introduces himself as a preacher of the gospel message brought from God the Father by Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 [New King James] *"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last for ever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man*

beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

The discipline that Paul applies to his body is no half measure but strong. The Greek word used is “*hupōpiazō*” meaning to buffet, subdue one’s passions. This is **not** referring to an ascetic attitude of mind, for Paul in the same letter declares the body of the believer to be the Temple of the Holy Spirit, [1 Corinthians 6:19].

Paul is **not** subjecting himself to all this discipline for nothing, he had a clear objective in view, and was making straight for that goal, an imperishable, eternal crown, [Revelation 2:10].

In our race in life, [1 Corinthians 9:24] the athlete has to undergo strict disciplined training to have any chance of winning the race. This also applies to every Christian who is seeking that crown that will not fade away, [1 Peter 5:4] who must also conform to the rules, [2 Timothy 2:5].

If we have not yet brought our body under control we need to start right away.

Any pleasure we have in God’s work will have little value for those we seek to serve if our life is still dominated by physical cravings, [1 Corinthians 9:27].

What does it mean to run a race? [1 Corinthians 9:24]

It means doing something exceptional. Normally we walk along in life, but on the race track the body is called upon to put forth extra effort.

When Jesus Christ sought physical support in His final hours before His crucifixion from His disciples, their bodies gave in to the demand of sleep, [Matthew 26:41]. Their “*spirit was willing but their flesh was weak.*”

Nicodemus came to Jesus Christ at night, yet Jesus talked to him at leisure in spite of it being this late hour, [John 3:1-21].

Jesus Christ spent all night in prayer, [Luke 6:12]. This was before He chose the apostles. This shows how He would **not** allow sleep to encroach upon His ministry.

I am **not** advocating that Christian leaders in training make a habit of spending nights in prayer, for this could damage the body and mind, for it is abnormal, but it is normal for the servants of Jesus Christ to sacrifice their sleep at times in His service.

The same principles apply to the matter of eating and drinking. Under special circumstances Jesus Christ abstained from food, [Matthew 4:1-2].

Matthew 9:14-15 [New King James] “*Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, ‘Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.’”*

Jesus Christ said that His disciples would fast after He left them, [Acts 13:2-3; Acts 10:30; Acts 14:23; 1 Corinthians 7:3-5].

If we can never forego a meal when the work of Jesus Christ demands our immediate attention we will do but little effective work.

1 Corinthians 4:11-13 [New King James] “*To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labour, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; 13 being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.”*

If we are true bondslaves of Jesus Christ, serving Him must have priority over all else.

The Creator God gave us a body with certain impulses that are perfectly legitimate, but He created the body to be our servant, not our master, until that is established we cannot serve Him as we ought.

A Christian leader in training must develop a mind that is willing to endure suffering –

1 Peter 4:1-2 [New King James] *“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.”*

Peter was repeating what Jesus Christ had said to him and the other disciples just before He suffered the excruciating pain of the crucifixion, [**John 16:2, 33**].

Revelation 2:8-10 [New King James] *“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, ‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.’”*

One example of the suffering that the true church will suffer.

If it is a settled matter in our mind that we are willing to accept the way of suffering for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, then trials will never take us unawares.

James 1:2-4 [New King James] *“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be **perfect** and complete, lacking nothing.”*

The Greek word translated “**perfect**” is “*tēlēiōs*” meaning completeness from a root word meaning **to attain the goal aimed for.**

The question arises, to what extent should we be prepared to suffer? –

“Be faithful unto death,” [**Revelation 2:10**].

In all of the seven churches listed in Revelation we see the statement “he who overcomes.” What is meant by this statement, overcome what?

Let scripture answer this question!

Revelation 12:11 [New King James] *“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.”*

The “*him*” is Satan and his evil influence, [**verse 9**].

“*They*” refers to fellow Christians, [**verse 10**].

Satan’s influence, [**2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19; Ephesians 2:2**] is what is overcome using the gospel message of Jesus Christ bringing salvation to all human beings and their own personal example of Christian living, [**Matthew 5:16**] and a willingness to face persecution to the point of death.

With such a willingness, all of Satan’s assaults against us will be futile.

Satan scoffed at the idea that Job could possibly serve God without any desire for self-preservation.

Job 2:4-5 [New King James] *“So Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!’”*

God had already allowed Satan to destroy all of Job’s family and possessions, [**Job 1:18-19**] but Job in no way cursed God but worshipped Him, [**Job 1:20-22**] even when the only member of his family not killed by Satan, Job’s wife, suggested that Job cursed God and killed himself, [**Job 2:9**].

The account of Job, like that of Christians in Revelation, shows Satan’s impotence to overcome those who disregard their own lives and are willing to suffer for their work as instruments in the hands of the Creator God to fulfil His will among human beings.

Romans 12:1 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

This total surrender to the Creator God, out of gratitude for what He has done for all humanity through Jesus Christ, is the response we should be making in our lives.

The Greek word translated “bodies” is “soma” meaning whole life, our physical body, mind and “human” spirit, [**Job 32:8; Proverbs 20:27; 1 Corinthians 2:11**].

Romans 12:2 [NIV] *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

The Triune God will then re-educate our minds to be in harmony with His and **not** this Satan-influenced society.

The Christian leader in training will be loyal to the truth –

John 14:6 [New King James] *“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”*

Jesus Christ’s life and teaching are the truth.

John 17:17 [New King James] *“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”*

All of God’s Word, the Christian Bible, is the truth for it is inspired by the Holy Spirit who is One Person of the Triune God, [**2 Peter 1:20-21**].

This loyalty to the Word of God must have priority in the life of every Christian being trained for leadership in the Kingdom of God.

It is possible that people may modify the truth because they are influenced by certain religious leaders, or by circumstances, or by their own desires. Yet the truth is absolute and demands undeviating loyalty of all people teaching it under all circumstances.

We must never seek to bend the truth to our purpose, but always bow to it.

The standards expressed in God’s Word must never be lowered to blend in with our personal standards.

Psalms 19:12-14 [New King James] *“Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me.*

Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.”

Presumptuous sin is when we obscure the true meaning of God’s Word where it is to our disadvantage.

The truth of God is absolute, it is **not** the fact that this or that person supports the truth or makes something “*the truth.*”

But there is in any human being a tendency to conclude that if someone we think is “*spiritual*” goes a certain way, that must be the right way.

The question is **not** one person’s reaction to the Truth, but of the Truth itself as expressed in God’s Own Word, the Christian Bible.

The numerous divisions in the Church and the many dissensions in the work of the Church of Jesus Christ would be eliminated if only our personal preferences could be eliminated.

If we allowed Jesus Christ who is the Word of God, [**John 1:1**] the Truth, [**John 14:6**] and head of the Church, not some human being who takes on that title, [**Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 1:18**].

When our one and only consideration is the Creator God’s will, as expressed in His Word, the Christian Bible, we are saved many fruitless decisions and speedily reach clear conclusions in our personal life and the life of any fellowship of true Christians.

The truth is far too great to need our manipulation of it. We can well trust in its inherent authority to make its own impact on the lives of any human being whom God is calling at this time for their chance of salvation, [**John 6:44; Isaiah 49:8; 2 Corinthians 6:2**].

Also only those who cling to the Truth will be used to teach those who come through the tribulation at the time of Jesus Christ’s Second Coming, [**Revelation 20:4-6**] and all who have never even heard of Jesus Christ as the only Saviour or God’s Word, [**Revelation 20:11-13**].