

**Series: Characteristics of a Devout Christian**  
**Title: The Discipline of Reaching Out**  
**Text: Matthew 28:19**

## **Introduction**

*"Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth." – John Wesley*

*"Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you're not saved yourself, be sure of that!" - Charles H. Spurgeon*

<sup>16</sup> Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. <sup>17</sup> When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> 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, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen. – Matthew 28:16-20

How would you change the world if you could? Would you eradicate poverty, disease, or ignorance, or would you put an end to war, famine, and all the useless violence and destruction?

The truth is, changing the world is an inside-out job, not an outside-in job. The Bible says we look at the outward appearance of things, but God looks deep into the heart and reveals a person's real motivation. Our world today is changing right before our very eyes. A person's virtue and character will determine whether this change will be good or bad. America can only become a better place if the people themselves become better people.

The book of Exodus records Moses leading God's people out of slavery to the Promised Land. That is God's plan for each of us. God wants to lead you out of slavery (whatever that is for you) and lead you to a life filled with passion and purpose. When Israel turned away from God, they became discontent and complained about their situations and blamed God for their circumstances. So what did God do? He offered them a fresh start! It was a fresh new start based on a new way of living, not based on ideas or philosophy. God challenged the people to change their behaviors.

God gave them ten rules to live by and said, "If you live by these Ten Commandments I give you, your life and this world will be a better place to live. The Ten Commandments are timeless rules.

1. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
3. Keep the Sabbath day holy.

4. Honor your Father and mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

If you take this list and watch the nightly news, you will see how each story of misery and gloom results from a broken commandment. Can you imagine what America would be if people could just keep these ten rules for life?

Amid astounding technological and medical advancement, our society's moral and ethical foundations are crumbling right before our eyes. And no one is willing to take any responsibility for it! We've convinced ourselves that whatever happens, it's someone else's fault and someone else's responsibility. What's worse is that many people today have no hope for a better future. Many people believe the world situation is rather hopeless.

But that is not the picture a devout Christian sees! Devout Christians believe this is the church's finest hour! They believe that no matter how desperate the situation, there always something God can do about it! That's why devout Christians believe they can and do make a difference.

Changing the world is the mission of a devout Christian. Empowered by Christ, Christians are the most positive and powerful change agents in our world. Devout Christians throughout the ages have spread hope and help even in the darkest moments of history. But there are a growing number of people who think the world would be a better place without Christians. Christians, however, know that Jesus is and has always been the world's greatest hope! Devout Christians believe their mission is to deliver this message to as many people as possible.

What if Christians across the nation could unite on God's ten rules? We could elect moral and ethical leaders and rid our country of the corruption destroying America. No wonder Satan works so hard in our culture to produce this hypersensitive, politically correctness that preaches tolerance as the ultimate twenty-first-century virtue. We live in a country that now tolerates the perverse to the insane! The one thing our country will not tolerate any longer is the right to worship God. Our culture extends tolerance to every kind of belief and behavior, except Christianity. It is time for Christians in America to wake up! A small yet powerful control group is doing everything possible to marginalize Christians and Christianity as a small group of idiotic fanatics.

Satan knows that Christians are a dynamic force to be reckoned if they ever rise up and exercise their faith and influence. Satan is fully aware of how powerful the church can be when anointed and inspired by the Holy Spirit. He has witnessed it in many parts of the globe throughout history.

- The Early Church went everywhere preaching the gospel.
- The Reformation brought tremendous change to the world.
- The great Welch Revival and all the subsequent Revival Movements have been of great consternation source for the Devil.

Our primary mission is to help people discover their need for Christ and receive the gift of Eternal Life! Our ultimate goal is to prepare people for eternity. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world." His kingdom is not like any worldly kingdom. When the kingdom of Christ reigns in this world, it will be a kingdom of peace. It will be a place where even the lion and the lamb get along. It will be a place where people practice honest virtue and impeccable character. This is the vision of a devout Christian.

Devout Christians develop a discipline of reach out to the world with Christ's message of hope and salvation. They refuse to become prophets of doom and gloom. They believe with all their hearts that God wants to show us a better way to live. As it turns out, God has a plan for each person to experience His very best for their life. It's been in place from before the beginning of time.

The Creator wants to develop an enduring and eternal relationship with us. His love is so comprehensive that God reaches out in grace to the whole world. Devout Christians are devoted to sharing this message of faith called the gospel of Christ.

Devout Christians are willing to reach out to all persons who don't know Jesus.

## **I. Devout Christians Live Transformed Lives**

Once you experience the love and grace of Christ, you realize how wonderful it is to be one of His disciples. Everything begins to fall into place when you give your life to Christ. Devout Christians know that God uses truth, beauty, and goodness to transform people from living self-centered to God-centered lives.

For some people, the truth of scripture shines on their intellectual search and wins their heart for God. For others, nature reveals God. The heavens declare God's glory, and the earth shows forth his handiwork. Others are won through the sacrifice and witness of those dedicated in service to Christ.

Devout Christians really get it! They know what a significant difference Jesus makes in a person's life. The average Christian believes in God and knows Christ died for them, but they don't feel compelled to share Christ with others. Dynamic Christians know you can't assume people know God. They do not leave this matter to chance. They are bold in sharing their faith with others and assertive in asking others to consider becoming followers of Christ themselves.

Statistics reveal that people are leaving the church today at an alarming rate. It's not that they have decided to quit going to church. It's because they have no serious commitment to serve Christ. A soccer tournament this Sunday, a swim meet the next Sunday, and it isn't long until worship and church is no longer a

priority. It's not because Christianity has nothing to offer. It's just that competing activities have caused them to drift away.

Devout Christians realize you can't leave people to find Christ on their own. They'll never do it! Devout Christians specifically and intentionally help people to learn and grow in faith. Becoming a Christian begins with personal transformation. God wins us one at a time. How were you won to Christ? Are you open to being won? Do you need to be won back?

## **II. Devout Christians Grow In Faith**

Devout Christians give attention to building their faith. They are always growing in their knowledge and love for Christ. And they not only do this for themselves, but they also encourage others to grow as well. They are deliberate and intentional in challenging others to grow spiritually.

Devout Christians are mentors in the faith. Average Christians need mentors in the faith. Devout Christians make the gospel come alive as they teach and challenge others to live the Christian life. A solid faith doesn't happen all at once. But little by little, your spiritual life begins to blossom and grow.

Devout Christians listen to the Holy Spirit as he directs them to become better disciples. As spiritual mentors, they reach out and help people find answers to their questions about God. People have questions about prayer, questions about the Bible, questions about life, legitimate questions that need answers.

Devout Christians are not afraid to reach out and engage people in dialog and discussion on any subject or in any area of faith. They know you don't have to have all the answers to help someone else grow in faith. But you must be willing to help them find the answers as they seek God for them.

Devout Christians believe God has answers to all of our questions. We grow in faith when we learn to trust God while we're still searching for some of those answers. Spiritual growth does not happen just because we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior. We need a process that is intentional and productive. We grow in faith when we reach out and help others grow in their faith.

## **III. Devout Christians Believe In Discipleship**

God calls every believer to share their faith with others, but devout Christians actually do it! But how you show people the way to Christ is crucial. You can't browbeat or guilt-trip a person into a lasting relationship. Lasting relationships are developed over time and require a lot of grace and mercy to survive.

Devout Christians show others the way of Christ through their friendship, generosity, and honesty. They look for and find answers to the questions people have about their faith in Christ.

Devout Christians are easy to talk to and generally friendly people. They are genuine and authentic. They are honest and trustworthy. Devout Christians are not right about everything, nor do they pretend to be. However, they are persistent in their quest to know God and share his love with others. For them, Christian friendship is not just about sharing common interests; it is about helping others connect with their God-created purpose in life. It takes time to convince people that your friendship is genuine, but it is this type of relationship that reveals to others that God is real and that He cares about people.

Devout Christians go out of their way to show people how to experience the generosity of God's love through the redemption and sacrifice of Christ. Devout Christians don't just tell you how to live the Christian life; they show you how to live it. They know that faith is more caught than taught, so they demonstrate by example, their faith in Jesus Christ.

They don't just talk the talk; they walk the walk.

## **Conclusion**

The early Christians were dynamic evangelists. They believed Jesus was God's Son sent to redeem them from their sins. They believed Jesus came to rescue everyone, not just a few Jews! They weren't selling a program or a concept; they offered a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. It wasn't a sermon or teaching that made Christianity so effective in the first century; it was meeting Jesus that changed their lives.

Jesus gives a person an eternal purpose. Many people today have no real purpose. Many people are disillusioned with government programs, politics, and religious leaders who offer empty promises of meaningless change. People today need help and hope! Maybe you need help! Our world is exploding in chaos and violence from the stress and relentless failures of our leaders. If ever the world needed a savior, today is the day.

Sadly, many Christians are not engaged in a growing faith and have nothing to offer their friends and family spiritually. Going to church is a duty rather than a joy and delight! The challenge for the church today is to reintroduce people to Jesus; to let Christ become an active part of their life again.

The early believers gave up the temporal for the eternal. They gave up the stress and pressures of worldly success for the peace and joy and fellowship of God. When it comes to faith, you cannot share with others what you have not experienced yourself.

Many people need to be set free again from the bondage of this world. We need Christians to rediscover the power of Pentecost and the difference Holy Spirit leadership can make. The Holy Spirit is here to help you, but he isn't going to make you do the right thing. You still have a choice. You still must choose God

over the world. But when you do, you will find yourself sharing Christ with others through the real-life experiences that you've personally encountered.

Through prayer and study, generosity, and evangelism, we are transformed from a casual or average Christian into a dynamic person of faith. The first Christians had a contagious faith. They lived their faith, and God blessed them, and the church flourished. When was the last time you stepped outside your comfort zone to share the gospel with someone you know really needed God's help?

Reaching out is at the core of every devout Christian's life. Reaching out to others is what confirms our faith and revitalizes our passion and zeal for Christ. It is the heart of our commission and mission for Christ. We are to go into our world and proclaim the good news that God has come to help and rescue them.

So, what can you do about it? How can you get involved? Well, I'm glad you asked that question. One thing you can do is the next time someone tells you about a situation or problem they are facing, tell them you are going to pray for them, and then do it! Let them know you're praying for them by sending them some scripture verses that deal with their kind of situation. Check back with them to confirm God is at work in their life! Try inviting someone to attend church with you. Get them and bring them. Or meet them at church and sit with them. Or take them to lunch following the service.

I challenge you to do just one thing each week for a month and see if it doesn't spark a new enthusiasm in your faith. If each of us would do just one reach out for Jesus a week, think what a tremendous difference it would make.

We can change our world. But that change occurs one person at a time. Christ is counting on us! It is our faith that overcomes the world. In Matthew 22:37, Jesus said the greatest commandment is to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind...and then...love your neighbor as yourself." That is our mission! That is our passion! So, why not do something to reach out this week to bring someone closer to Christ?