

NKJV STUDY BIBLE

WHO CHRIST CALLS YOU TO BE

5-DAY DEVOTIONAL



DAY 1

“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Matt. 5:14–16

Christ Calls You to Be a Light in a Dark World

For many people, this world is a dark place. They feel lost, lonely, helpless. They need somewhere to turn for guidance and hope. Jesus understood that need, so He made provisions to counteract the darkness. He tasked His followers with providing the necessary light for the world.

That may seem like an immense challenge, especially when darkness threatens to overwhelm us. The good news is that we’re not called to generate our own light. We’re called only to reflect Christ’s light (see John 1:4). Yet even that isn’t always easy.

The temptation to hide our light—to put our lamp under a basket—can be intense at times. After all, when you let your light shine, you draw attention to yourself. You invite scrutiny. If you’re not naturally comfortable in the role of a beacon, you may find that it takes some getting used to.

You may also find that some people—those who have grown comfortable in the darkness—don’t appreciate your light. They may try to dim it by knocking you off your lampstand. You’ll need to steel yourself against accusations of hypocrisy or intolerance. You’ll need to prepare to have your past thrown in your face. You’ll need to find ways to prevent people from sowing seeds of doubt in your life.

The best way to prepare for those possibilities is to draw closer to the source of life. According to 1 John 1:5–7, when you walk with Christ, you walk in His light. When other people interact with you, they experience His light too. They may not always recognize it for what it is, but they can sense something in you that lifts the darkness.

The closer you get to the source of light, the brighter your own light will shine. You get close to Jesus by following His lead. You study His light-giving qualities in the gospels—the way He prioritized hurting people, the way He spoke truth to power and called out hypocrisy, the way He drew comfort and strength from time alone with His Heavenly Father, the way He used Scripture to counter His enemies.

The risks of being a light bearer are real. But so are the rewards. Your light may be the only source of illumination some people have. By reflecting Jesus’ glory and pointing the way to Him, you have the potential to change their lives forever.

Day 1: The prophet Jeremiah brought light to Israel during a time of suffering. Visit <http://bibl.es/BringLight> to see how he can inspire you.

DAY 2

“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me. . . . Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’”

Matt. 25:34–36, 40

Christ Calls You to Be a Champion of the Poor and Needy

Why doesn't God do something to help people who are poor, needy, or suffering?

That question (or some variation of it) lies at the heart of countless struggles and doubts concerning the Christian faith. You can find any number of theological explanations about the nature of suffering. But there's a more immediate answer that shouldn't be overlooked.

In fact, God has done something about it. He has entrusted the sacred task of caring for the poor and needy to Jesus' followers. He has given us the responsibility to make a difference in the lives of people who need it most.

The job is not a popular one. There's little prestige in it—at least as prestige is measured in earthly terms. Caring for the poor and needy aligns with the theme of “downward mobility” that runs throughout Christ's teachings: “So the last will be first, and the first last” (Matt. 20:16). “But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matt. 23:11).

Jesus doesn't give His followers the option of treating those who are poor and needy as an annoyance or writing them off as a

blight on society or arguing that they deserve their fate. Instead, He asks us to do something extraordinarily difficult. He asks us to see Him when we look at them.

Embracing that concept requires us to rethink not only our prejudices but also the lens through which we look at other people. The homeless man with the scraggly beard and overpowering stench whose story is written in faded marker on the cardboard sign he holds every day? That's Jesus. The office cleaning lady who speaks no English and seems terribly sad lately? She's Jesus. The coworker whose social awkwardness is almost painful to watch? Jesus too.

The question is, what will we do for Him?

We may be tempted to think of Jesus' challenge as a burden. In reality, it's a rare opportunity. Every day we have the chance to do something meaningful for Jesus Himself, the Savior of the world. We can help Him by caring for the people He most closely identifies with.

Day 2: What did Jesus mean when He said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.”? Visit <http://bibl.es/JesusAndPoor> to explore.

DAY 3

“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.”

2 Cor. 9:6–7

Christ Calls You to Be a Generous Giver

Jesus sets a high bar when it comes to our financial responsibility. He calls us not only to give but also to give with a generous spirit. Yet what He gives us is not a financial burden; it is an opportunity—a chance to demonstrate a mature, active, and difference-making faith. As the devastated rich young ruler discovered in Mark 10:17–22, a person’s attitude toward money and possessions reveals more about him or her than perhaps the person cares to know.

For one thing, giving generously demonstrates proper gratitude to God. When we give, we acknowledge what has been given to us. We give to others from the bounty of God’s blessings in our life. Generosity is an outflow of our celebration of God’s goodness.

Our giving also demonstrates a proper attitude toward God. In Matthew 6:1–4, Jesus instructs us to give with as little fanfare as possible. In fact, our generosity should be so low-key that our left hand doesn’t know what our right hand is doing. That prevents us from wrongly receiving credit for God’s work. It also focuses people’s attention on Him. If God doesn’t receive all the glory for our giving, we’re doing something wrong. That presents a very real challenge in our social-media-obsessed society, where news of generous acts routinely goes viral.

Our giving also reveals a heart for others. In order for us to give as God instructs us to do, we must be aware of others’ needs—the needs of the church, the needs of various ministries, the needs of friends and acquaintances who are experiencing difficulties, the needs of people in our community. The more we search for ways to give generously, the more we become aware of people’s needs.

Generous giving is a key element of discipleship because it acknowledges that we trust God to supply our needs. In Mark 12:41–44, Jesus staked out the temple treasury, where people came to make their offerings. He watched several ostentatious givers loudly announce their gifts by tossing handfuls of bronze coins into the trumpet bell that served as a collection device. Yet the only offering that truly moved Him came from a widow who quietly offered two mites—coins that had very little value to anyone but her. That’s because they were all she had.

The faithfulness, obedience, and trust of her offering made it priceless in God’s eyes. And if we give with the same spirit, our gifts will accomplish much.

Day 3: Take a closer look at what Christian giving means.

Visit <http://bibl.es/NewTestamentGiving>.

DAY 4

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Gal. 3:28

Christ Calls You to Unity and Fellowship

In his letter to the Galatian church, the Apostle Paul offers a glimpse of the demographics of heaven. And it looks like paradise. If there were a census in heaven, it would ask only one question: Is Jesus your Lord and Savior? Everything else is incidental.

But Paul is not necessarily talking about heaven in Galatians 3. He’s talking about the church—Christ’s followers in this world. The unity of our shared purpose far outweighs any differences in race, gender, or background. In 1 Corinthians 12:12–31, Paul uses the human body as an analogy for the church. Within the body, various parts have different features, different functions, and different ways of working. But they share a common goal—one that unites them profoundly and overrides their differences. Like the parts of the human body, Christ’s followers work together and depend on one another to accomplish Christ’s work.

The unity to which Christ calls us can serve as an example to the world. It can inspire and give hope to people who know little about Christ. Learning to embrace—and celebrate—the unique set of cultural mores, personal experiences, and God-given gifts and sensibilities that every believer brings to the work of Christ is one of the most powerful forms of outreach the church has to offer.

A lack of unity within a church can have a devastating effect on its outreach. If people look to the church and see fractious relationships, backbiting, and internal warfare, they will likely, and justifiably, chalk it up to hypocrisy. For many, it will confirm their worst suspicions about Christianity. If they see there’s nothing special about the way Christ’s followers interact with one another, they may question Christ’s ability to change lives. If, on the other hand, people see loving concern, cooperation, encouragement, accountability, and “iron-sharpening iron,” they may be inspired to investigate Christ further.

Romans 12:18 gets to the heart of the matter: “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.” You may be surprised by how much does depend on you—that is, how much unity you can inspire simply by developing a Christlike heart for others.

The walls that separate us are much more fragile than they seem. If you take the time, effort, and risk to reach out to other believers, especially those who are different from you, you’ll find that those walls can be toppled in no time.

Day 4: To learn more about how you can align yourself within the body of Christ and create relationships, check out <http://bibl.es/WeAreFamily>.

DAY 5

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

2 Tim. 3:16–17

Christ Calls You to Equip Yourself

Paul knew he was facing imminent death when he wrote his second letter to his protégé, Timothy. His words are a summary of a life filled with hard-earned lessons. None is more profound than the conclusion he draws in 2 Timothy 3:16–17: Everything you need for your walk with Christ can be found in God’s Word.

Every other writer of Scripture would certainly concur. In Psalm 119:105, the psalmist wrote, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” The Bible illuminates the road God has laid out before us and directs us on our journey. It reveals pitfalls and dangers along the way. The more time we spend in its pages, studying it and looking for ways to apply it to our lives, the better prepared we’ll be to make wise decisions along the way.

In Ephesians 6:17, Paul describes God’s Word as a sword, the final piece of spiritual armor necessary for battling Satan. Jesus Himself demonstrated the effectiveness of Scripture as a defensive weapon when He was tested by Satan in the wilderness. Three times Satan tempted Jesus to take a shortcut through God’s plan. Three times Jesus countered his temptation by quoting Scripture. The Word of God proved too powerful for the tempter. Unable to mount a defense against it, Satan left Jesus.

In 1 Corinthians 9:24–27, Paul describes the Christian life as a lifelong race, one that requires every bit of strength, discipline, and endurance we possess. In that analogy, the Bible is a training manual. It shows us how faith and actions work together to propel us forward. It traces the connection between tribulation, perseverance, character, and hope. It offers tantalizing glimpses of the prizes that await us at the finish line. It also provides detailed snapshots of the races run by others. We can find inspiration in the stories of Joseph, Esther, Job, and Daniel. Likewise, we can learn from the mistakes of people like Moses, Samson, David, and Peter.

As is the case with any tool, weapon, or resource, the more you know about God’s Word, the more effectively you’ll be able to use it when you need it. That’s why Jesus calls us to equip ourselves—to become masters of Scripture. In Psalm 119:11, the psalmist wrote, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.” He immersed himself in Scripture so deeply that he could draw on it from within. That’s the kind of equipping we should aim for.

Day 5: If you would like to know what else Paul told Timothy, visit <http://bibl.es/EncourageTimothy>.