

Seven Steps to Discipleship

by Bruce Wilkinson

The sermon outlines seven steps to discipleship: seeking God, cleaning up your act, giving money to God's work, stewardship, prioritizing Scripture, and forsaking everything else.

Duration: 59:27

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 34:8-35

Topics: "Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of making a covenant with the Lord and following His commandments with all of one's heart and soul. The speaker emphasizes that until this covenant is made, worldly goals such as business success and accumulation of wealth will continue to rule our lives. The sermon also highlights the common tendency for Christians to believe that giving money to the church is enough involvement in God's work. However, true commitment to God goes beyond financial contributions and requires a deep understanding and application of the Scriptures. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the need to view our possessions as entrusted to us by God and to use them for His ministry.

Transcript

I love to read books, and this past year I've spent quite a bit of my book reading time in non-religious areas because of a need in my own life, and I've been reading in the area of business. And some of the better books that I've been reading, I'm sure some of you businessmen have read also, obviously the number one for this past year was *In Search of Excellence*, some of you have probably gone through that with your staff, and the *One Minute Manager* came out, and the *One Minute Father* came out, and the *One Minute Mother* came out, and the *One Minute Salesman* came out, and the book on people management, very fascinating book, the hundred best companies in USA to work for as far as the employees are concerned. Fascinating book, I read that whole thing hunting for my first Christian owned company, didn't find any.

Then of course a very interesting one, *Autobiography of Lee Iacocca*, that was interesting. *What They Don't Teach You at the Harvard Business School*, that was fascinating. One of them that helped me a lot and also gave me some input that enabled me to help some of my friends was a book called *The Corporate Steeplechase*, and that was there are predictable crises in the business career, and that most of us go through those crises, and they studied thousands of men in business for the past twenty years,

and they isolated a number of different stages that people went through, and I saw myself in the various stages, and also perhaps had a glimpse what might be in store ahead of me, and that created a thought in my mind, I wonder if there are any predictable crises in a growth of a disciple, and if there were, I wonder if we could find a passage in scripture that perhaps might give us some insight, and I found what nestled away in the middle of the Old Testament.

I guess if I were to turn to a book in the Old Testament that I read the most as a president, besides the book of Proverbs, it is the book of Second Chronicles, because in that it's God's appraisal of leadership on a practical basis. Take your Bible with me, and let's turn to Second Chronicles, Chapter 34. Second Chronicles, Chapter 34.

As you might know, Israel and Judah split down the middle, and nineteen kings ruled in Israel in the north, and in the south of the nation of Israel there were twenty kings that ruled. Out of the nineteen kings that ruled Israel in the north, not one of them was a good king, and of the twenty kings that ruled Judah in the south, there were eight good kings of the twenty. Undoubtedly one of the best of those eight was the man we want to study tonight.

His name is the name Josiah. Follow along, verse one of chapter 34. Josiah was eight years old when he became king and reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem, and he did what was right in the sight of the Lord and walked in the ways of his father David.

He did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the Lord God of his father David, and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images, and they broke down the altar of the Baals in his presence, and the incense altars which were above them he cut down, and the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images he broke in pieces, and made dust of them, and scattered them in the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. He also burned the bones of the priests on their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem.

So he did in the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, and as far as Naphtali, and all around with axes. And when he had broken down the altars and the wooden images, and had beaten the carved images into powder, and cut down all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem. Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the temple, he sent Shaphan, the governor of the city, and the recorder to repair the house of the Lord his God.

And it goes on to tell the story of the repair of the temple. Let's stop there for a moment. I think the first step that is a predictable event in the life of a disciple is the first one in verse three.

He began to seek the Lord God of his father David. After a person is a believer, in most cases they do not begin to seek the Lord right off the bat. In fact, in most cases, especially in business careers, unless you are very fortunate to have a navigator who disciplines you, it will be years before the seeking like this takes place.

If you are like the average Christian business person, or wife of a business person, this probably were years after you were saved that you really began to seek the Lord yourself. And usually it takes place after the mid-twenties, into the later twenties, and oftentimes into the mid-thirties, before the first stage of a disciple really begins to take place. Oftentimes men are so busy trying to make it that they don't have time to realize that there's anything missing.

So busy trying to climb the mat or make that life goal before you're thirty-five that you do all the things you have to as far as religion is concerned, but as far as the seeking is there, oftentimes that's not there. But eventually in a believer, a time comes when an emptiness is felt. It's not usually from a sermon, not usually from a book, not usually from anything, and it's not usually a big blast that comes out of heaven.

It's a slow wind that blows every once in a while in which you feel there must be something more than this. It's in the eighth year of his reign. That wouldn't be uncommon, eight years after you become a Christian before you seriously start to seek, where you realize Christianity must be something more than I have because oftentimes it's empty.

I go through the rituals, but there's no relationship between me and God, and I wonder if there is something more than this. It starts out as a wondering, and eventually it grows in which a person begins to crave for an answer, and they'll find themselves reading the Bible at night, and they can't sleep. Unusual habit, reading books that perhaps they hadn't read before, listening a little bit more intently to a sermon, and the seeking begins.

Let's take a poll in here just for interest's sake. After the time you were a believer to the time when you seriously began to seek, how many of you it was in that time period, less than five years? Between five and ten years? More than ten years? I would say fifty percent of you it's more than ten years. That's not uncommon, especially if you grew up in a Christian home, and you become a believer at a young age.

Oftentimes those are our parents' beliefs that aren't really our own, because our parents love us, and they do the right things, and they love each other. We accept their belief system, accept Jesus Christ, but as an individual, where we grab a hold of it, that's a whole other issue. So interesting, recently my son was going through a challenging time in his life at eleven year old, because he had a fellow on the van who decided to pick on him all the time, and it just didn't go along, and he tried back and forth to handle it, and we tried different ways, sitting in different seats in the van and all that, and finally he said, Dad, I just feel like punching him, he won't do anything else.

I said, well Dave, maybe you will. What? I said, maybe you'll have to punch him. I'm not going to kick that out of school, you might.

I'm seeing my wife. Maybe you'll have to punch his eyes out, Dave, just give it to him. Really? I mean, lay him low, Dave.

Yeah, I think I will. So we talked a little bit that night, my wife was green, wondering what's her minister husband talking about. Well, he went to school the next day, and I was very anxious to wonder if he'd be home early, and I said, did you get in a fight? He said, no, but I warned him.

I said, Dave, it's going to be great when you beat him up, isn't it? He said, yeah, Dad, it'll be great. I said, you've tried a lot of other things, haven't you? He said, I've tried everything, Dad. I said, how about that? I wonder what Jesus would do? He probably wouldn't punch his eyes out, Dad.

I said, what would he do? I don't know. I said, well, Dave, let's think about that for a minute. Now, if you as a leader decided to strategize on how to win Mark over, what would you do? I'd have him spend the night, and then I'd have you take us play video games.

Okay, Dave, if you want to have him over, I'll buy video. Interesting. As time went on, that solved it for a while, and then it started again.

This time, I decided to try a little something different. I said, Dave, why don't you go talk to the assistant principal, not to tattle on the boy, but to get some input about maybe something you could do? He said, yeah, I think that I'll do that. He got together and went to see the assistant principal and told her the problem, and she said, I have a solution.

He came home, and he was all excited about this answer that she had given him. And I said, Dave, what on earth did she tell you? And he said, she told me to do three things. Three? What are they? Number one, if he does it again, I'm supposed to go by myself and talk to him.

I said, oh, what else was the second thing? Well, if he keeps it up, I'm supposed to take a friend with me and go see him. No kidding. I said, and I loved him learning this from somebody else than me.

It's great. And I said, what was the third one? And he said, well, if it didn't work the second time, I'm supposed to go to the assistant principal, and she and I will go together. I said, Dave, what do you think of that idea? He says, I thought that was really great.

And then I said this. I said, Dave, guess where she got the idea? And he got quiet. He says, what do you mean? And I said, guess where she got the idea? I don't know.

She got it from the Bible. Oh, Dad, I wish you hadn't told me that. This is an 11 year old.

And I said to him, Dave, why did you say that? He said, Dad, it had been so great for me to have done this and found it worked before I knew it was in the Bible. Wow. An 11 year old growing up in a Christian home.

I want to find out for me. Initially, I was really upset. And then I thought to myself, oh, no, that's good.

Seek. That's the first step. Second step.

He gave his reign while I was still young. He began to seek the Lord, his father, David. And in the 12th year, look at that.

Four years later, he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images and the carved images and the molded images. What's the second step? What's it? It's when you clean up your act. That's what it is.

See, had those images been around? They'd been around all that time. But you know what? It doesn't seem that he was bothered by them. They were just part of life, normal life.

And we began to seek. Eventually, God said, oh, right. You want to seek me? I'm holy.

There's some big ones in the way and turn on the old floodlight. And he got rid of the big sins that before hadn't really bothered him. What are those in a believer's life? The big ones that happen early.

Language, drunkenness, immorality, things like that. You clean them up. Why? Because God begins to point them out to you.

Oftentimes without the help of another Christian, you just begin to think to yourself, I don't think I should do that anymore. Why? In the seeking, God says, you want to find me? Okay. Then his holiness here, clean this part up.

The interesting part, as an owner of a company, as a manager, he didn't delegate that. He did it. And I appreciate that so much.

Verse 3 says, he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem. Verse 4, they break down the altars of the Baals in his presence. He cut down the, he could have sent somebody else to do that.

That's what oftentimes Christian owners do. But instead, he set aside all the responsibilities of his leadership role, came down and cleaned up the mess himself. And when it was all done, verse 7, and when he cut down all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem.

That's the second predictable crisis. I want to seek God. Here's some sin that you didn't know about, really.

Look at it all. Alright, you clean it up. First one passes.

It keeps going on. As that seeking heart comes to this second stage of sin, most time I find, men and women will clean it up. Most times.

Those men and women who will not clean it up, the seeking will go away. And it will come back around maybe years later. And the seeking will start again.

And the same things will come up again. But if the seeking leads to the sin, and the sin is taken care of, you're going to go to the third predictable crisis. Some of you in this room are in the third one.

Verse 8, in the eighteenth year of his reign, when or after he had purged the land and the temple, he sent a few people to repair the house of the Lord his God. What's the third stage? Money to God's work. Where all of a sudden God begins to nibble at the back pocket.

And when it initially first starts, it starts out of a thankfulness of you clearing up sin that was a weight you didn't know you had. You seek, you clean up the sin. And out of the thankfulness that comes out of a more cleansed life, you want to thank God.

And a growing new disciple does it with money. They want to do something for God. And it almost always is tied to buildings.

Really hits this stage when the church is in a building program. I guarantee you, I've worked with so many Christian businessmen, that is a standard stage in which the Christian businessman thinks this is it. This is really being a disciple.

I've given part of my money to the work of God. And all of a sudden they become more involved and more interested in the projects the buildings and the needs that are going on that they can, from resources in their own pocket, answer. Not the ministry of the work of God, but the work of God meaning financial things.

It's a big stage for a man in particular. And sometimes for a woman, but not usually as hard. Where all of a sudden the accumulation, drive and motivation begins to change.

And they'll take a hunk of money and give it away. It's very painful, first step. Here.

Often times in that growing thing, a disciple will want their name attached to that with some recognition. They want their plate name on the side of that piano. That's a standard step of carnality.

But it's normal. We process our way through it. We give our gifts half the time for recognition in those early days of disciple making.

And that is a beginning of when God begins to sanctify our pocket. I spent two hours this afternoon with a couple, with a man I've come to know over the last couple of years who I deeply respect and admire. And we sat in my room today and he just shared at my request.

And he shared when God got a hold of his pocket book as he said it. And what it did in his life to today. He's progressed way past that.

But he went way back and he told me the day when that happened. I remember when that happened to me. Now this is a deeper step than this.

But to a man the accumulation of wealth and power is an underlining drive. And for God to grab a part of this is a big step early on. Isn't it? Sure it is.

Later on it's a whole different ballpark. But ladies and gentlemen it's a predictable crisis where you think a deep walk with God is giving money. If there is no, and who isn't requested? My goodness, we get so many letters and requests don't we? I get them so often.

I get them addressed at Dear Mr. Walkthrough. Second paragraph and we prayed for you by name Mr. Walkthrough today. I hated it.

You did not. As a seeking heart comes and it faces some sin if it goes through that second predictable crisis, the next one of giving money to the work of God usually isn't personal activity. It's giving a thing to God.

It's not giving me to God. It's giving a thing to God. And it makes me feel good.

I'm growing. Some of you in this room are right in the middle of that and you've thought you've been on the last chapter all these years. It goes on and then it comes in to the fourth step.

Verse number 14. And when they had brought out the money that was brought into the house of the Lord, the priest found the book of the law of the Lord that given by Moses. Then Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I found the book of the law in the house of the Lord.

And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan. So Shaphan carried the book to the king saying all that was committed to your servants they are doing. They've gathered the money, etc., etc.

Then verse 18. Shaphan the scribe told the king saying, Hilkiah the priest has given me a book and Shaphan read it before the king. That's the next stage.

It's a predictable crisis. It's stage number four. First, seek followed by sanctify big things.

Clean up the mess. Third, stewardship. Not a deep stewardship.

Some of it comes out. Next one is fourth. This is a critical point.

This is why I deeply admire the NAB so much because they center on step four. That is, all of a sudden scriptures become very personal. Before that, we carry our Bibles to church, but when we sit down to read the Bible, it does not meet our needs.

It is a book that we know we ought to read and we try to read, but as far as really getting something out of it, it's not worth the effort. And so guilt is full all over the place of a disciple preceding this step. They've tried to read their Bible one million times and it hasn't lasted.

Not because they didn't want it to last, but because the effort didn't bring enough reward to continue doing it. Why? Because the seeking needs to precede that, in a sense. And the cleaning of that sin is going to be there.

I think giving up the money is part of it. And in the middle of that next stage, God's trying to answer the seeking all this time. You want to find more of me? Clean up the sin.

More of me? Give away some of your money, because really you're working for money. And now I'll open up the Word to you. That's what takes place in the next step.

In the middle of the temple, in the middle of the work, in the middle of all that, all of a sudden, Scripture is found. And I think what takes place is at that time in a disciple, the Scripture begins to feed them personally. Where they go and food is found.

Nobody has to tell them. In fact, they are frustrated that they can't get enough time. They can't get enough time in the book.

And the Scripture becomes something to them that's more important than hardly anything else. They're constantly going at it, because they're meeting more of God than they ever met before. That answers to some of life questions are popping out at them.

And then it means something. They begin to lock up their Bible at this time. They begin to read it instead of watching television.

Shocks the family. Shocks them, really. And that Scripture then becomes a more higher priority in the next stage.

Then it moves into the fifth stage, which is where most of the time it hits the brick wall. What is God trying to do? God's trying to move a seeker all the way down to the other end of being a disciple. There's a lot of believers, a lot of followers, a lot of dedicated faithful people, but not too many disciples.

Disciple has forsaken everything else. You can't be my disciple unless you forsake everything else. There's not many disciples.

There's a lot of us on the way to that. And on the way to that, the Scriptures become alive. And then God says, now comes the real test.

Because in the midst of the Scripture, there comes a revelation that totally knocks us down. Because we think early on, I've cleaned up all the sin. All the sin's gone.

I've finished it. I don't know of any more sin. And then on the other side of this occasion of finding the Scripture to be more meaningful to us, God shows us ourself.

Not the sins that we commit, but for the first time, that we are a sinner who commits sin. Not we are a sinner because we sin. And what God begins to do in the early stages of this, is our life is almost like a revolving, it goes closer and closer and closer to us.

This is us. And God begins to say, here's a sin here. Okay, I can clean that up.

And then here's another sin. And then here's another sin. Give me some money.

How much? Give me some more money. And we think we're doing great. The Scriptures come alive right in here.

And I mean, it's wonderful. Not a lot of conviction right then. And then God begins to show us to ourselves right there on the spot.

And for the first time, we realize that every action we have had, all of this, of all of our Christian life, was centered in selfishness. And that nobody has to convince us at that time that there's no good thing in us. I couldn't believe that verse in the Bible for years.

There was a lot of good things in me. I'd help other people if they needed it. And it wasn't until these things, of him pointing out, look at this pride over here, Bruce.

I didn't know that. Look at this selfishness. You're kidding.

Look at this bitterness. And what God begins to do is, is out here, in the early stages of this, is here, begins to flick out things that are things initially that are part of us. And then he begins to knock down some of the things, the characteristics in us, that really knock us over, that humble us, because we can't really handle it initially.

And as that begins to work, every one of these is a test that God brings to us. They are a predictable crisis. Pride.

What are you going to do with that? And depending upon how we handle that pride, the seeking will veer off, we'll grow cold, Scriptures will become boring, and it all goes away. And if we stay at that day after day after day until we understand it, work our way through it, we think, ladies and gentlemen, it's all over. And then God comes a little bit closer, and shows another one.

And we thought we were all done. And he keeps bringing us closer. This is usually a one to two year process.

Very few people, very few people, stay on the path. Because if you've ever read any of the greats that God has used in mighty ways in centuries gone by, they'll talk about that every time. Moody, Spurgeon, Wesley, Zwingli, Hudson Taylor talks all about it.

You can't find a man or a woman that God has used in a mighty way who's not experienced brokenness. And brokenness takes place in a lot of different levels. It breaks up here early.

When we say earlier on in our Christian life, I'll do anything you want me to do. I'll be, I'll go, I'll go. And then later on, he really begins to ask, and we thought we handled it.

And that whole process comes closer and closer toward the middle, in which we realize for the first time, we see ourselves the way God sees us. And, and you will go through weeks with bleary eyes, and feeling undone, and having emptiness as you are emptied as God breaks, not a sin, but an emptiness. And then there's not the sin, but the sinner.

Some of you know what I'm talking about. I remember when Darlene and I were on this process, I said to Darlene, I said, sweetheart, if God would have showed me all these things at one time, I wouldn't have coped with it. I'd have died.

I'd have, I'd have run away. And God just continues to give us the option, this one, and then this one. I'm sure that's the end.

And then this one, and then this one. Ladies and gentlemen, that is the breaking point of a true disciple. I remember when we began to pray for brokenness.

It was a year's ago, and we prayed that God would do something that He would do in our lives, anything He chose to do in this, with complete freedom. It was the worst year of my life, and my wife's. Have you been broken? You're broken on the inside.

And eventually, as we grow older, having been broken, and remaining broken, is when true discipleship begins to take place. Look what happened when it happened to him in verse 19. Now, it happened when the king heard the words of the law that he tore his clothes, and he wept.

Verse 27 shows what God reacted to this. He said, because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words, and wept before me, I also have heard you. Ladies and gentlemen, the weeping that goes on in this process initially starts out for the things we've done wrong, the sins, then the selfishness in us, and then the different sins out here, that we weep over when we realize what we have done.

The brokenness is when we weep over who we are, and that is a totally different spot in the growth of a disciple, when you realize everything that has preceded that, because of an unbrokenness, was motivated out of a sneaky pride, and you wouldn't believe that until it comes. See, that's what happens in the middle of Scripture, in that stage. If we seek, and if we handle the major sins that God shows up, and we handle this issue of stewardship on a given level, He gives us the Scriptures, and the Scriptures begin to open up, and separate us, and lay us bare before the heart of God.

And if we keep staying in it, the pruning, this starts out as somewhat chastisement, then it goes into pruning, and the pruning stays on. It'll end for a long time in this. It keeps going.

It snips here, and then God, watch, what are you going to do with that? And then here, and then here, and then here, and then here, until all that's left is, can God ever love me? Can God ever use me? Josiah, go find out whether or not God will ruin and destroy the land of Judah for all the sins we've done. That was his honest question. I think we've done too much.

God can never use Judah. It's all over. And ladies and gentlemen, when brokenness comes, for the first time you say, I really don't think God can use me.

There is no good thing in me. And ladies and gentlemen, that is the most exciting spot, isn't it? Jesus, the words which I speak are not my own. The works which I do are not my own.

What takes place in the middle of that wrestle with self is if all these sins break. Boy, I tell you, I had to go to more people and to ask for forgiveness and humble myself through this process, and this process is never ending, okay? It goes on as God continues to reveal more sin. But there's a place in there that the trunk of the tree gets broken.

There is a place that that happens. It happened in Tozer. It happened in Dwight Moody.

Boy, I loved reading those stories. It made me realize that that is a predictable place in the pattern of God in making men and women that he uses mightily, and that I can expect it. In the middle of that breaking, when that takes place, other things break with it because all of self is locked up in here, and the self has all these goals that it wants to do.

It wants to do this, and this, and this, and this. And all the time before that, when we tried to fix it, I'm going to stop doing that. I'm going to kill that desire.

We were knocking off the limbs when the root system was flourishing, and it grew again, and we tried again, and we'd lop it off again. Lord, I'm not going to do that again. And it happened again.

And this is dealing more with the root of what it is. And when that is broken, this second part of the self takes place there in verse 30. Verse 31.

Then the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the Lord to follow the Lord and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all of his heart and all of his soul, and to perform the words of the covenant that were written in the book. That's when you leave the nets. That's when you forsake all.

Up to that point, the goals of business and the goals of achievement and the goals of accumulation are still number one. They're still number one. They are still the God that rules our lives.

And only through this issue that we're talking about of brokenness do those root life goals die. They die in the middle of that time period of one to two years. Ever since I can remember, I wanted to be a millionaire.

Knew I could do it. Wanted to do it by the time I was 35. Was heading in that direction.

Not through the ministry, but in other things. And in the middle of all of that goal, trying to kill it time after time after time. I couldn't kill that.

I loved it. I enjoyed it. I relished in it.

With all of your heart and all of your mind, you make a covenant. I remember when that took place in that issue. I went to Moody Bible Institute to give the spiritual life lectures at that college for a week.

And I had wrestled through a number of these out here and real close to me was the issue of that goal. That was down in the close part of me. And I told Darlene, I can't break it.

I can't get rid of that goal. And I said, maybe when I go to Moody, somebody will help me reach it. And I was expecting the president, Dr. Sweeting, to help somehow.

And we had a few lunches together and it never came up in the conversation. I talked to some faculty, it never came up in the conversation. I took out some books from the library and read them to all hours of

the night trying to get through that goal in my life.

You can't serve two masters. Before the brokenness, you're sure you can. I was sure I could be the first exception.

You can't. The goal of accumulation does not end. I've yet in all my life to find a man before this issue who has answered the question, how much is enough? And I remember out in the middle of the coast off of Florida talking to a fellow who flew up in his jet and took my son and I to fly back to go fishing in the middle of his private three bedroom, two bath boat, talking that through and watching him before God wrestle to the conclusion, if this is enough, then what am I going to keep working for? I said, God, man.

But if I stop trying to keep building all of these things, why would I get up in the morning and go to work? Light should go on. Anything more going to work in the morning? Of course not. It's the God we work for.

And to the realization that he had in the middle of that ocean where you couldn't see land for hours, catching more fish than we could keep. He got it. And it just about killed him.

Well, then I don't know what to do with the rest of my life. If it's so, I don't care how much you said, if you want a million dollars in the bank, set it in. What happens then? Give the rest of the way.

But why are you living your life then? How much is enough? When you answer that question, a whole slew of new questions come up called discipleship questions, meaning what's the purpose of my life? His question, what really is the road he wants me to walk? Totally different question. Well, I went to Moody and nothing was happening. And I was in the middle of counseling a lot of students about a lot of problems.

And I remember going out the wild floor on one of the dorms, invited me out for fried ice cream. We went out in Chicago for fried ice cream and God was really moving in that week. And I said to the guy next to me, I had some napkin rings, three of them.

And I said to him, if this is where you are, and this is being a hundred percent sold out for God, and this is the beginning, and this is being totally sold out for God, and this is you, where are you? I got quiet around that table. And that young man said, right here? Go ahead. Oh, I'm over here.

I said to him, what would have to take place for you to be over here? And he told us. And I said, will you do that? You mean do it? I said, yeah. Okay.

Then I went to the next guy. I had the same process. We went through four guys, each one right on that table, getting rid of that big sin in their life, whatever it happened to be to them.

Then we had to leave because of curfew. And on the way back, the biggest guy, who was next in line, and I'm sure was really sweating, came and stepped with me. And he said, I was hoping we'd have time for me.

I said, we have time for you. And we talked a little bit. And it was a huge decision for him.

And he finally gave in. All those things were rattling around in my mind. And the next morning, I was counseling with a young lady, not young lady, to a Bible college.

She was in her mid-thirties. Had never anybody interested in her. She finally had a man who wanted to marry her.

Loved her. She loved him. He wasn't a believer.

That's not a hard thing to answer. It's a tough thing to cope with. And together, she and I cried together.

As God brought her to the conclusion that she called him that afternoon and said it's over. In the middle of the challenge to her, with tears coming down my eyes, God said, and what about you? We take them off the mantle, one by one, and we grind them to dust. Next thing that takes place is in verse 33.

It's after this was all done. Thus Josiah removed all the abominations from all the country that belonged to the children of Israel. Leave your finger in there and turn very quickly to 2 Kings, just for a second.

2 Kings gives you a part of the story that Chronicles doesn't give. 2 Kings 23, verse number 3. Talks about the king making that covenant we just talked about. Then look what happened in verse number 4. And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest and the priests of the second order and the doorkeepers to bring out of the temple of the Lord all the articles that were made for Baal.

Verse 5. Then he removed the idolatrous priests. Verse 6. Then he brought out the wooden image from the house of the Lord. Verse 7. Then he tore down the ritual booths of the perverted persons that were in the house of the Lord.

Verse 8. Then he brought all the priests from the cities and defiled the high places. Verse 10. And he defiled Topheth.

Verse 11. He removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun at the entrance to the house of the Lord. Verse 13.

Then the king defiled the high places that were in the east of Jerusalem which were on the south of the Mount Corruption which Solomon, the king of Israel, had built for Ashtaroath, the abomination of Sidonians, for Chemosh, the abomination of the Moamites, and for Malcolm, the abomination of the... Solomon did that. Verse 20. And he executed all the priests of the high places.

You know what took place the second time? It goes from seek to sanctification of the big sins out here that are external. Then it moves over to the next stage which is stewardship and some money. Then it moves to scriptures.

Excuse me. Then it moves to self. Hard stage.

Most believers crumble under the challenge of God to keep at it and keep paying the prices as God reveals sin. Then it comes to this stage we're in right now which is the second step of sanctification in which when you are broken, ladies and gentlemen, and you make your covenant with God that no matter what goes on, I will, with all my heart and all my might, with everything in me from now on, serve you. The next issue is all those sins that you have control of outside of yourself.

You are now free to clean up no matter what anybody else says in the business. You could care less what another person says about what you do. The freedom to confront sin and to cleanse it under criticism is yours.

Why? Because for the first time in our lives we are free to walk solely for God caring less what another person has to say when we are obedient. But then you get into holiness, don't you? Yes, you do. That's where the little things that nibble us to death around our ankles, we get rid of them.

And the last stage, the seventh stage, is in chapter 35. And some of you in this room are here. Now Josiah kept the Passover to the Lord in Jerusalem, 2 Chronicles 35, and they slaughtered the Passover lambs on the 14th day of the first month.

And he, Josiah, set the priests in their duties and encouraged them for the service of the house of the Lord. What's the last step of discipleship? It's disciple building. What did he do? He set the priests in their duties and encouraged them for the service of the house of the Lord.

What was he doing? He was building other disciples, in my opinion, on the last stage. Next verse. Now serve the Lord your God and His people Israel.

Where is he in all of his life now? He is so single-focused, all he wants to do is to get the work of the ministry on target. And he spends his time motivating, ministering. And verse number 7. What else did he do? Look at the end of that verse.

These were from the king's possessions. When you're at the end of this, you know what happens? You think about your possessions just like that man in my room this afternoon. And he thinks about them this way.

They are not mine. Not in just his attitude, they are not his. And he takes his money and he uses it for ministry.

Period. Enough to live and the rest is to help the ministry. Why? Because all those other goals that were preceding us are gone.

And we realize for the first time in our life, we are the servants of the Lord God. And everything that we have is an entrustment to Him. Where are you on those seven steps? Seeking? Maybe that's where you came into this conference.

Has God been in the middle of the second step of showing you sin that's just poking out and it's major? And you've been rebellious about answering it? What about the third stage? Maybe all that you think you should be involved with God's work is to give the navs money. Many of us in this room could be there. That's the most common spot for the Christian businessmen in America.

It's step three. I buy God with my money. Step four.

How alive is the scriptures to your life? Step five. Well, if you've been in it or are in it, I could sit down and give you this pen and you could talk for a half an hour. If you haven't been in it, you don't know what I'm talking about.

And if you've lost hope in it, like we all do, get back up. Look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, and stay at it till the work of God is done in your heart. And then covenant, covenant to Him with all of your might and all of your heart and all of yourself.

As far as me and my house, I will serve the Lord foremost for the rest of my life. Ladies and gentlemen, the second you do that is the second you're out of step with all kinds of people around you. You march to a

different drum.

And some of the decisions you make are the most shocking decisions to people around you. But you are free to be obedient. Why did I come on a weekend when I'm sick of weekends? Why did I leave my wife and my two children home again? Because I needed to minister again? No.

Because I want to be away again? No. For the honorarium? Are you kidding me? Why? Because, ladies and gentlemen, you are a group of men and women who are serious about moving on. And that's worth blood of my life to be here with you.

May I encourage all of us? There's always more to abandon to the Lordship of Christ. It never ends. Let's pray together.

Get along with God right now in your thoughts, would you? You're about ready to break into small groups and to pray and then you'll be having ice cream you don't need. But now it's time for you and Him. Where are you on those seven steps? Can you picture yourself on that line? Maybe you came to the Navs and said, I'm a businessman and all I can do for the cause of Christ is give my money.

Hey, who are you kidding? We ask Him if you've never gone around that cycle of brokenness. Will your commitment be deep enough right now to ask Him to break you? Maybe again. Oh God, break me.

Help me to have courage. Free me. Maybe you've gone through those stages and you've been a servant for a long time and you're tired.

Hey, keep on marching. Keep on encouraging other men and women around you. To move down that line.

You are the Levites of God's army. And now Father God. How much we want to serve you with our whole heart.

With complete abandonment. To the sins that so easily beset us. Focus our attention upon the straight and narrow.

And cause us to live for eternity every day we have. In Jesus name. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/24/SID24222.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/bruce-wilkinson/seven-steps-to-discipleship/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net