



We are delighted to be able to give you this free Bible notes sampler, produced and provided by Grow with the Bible.

The aim of the sampler is to provide a framework for you to follow up on the teaching and ministry you have received at Spring Harvest in 2009.

We hope that it will help you in your journey as an apprentice of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that it will stimulate a desire and commitment to continue with some form of daily Bible reading notes in the future.

Grow with the Bible is a collaboration of several agencies all involved in making Bible reading notes available. We invite you to take time at Spring Harvest this week to look at the extensive range of notes in the bookshop. In addition there is more information at the back of this booklet or at www.grow-with-the-bible.org.uk

May you know God's richest blessing as you read these notes and study his Word.

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan Johnson".

Alan Johnson
Chief Executive

Contents

Page 2	Introduction	
Page 4	Day 1	Listening
Page 5	Day 2	Obeying
Page 6	Day 3	Serving
Page 7	Day 4	Giving
Page 8	Day 5	Praying
Page 9	Day 6	Suffering
Page 10	Day 7	Trusting
Page 11	Day 8	Sharing
Page 12	Day 9	Worshipping
Page 13	Day 10	Following
Page 14	Life-long learning	– David Spriggs
Page 16	What next?	– David Spriggs

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Following on and following up

Apprentices of Christ are people who learn and follow. That has been our theme at this year's Spring Harvest, recognising we each have different learning styles and are called to follow the unique path of discipleship Jesus marks out for us.

This booklet is ten days' worth of readings to help us tune into God's voice and continue to put into practice some of the good things we have been learning at Spring Harvest.

Tuning into God's voice involves setting aside some time each day to read part of the Bible and pray about those things that are on our mind. It involves creating a sacred space in the busyness of our daily lives. Those who serve well as apprentices of Christ talk about the importance of this sacred space as a chance to be still, listen, focus and be renewed.

Creating sacred space

Begin by planning a time that works for you when you can be free from interruptions. Spend a few moments in prayer, inviting God, by his Holy Spirit, to make this space special, and then read carefully through the verses from the Bible set out at the start of each day's reading. Following the Bible passage there's a brief comment that draws out principles that I hope will help you gain a broader understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ. Then there is a short reflection that may be a memorable quote or a prayer. The final part notes a relevant Bible passage, which gives some further background to the reading. You are then encouraged to spend a few minutes praying, bringing your concerns before God. It is important that we get beyond our own needs as we pray, and remember the wider world of which we are a part. It is helpful to use this prayer time to be still for a few moments and to consciously tune in to anything that God – by his Spirit – is saying to you today.

Apprentices – vision and values

Our readings look at ten people who reveal the vision and values it takes to be effective apprentices of Christ. Each day we consider an important aspect of being disciples/apprentices:

- Listening
- Obeying
- Serving
- Giving
- Praying
- Suffering
- Trusting
- Sharing
- Worshipping
- Following

It's our prayer that these readings will help you tune in to God and follow up what you have learnt during your time at Spring Harvest. And beyond that, we hope you discover the blessing of creating sacred space in your daily life using some of the excellent resources available. You can discover more about these as you read on ...

Ian Coffey

IAN COFFEY

APPRENTICE

Listening

1 Samuel
3:4–9

⁴Then the LORD called Samuel.

Samuel answered, “Here I am.” ⁵And he ran to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” But Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” So he went and lay down.

⁶Again the LORD called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

“My son,” Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.”

⁷Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. ⁸A third time the LORD called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. ⁹So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

A good apprentice knows how to listen – and as a result learn. Samuel was a boy (maybe around 12 years old) when the Lord spoke to him dramatically in the night.

Samuel worked alongside the elderly Eli who was the senior priest in Israel based in the town of Shiloh where the sacred ark of the covenant was kept. Samuel’s daily duties involved helping the old priest in serving the many worshippers that visited the Temple. Eli’s eyesight was failing and we can imagine that Samuel spent a great deal of time helping him around.

This particular night, however, things changed forever. Samuel was about to discover the call of God on his life. In the middle of the night Samuel heard a voice calling his name and immediately assumed this was Eli, as it usually was. He made his way to the old man’s room only to discover it was not Eli’s voice calling his name. This happened three times before Eli realised something special was happening. The boy wasn’t dreaming but experiencing, for the first time, the astonishing privilege of hearing the voice of the Lord.

Eli was stunned – not simply because of Samuel’s youth – but because the Lord seemed to have stopped talking to his people lately.

So Eli gives this young apprentice some valuable advice: Tell the Lord you are listening and ready to serve. Samuel does exactly as he is told, and the rest – quite literally – is history.

Learning to listen and listening to learn are fundamental ingredients for apprentices of Christ.

REFLECTION

Lord Jesus Christ, teach me to hear your voice above all others and find in me a willing heart to do whatever you ask. In your holy name, Amen.

Discover more ...

You can read more about Samuel in 1 Samuel 1:1–4:1.

IAN COFFEY

APPRENTICE

Obeying

Matthew
1:18–25

¹⁸This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ^{23a}“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

Joseph seems to stand on the edge of the story of the birth of Jesus, with more space given to the shepherds and the wise men than to him. But, like a lot of people who appear on the edge, he actually plays a central role.

We can only imagine the sense of shock and betrayal when he discovers his fiancée, Mary, is pregnant. He must have run through a mental check-list of who the father might be, questioning himself at every turn. Our reading tells us he was a righteous man who took the upright decision not to cause a fuss and ruin Mary’s chance of a future for herself and her unborn baby. This was a generous choice especially as his confused heart must have burned with anger.

And then the angel showed up. Matthew records a short and matter of fact account: the angel tells Joseph not to worry as Mary is pregnant with God’s child. The verses following on from our reading record that Joseph accepted this, took Mary home as his betrothed and – when the child was born – named him Jesus, just as the angel had instructed. Joseph lived with the shame and rumours for the rest of his life as the gossip suggested he and Mary had either jumped the gun by sleeping together or – worse still – that she had been unfaithful in the run-up to their marriage.

But he was a big man with a willing heart to obey the Lord whatever the cost. Of such stuff, good apprentices are made.

REFLECTION

Are there areas of your life where you struggle to obey the Lord Jesus Christ? Invite him to help you change your mind.

Discover more ...

You can read more about Joseph in Luke 2:21–52.

IAN COFFEY

Serving

APPRENTICE

Esther
4:9–14

⁹Hathak went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said. ¹⁰Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai, ¹¹“All the king’s officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king.”

¹²When Esther’s words were reported to Mordecai, ¹³he sent back this answer: “Do not think that because you are in the king’s house you alone of all the Jews will escape. ¹⁴For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?”

Esther faced an impossible situation. Exiled from their homeland, the Jews were vulnerable in a world ruled by King Xerxes, head of the Persian empire. Esther had been plucked from his harem to be queen. The king’s senior adviser was Haman, a nasty piece of work, who was filled with hatred for the Jews.

Haman persuaded the king to embrace a terrible plan of ethnic cleansing and fix a day permitting wholesale murder of Jews across the empire. The order was signed and sealed as a law of the Medes and Persians that, famously, could not be revoked.

Esther’s uncle – Mordecai – sent word to Esther about this decree as she lived in virtual seclusion in the royal palace, unaware of this murderous plan. He pleaded with her to intervene with the king and seek mercy for her people. Esther had kept her Jewish family ties a secret and, in the current climate, she was tempted to leave things that way.

Today’s reading records a covert dialogue between Esther and her uncle via a go-between. Mordecai urges her to act; Esther replies that to appear uninvited into the king’s presence could result in execution. She receives three sharp reminders. One, to forget saving her own skin. Two, if she won’t act, help will arise from another source. Three, she had become queen because of a greater plan – would she seize this opportunity to serve?

Esther said yes – read the rest of the story to discover the astonishing result. We are reminded of the choice that faces every apprentice: will I serve my own interests – or those of Christ?

REFLECTION.

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.’

*Jim Elliott
(1927–1956)
Christian martyr*

Discover more ...

Read the whole of this amazing story in Esther chapters 1–10.

IAN COFFEY

Giving

APPRENTICE

Acts
4:32–37

³²All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

³⁶Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means “son of encouragement”), ³⁷sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet.

Nicknames can be kind or cruel. But as nicknames go, ‘*encourager*’ is a good one. Our reading is a snapshot of life in the first Christian community in Jerusalem where a Spirit-directed communism had broken out. The new apprentices of the risen Jesus expressed their new-found joy in an epidemic of generosity. They found the grip of owning stuff had gone, replaced by a willingness to share and give away.

Some have taken these verses as a prescription directing us on the way to authentic Christian community. But this misses the point. They are a description rather than a prescription as they reveal what happens in a life given wholly to Jesus.

Joseph, who became better known as Barnabas, is singled out as an example of this spontaneous season of giving. Why choose him out of a large congregation? The answer is that he appears later in the story as a significant player so his entrance mustn’t go unannounced. He went on to be a leader in the Church and a ministry partner of Paul the Apostle with whom he travelled extensively in order to plant new churches. He invested significantly in Paul’s life and nurtured him long before he became an established leader. Such a ministry comes from a generous heart which is probably why the story of him selling a field and donating the proceeds makes its way into the Bible. All that followed on in Barnabas’ life stemmed from this attitude; he wanted to be a giver rather than a getter.

If you read more of his story, you will see that he cultivated this generous spirit in many other ways, including investing his life in others.

True giving comes from a generous heart. Apprenticeship is about being willing to bless.

REFLECTION

Think about these wise words and their implications for the choices you make today; ‘We are never more like God than when we give.’

*Chuck Swindoll,
pastor and author.*

Discover more ...

Read more about Barnabas in Acts 9:26–30; 11:19–30; 13:1–14:28; 15:36–41.

IAN COFFEY

Praying

APPRENTICE

1 Samuel
1:9–14

⁹Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the LORD's house. ¹⁰In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly. ¹¹And she made a vow, saying, "LORD Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."

¹²As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk ¹⁴and said to her, "How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine."

Hannah's life was miserable. Her one unfulfilled wish was to have a baby but there seemed little possibility this would happen. Her husband, Elkanah, had a second wife named Peninnah, who constantly taunted Hannah over her childlessness. Peninnah had a cluster of children and, for some twisted reason, enjoyed flaunting her 'success' and rubbing Hannah's nose in her 'failure'. In the culture in which these women lived, children were seen as a sign of God's favour and being childless as a sign of his displeasure.

Hannah took the opportunity of an annual family visit to the holy site at Shiloh, to go into the Temple alone and pour out her heart to God. Her childlessness was affecting her health to the extent that she had stopped eating, so great was her emotional distress.

Hannah's fervent praying was mistaken by Eli, the priest, as the action of someone who has had too much to drink. Shiloh was a place of pilgrimage but sometimes pilgrim meals led to overindulgence, it would seem. We can only imagine how desperate Hannah was as she poured out her heart to God – even offering to dedicate her child to God's special service should the Almighty choose to favour her.

The Lord did hear and answered Hannah's prayer and her son – Samuel – grew up to be a man who lived a significant life.

Here's the lesson on apprenticeship we learn from Hannah's life: taking our needs to God is an act of faith and trust. Prayer is more than an activity that disciples engage in, it is an expression of what we believe about God. Look at what Jesus taught about prayer (see Matthew 6:5–15) and learn to tell God what is on your heart.

Discover more ...

Read more about Hannah's story in *1 Samuel 1:1–2:11*.

REFLECTION

'Is prayer your steering wheel – or your spare tyre?'

Corrie Ten Boom (1892–1983) Holocaust survivor

IAN COFFEY

Suffering

APPRENTICE

Acts
7:54–60

⁵⁴When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. ⁵⁵But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶"Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

⁵⁷At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, ⁵⁸dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

⁵⁹While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

REFLECTION

'For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'
Romans 8:38–39

Discover more ...

Read more about Stephen in Acts 6:1–8:53.

At the beginning of the Church of Jesus Christ it was costly to declare yourself to be one of his apprentices. Many suffered and died for their faith in him. The word *martyr* (one who is killed for believing) came to mean the same as *witness* (one who bears testimony).

Stephen was the first Christian martyr, but notice how Luke (who wrote the book of Acts) doesn't dwell on the gory event or even the injustice meted out by the crowd. His focus is the climactic spiritual experience that Stephen underwent at his moment of deepest crisis. He had an astonishing vision of heaven opened and Jesus standing next to God's throne. This remarkable experience would be normally associated with a time of quiet prayer and tranquil meditation rather than the blood-curdling screams of a crazed mob.

There is another curious description: Luke records Stephen seeing Jesus standing at God's right hand. Yet the apostolic preaching declared that when Jesus ascended to heaven he *sat down* at the right hand of God's throne, symbolising that his great work of rescuing lost people was accomplished (see Ephesians 1:20–21). Yet Stephen saw him standing not seated – why?

Jesus stood to welcome Stephen, his faithful witness, into his presence. Luke's account sends a signal to all apprentices of Christ who suffer – we are not abandoned. The one who is called Emmanuel (*God with us* – Isaiah 7:14) comes to us in our affliction and stands to help. Let this assurance give you strength to faithfully follow the one who has promised never to abandon us, whatever we face (Matthew 28:20).

IAN COFFEY

Trusting

APPRENTICE

1 Samuel
17:41–47

⁴¹Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. ⁴²He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him. ⁴³He said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. ⁴⁴“Come here,” he said, “and I’ll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!”

⁴⁵David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. ⁴⁷All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD’s, and he will give all of you into our hands.”

When David faced Goliath it appeared a one-way contest. David was a boy and Goliath a giant of a man; David kept sheep and Goliath was a professional soldier; David carried a sling and Goliath had a full suit of armour. But when God stands alongside you, whatever the odds – you are in the majority.

The circumstances of this seemingly uneven contest were a stand-off between the armies of Israel and the Philistines. As was common in ancient warfare, it was suggested the matter be decided by the two nations putting up a champion each who would fight to decide the winner. The problem was that in Goliath the Philistines had a weapon of mass destruction. No Israeli soldier would face him.

David’s offer to face Goliath appeared laughable (at least on the surface). But he claimed experience of God’s deliverance in the past (read 1 Samuel 17:34–37) and that filled him with confident faith – and this was more than the boast of cocky youth – David was not boasting but trusting. As the final verse of our reading shows, David was God-confident rather than self-confident.

Apprenticeship involves taking God at his word and trusting him confidently when circumstances seem against us. Trust is faith put into practice. Are there specific areas where the Lord is calling you to trust him more and to step out in faith? Just do it!

REFLECTION

Faith means more than believing in God. It involves believing God and trusting him for all we need.

Discover more ...

Read more about David in 1 Samuel 16–2 Samuel 24.

IAN COFFEY

Sharing

APPRENTICE

Acts
16:13–15

¹³On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.

¹⁴One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message. ¹⁵When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. “If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us.

Lydia was a successful businesswoman who traded in special purple cloth manufactured in her home city. She travelled to trade and found herself doing business in Philippi – a Roman colony situated in the north-eastern part of modern-day Greece. For all the trappings of her success, Lydia carried a deep hunger for something more in life. She was what we might describe as a *seeker*. Lydia was exploring the Jewish faith and fell into the category described as a *worshipper of God* – she was not born a Jew but something of their faith spoke to the hunger of her heart.

One particular day as she went to the place where Jews gathered to worship, a rabbi named Paul was visiting and spoke powerfully about a Man called Jesus of Nazareth. Paul claimed this Man was the long-awaited Messiah – the Saviour of the world. For Lydia this was the missing piece of the jigsaw. The message Paul preached said this Jesus was for everyone – not simply the Jewish nation. As Luke expresses it: *‘The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message.’* She and everyone in her home were baptised as apprentices of Christ.

Notice how (as a reflex action to discovering God’s grace) she persuades Paul and his team to enjoy her hospitality as she opens her home for them to use as a base during their stay in Philippi. This was both a generous and potentially dangerous invitation. Generous because Paul and his team were given space to live and work without cost, and dangerous because Lydia identified with foreigners preaching a message that wasn’t popular.

The lesson we learn is that grace should make us grateful. Lydia discovered the generosity of God and, in turn, responded with gratitude towards Paul and his team.

Apprentices of Christ discover that the reflex response to grace is to share gratefully and to use our resources to extend God’s kingdom.

REFLECTION

‘Freely you have received, freely give.’
Jesus (Matthew 10:8)

How can you obey this challenge today? Who can you bless and how?

Discover more ...

Read more about Lydia and her church in Acts 16:16–40 and Philippians chapters 1–4.

IAN COFFEY

Worshipping

APPRENTICE

John
12:1–11

¹Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ²Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honour. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. ³Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

⁴But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵“Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.”

⁶He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

⁷“Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “[It was intended] that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. ⁸You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.”

⁹Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, ¹¹for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him.

REFLECTION

‘Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is true worship.’
Romans 12:1

Discover more ...

Read more about Mary and her family in John 11:1–44.

Mary, together with her sister Martha and brother Lazarus, shared a home in Bethany, a small village a couple of miles outside Jerusalem. Jesus was a close friend who often visited their home, and a short time earlier it was the scene of an astonishing sign of his power. Lazarus died and Jesus raised him to life again much to the joy of his family, the astonishment of his neighbours and the antagonism of the religious hierarchy.

Mary's extraordinary act of selfless devotion to Jesus is understood against this background. Out of a heart overwhelmed with joy and gratitude, she breaks with social norms, by pouring expensive ointment on Jesus' feet and wiping them with her hair. John (who was present) remembers the lingering aroma filling the whole house and we as readers sense something of its fragrance as we think of this selfless act of love. Mary reminds us what true worship looks like: extravagant, costly, flowing from a grateful heart and focused not on ourselves but on Christ.

Apprentices who serve well discover the renewing power of worship.

IAN COFFEY

Following

APPRENTICE

Philippians
3:4–11

⁴If others think they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

⁷But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. ¹⁰I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

When Paul wrote these words he had been an apprentice of Christ for many years yet had lost none of his passion for the one who had laid down his life for him. As he opens his heart to his friends in the congregation at Philippi he reveals that since his dramatic conversion there had been some *losses* and *gains* in his life but the greatest gain was the surpassing worth of *‘knowing Christ Jesus my Lord’*.

Paul's testimony reminds us of three important lessons for all who would follow Christ. Firstly, that we are called to be his disciples not agents of an organisation. Look at today's reading and see how many times the word *‘Christ’* is used – the Christian faith is based on a relationship with the living Lord himself.

Secondly, Paul reminds us of the need to have a realistic view of apprenticeship as it may include experiences of suffering as well as power. It is highly probable that Paul himself eventually faced a martyr's death.

Thirdly, we see how – many years on – we still have more to learn and do as apprentices of Christ. In the verse following today's reading, Paul declares, ‘... I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me’ (Philippians 3:12).

There is no sense that Paul was resting on his laurels and getting ready to take life easy. He was committed to following and serving Christ to the end.

Apprentices never retire, they simply move to a better place.

REFLECTION

This inscription was found in a Swiss churchyard to commemorate a guide killed on the mountains: ‘He died climbing.’

This makes a good mission statement for apprentices of Christ.

Discover more ...

Read about Paul's dramatic conversion in Acts 26:1–29.



Life-long Learning!

The Christian life is both a call to conversion and a call to discipleship. Jesus' relationship with his disciples begins with 'follow me' (Matthew 4:19), involves 'learn from me' (Matthew 11:29) and concludes with the clarion call – 'Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples ... and teach them to do everything I have told you' (Matthew 28:19–20). As part of this relationship they are also sent off to 'live the life' (Matthew 10:5–15).

Recently I heard of a young mother who was feeding crisps and fizzy drinks to her five-month-old baby. The social worker who discovered this was horrified because of the obvious danger. The nineteen-year-old mother said, 'But what's wrong? How am I supposed to know what to do? No one taught me!' She made an important point.

Previously, we all learnt parenting skills from our parents, older siblings and family members. We absorbed it. Now we need to do things differently. We have to teach and learn good practice in child care. The same goes for Christian discipleship. We used to assume new Christians would 'get it' from their families or the general moral and social climate. Those days have gone. Our culture today teaches us to be self-centred, sexually wayward, aggressive and so forth. The exact opposite of following the example of Jesus (see 1 Peter 2:21).

So how can we re-discover the art of being and making disciples? *Look–listen–learn* is a good place to start.

We need to do all we can to *look* at Jesus. One of my friends puts it this way: walking after him means 'breathing in the dust from his footsteps'. So we need to soak in who he is, what he does, how he relates to people. Much more deeply than this we need to absorb his responses to situations of all kinds: pressure, temptations, human need, confrontations, relaxation, pleasure, prayer, work and worship. There are many valid ways to do this, but if they are about authentic discipling they will inevitably have the four Gospels, the rest of the New Testament and indeed the whole Bible somewhere at the centre (Luke 24:27). These are our God-given ways of accessing the life of Jesus today. Unless we deliberately, regularly and systematically keep company with Jesus by engaging with Scripture, we cannot be transformed by the 'renewing of our minds' (Romans 12:2).

Through this kind of 'following', we not only *look at* Jesus, but we see the world through his eyes. We *look through* Jesus with compassion on distraught people, with anger at abuse, with amazement both at the beauty of God's world and the wickedness of people. This is our aim. Sometimes this will be exciting, sometimes it will require discipline to keep going; sometimes it will be easy and encouraging, sometimes hard and uncomfortable. That's what it was like for the first disciples

who followed him and it will be the same for us too. Should we want anything other?

We must also *listen*, 'take note', not simply in terms of understanding what he said but also of being changed. This is tough (as the previous Bible notes by Ian Coffey have shown!), because it is more than thinking differently – although that is important. It involves acting differently towards people and in situations so that all we do honours Christ. This means continuously being repentant when we get it wrong and finding the energy to have another go.

And we need to *learn*; after all, that's the basic meaning of disciple! Here we need the Holy Spirit's direct and indirect help. Both to allow God to break through our prejudices and bad habits but also to have the humility to be changed and to keep acting differently. The direct help comes through an intentional prayer life and the indirect help through the 'fellowship of the Spirit' as we share deeply with other Christian believers. Having some kind of accountability group (this could be your church home group or a group at work) is an important part of this, enabling us to be with other Christians, listening to them and learning from them. There are lots of ways of doing this, so don't just stick to one model!

We can also experience this ministry of the Spirit through the insights which Bible-reading notes provide. The thoughtful preparation, prayer, study and insights of those who write the notes can help us to 'look, listen and learn'.

So please explore the wide range of approaches which the publishers of Bible-reading notes offer. Get down to the business of following Jesus, of *living* for him. In the end, as with learning to drive, the test is not just about knowing it in our heads but actually being able to do it – living it out. Whatever we're doing and wherever we are other people should encounter Jesus through us – in every part of who we are.

My prayers are with you as you take the next steps on the road of becoming more like Jesus, an apprentice, his disciple.

David Spriggs

Bible and Church Consultant, Bible Society

PS In addition to the Bible-reading notes mentioned on the next page you might like to look at two other resources for meeting Jesus through Scripture available free from Bible Society. **LYFE** – Life Your Faith Encounters is a web-based resource for small groups (often meeting in public places like cafes or at work) where open encounter with passages of the Bible is encouraged. www.lyfe.org.uk

Lectio Divina is a prayerful way of reading the Bible which many Christians around the world are re-discovering. Some starter materials can be found at www.biblesociety.org.uk/lectio

What next?

The apprentice – you’ve been chosen!

As a Christian you have been chosen by Jesus Christ to be his apprentice. At the heart of this will be regular encounter with Jesus through the Bible.

We have provided this special sampler of Bible-reading notes, written by Ian Coffey, to encourage you whether you have been an apprentice for years or just days. Our hope and prayer is that these will have created in you a desire to continue to read the Bible every day. There are many excellent Bible-reading notes published to help you engage daily with the Word of God – and you can see the wide range available on the page opposite. Using one of these can help to ensure that we gain a full and rounded understanding of the mind of Christ and are stimulated to live well for him.

What next – get going!

So, visit the **Grow with the Bible website** at www.grow-with-the-bible.org.uk for further information on all these publications, and for sample pages to help you choose the right one for you. While you are at Spring Harvest you can also browse and purchase them at the **Wesley Owen bookshop**. When you get home visit your local bookshop to purchase or place orders.

About us

This sampler is produced by Grow with the Bible. This collaboration involves The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF), Bible Society, CWR, International Bible Reading Association (IBRA), Nationwide Christian Trust and Scripture Union (SU). Since 1996 we have worked together on a number of Grow with the Bible initiatives to stimulate and encourage more personal regular Bible reading. The Grow with the Bible website offers a wide range of Bible-reading resource materials available in the UK today.

GROW WITH THE BIBLE

www.grow-with-the-bible.org.uk





Grow with the Bible is delighted to offer you this free booklet of Bible readings. The ten days of readings, reflections and prayers have been specially written by Ian Coffey to complement this year's Spring Harvest theme *Apprentice – walking the way of Christ.*

The readings are intended to help us, as Ian writes, 'to tune into God's voice and continue to put into practice some of the good things we have been learning at Spring Harvest'.

We hope that these readings will help you to do just that and that they will get you started, or inspire you to keep going, with what will become a lifetime habit of reading the Bible every day.



IAN COFFEY is Director of Leadership Training at Moorlands College. He was previously senior pastor of an international church in Geneva after twelve years as team leader of Mutley Baptist Church in Plymouth. He is author of over fourteen books, speaks at teaching events around the world and served on the Leadership Team of Spring Harvest for nine years.