



# The Disciple

104 ELM AVENUE  
P.O. BOX 1344  
LOUISA, VA 23093

JANUARY 2022

540-848-6441  
LOUISACHRISTIANCHURCH.ORG  
LCCPASTORV@GMAIL.COM

Editor's Note: As I was looking for articles for the January 2022 theme of the Aspirational Christian Life, I came across this article from J. R. Miller written 142 years ago. I found it beautiful and thought provoking. And despite the length, I wanted to share it for you to enjoy and ponder as the year begins anew. May your 2022 be filled with joy, love, hope, peace, grace, and mercy. Sheryl.

## How to Live a Beautiful Christian Life

J. R. Miller, 1880

We have only successfully acquired *the art of living a Christian life*—when we have learned to *apply* the principles of true religion, and enjoy its help and comfort in our daily life. It is easy to join in devotional exercises, to quote Bible promises, to extol the beauty of the Scriptures; but there are many who do these things—whose religion utterly fails them in the very places and at the very times—when it ought to prove their staff and stay!

All of us must go out from the sweet services of the Sunday—into a week of very real and very commonplace life. We must mingle with people who are not *angels*. We must pass through experiences that will naturally worry and vex us. Those about us, either wittingly or unwittingly, annoy and try us. We must mingle with those who do not love Christ. We all meet many troubles and worries in ordinary week-day life. There are continual irritations and annoyances.

The problem is to live a beautiful Christian life—in the face of all these hindrances! How can we get through the *tangled briars* which grow along our path—without having our hands and feet torn by them? How can we live sweetly—amid the vexing and irritating things and the multitude of little worries and frets which infest our way, and which we cannot evade?

It is not enough merely to 'get along' in any sort of way, to drag to the close of each long, wearisome day, happy when night comes to end the strife. Life should be a joy—and not a burden. We should live victoriously, ever master of our experiences, and not tossed by them like a leaf on the dashing waves. Every earnest Christian wants to live a truly beautiful life, whatever the circumstances may be.

A little child, when asked '*what it was to be a Christian*,' replied, "For me, to be a Christian is to live as Jesus would live—and behave as Jesus would behave—if he were a little girl and lived at our house." No better definition of practical religion could be given. Each one of us is to live just as Jesus would—if he were living out our little life in the midst of its actual environment, standing all day just where we stand, mingling with the same people with whom we must mingle, and exposed to the very annoyances, trials and provocations to which we are exposed. We want to live a life that will please God, and that will bear witness on its face to the genuineness of our piety.

Continued on Page 2



Continued from Page 1

How can we do this? We must first recognize the fact that our life must be lived just in its own circumstances. We cannot at present change our surroundings. Whatever we are to make of our lives—must be made in the midst of our actual experiences. Here we must either win our victories—or suffer our defeats. We may think our lot is especially hard—and may wish it were otherwise. We may wish that we had a life of ease and luxury, amid softer scenes, with no briars or thorns, no worries or provocations. Then we would be always gentle, patient, serene, trustful, happy. How delightful it would be—never to have a care, an irritation, a cross, a single vexing thing!

But meanwhile this fact remains—that our aspiration cannot be realized, and that whatever our life is to be made, beautiful or marred, we must make it just where we are. No restless discontent can change our lot. We cannot get into any 'paradise' merely by longing for it. Other people may have other circumstances, possibly more pleasant than ours—but here are ours. We may as well settle this point at once, and accept the battle of life on this field—or else, while we are vainly wishing for a *better chance*, the opportunity for victory shall have passed.

The next thought, is that it is possible to live a beautiful life anywhere. There is no position in this world in the allotment of Providence, in which it is not possible to be a true Christian, exemplifying all the virtues of Christianity. The grace of Christ has in it, potency enough to enable us to live godly, wherever we are called to dwell. When God chooses a home for us—he fits us for its peculiar trials. There is a beautiful *law of adaptation* that runs through all God's providence. Animals made to dwell amid Arctic snows are covered with warm furs. The camel's home is the desert, and a wondrous provision is made by which it can endure long journeys across the hot sands without drink. Birds are fitted for their flights in the air. Animals made to live among the mountain-crags, have feet prepared for climbing over the steep rocks. In all nature this law of *special equipment and preparation for allotted places* prevails.

And the same is true in spiritual life. God *adapts* his grace to the peculiarities of each one's necessity. For rough, flinty paths—he provides shoes of iron. He never sends any one to climb sharp, rugged mountain-sides, wearing silken slippers. He always gives *sufficient grace*. As the burdens grow heavier—the strength increases. As the difficulties thicken—the angel draws closer. As the trials become sorer—the trusting heart grows calmer. Jesus always sees his disciples, when they are toiling in the waves—and at the right moment comes to deliver them. Thus it becomes possible to live a true and victorious life—in any circumstances. Christ can as easily enable Joseph to remain pure and true, in heathen Egypt—as Benjamin in the shelter of his father's love. The sharper the temptations, the more of divine grace is granted. There is, therefore, no environment of trial, or difficulty or hardship—in which we cannot live beautiful lives of Christian fidelity and holy conduct.

Instead, then, of yielding to discouragement when trials multiply and it becomes hard to live right, or of being satisfied with a broken peace and a very faulty life—it should be the settled purpose of each one to live, through the grace of God—a patient, gentle and unspotted life—in the place and amid the circumstances He allots to us. The true victory is not found in escaping or evading trials—but in rightly meeting and enduring them. The questions should *not* be, "How can I get out of these worries? How can I get into a place where there shall be no irritations, nothing to try my temper or put my patience to the test? How can I avoid the distractions that continually harass me?" There is nothing noble in such living. The soldier who flies to the rear when he smells the battle is no hero; he is a coward.

The questions should rather be, "How can I pass through these trying experiences, and not fail as a Christian? How can I endure these struggles, and not suffer defeat? How can I live amid these provocations, these reproaches and testings of my temper, and yet live sweetly, not speaking unadvisedly, bearing injuries meekly, returning gentle answers to insulting words?" This is the true problem of Christian living.

Every obstacle to true living should, then, only nerve us with fresh determination to succeed. We should use each difficulty and hardship, as a leverage to gain some new advantage. We should compel our temptations to minister to us—instead of hindering us. We should regard all our provocations, annoyances and trials, of whatever sort—as practice-lessons in the application of the theories of Christian life. It will be seen in the end—that the hardships and difficulties are by no means the smallest blessings of our lives. Someone compares them to the weights of a clock, without which there could be no steady, orderly life.

Besides, it is no heroism to live patiently—where there is no provocation, bravely where there is no danger, calmly where there is nothing to perturb. Not the hermit's cave—but the heart of busy life, *tests*, as well as *makes* character. If we can live patiently, lovingly and cheerfully, amid all our frets and irritations day after day, year after year, that is grander heroism than the farthest famed military exploits, for 'he who rules his own spirit—is better than he who captures a city.'

Continued on Page 3

Continued from Page 2

This is our allotted task. It is no easy one. It can be accomplished only by the most resolute decision, with unwavering purpose and incessant watchfulness.

Nor can it be accomplished without the *continual help of Christ*. Each one's battle must be a personal one. We may decline the *struggle*—but it will be declining also the *joy of victory*. No one can reach the summit—without climbing the steep mountain-path. We cannot be borne up on any strong shoulder. God does not put features of beauty into our lives—as the jeweler sets gems in clusters in a coronet. The unlovely elements are not magically removed and replaced by lovely ones. Each must win his way through struggles and efforts—to all noble attainments. The *help of God* is given only in cooperation with human aspiration and energy. While God works in us—we are to work out our own salvation. He who *overcomes*, shall be a pillar in the temple of God. We should accept the task with quiet joy. We shall fail many times.

Many a night we shall retire to weep at Christ's feet—over the day's defeat. In our efforts to follow the *copy* set for us by our Lord—we shall write many a *crooked line*, and leave many a *blotted page* blistered with tears of regret. Yet we must keep through all, a brave heart, an unfaltering purpose, and a calm, joyful confidence in God. *Temporary defeat* should only cause us to lean on Christ more fully. God is on the side of everyone who is loyally struggling to obey his divine will, and to grow into Christlikeness. And that means assured victory, to everyone whose heart fails not.



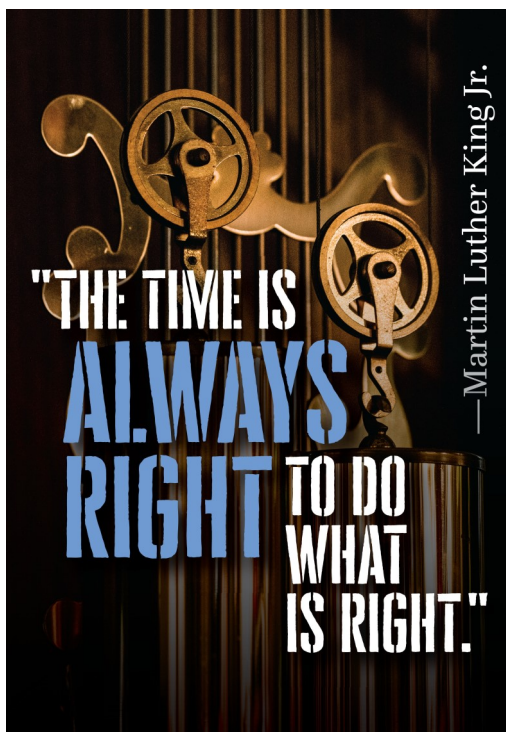
## Biblical resolutions

Hold firmly to your faith (Hebrews 4:14)  
 Assemble with the saints (Hebrews 10:25)  
 Pray and thank God earnestly (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18)  
 Petition God for great blessings (Malachi 3:10)  
 Yield not to temptation (1 Thessalonians 5:22)

Notice opportunities to serve others (Galatians 6:10)  
 Examine yourself daily (2 Corinthians 13:5)  
 Work diligently for the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58)

Yearn for righteousness (Matthew 5:6)  
 Exercise godliness (1 Timothy 4:7)  
 Aim for sinless perfection (Hebrews 6:1)  
 Redeem the time, living wisely (Ephesians 5:15-16)

Happy New Year ♪ Happy New Year ♪ Happy New Year



## TURNING BACK

In 1569 Holland, Dirk Willems, a member of the Anabaptist (now known as Mennonite) church, was imprisoned for refusing to belong to the state church. He escaped and was running across a pond's thin ice when the guard in pursuit fell through. Hearing the drowning man's cries, Willems turned back to rescue him, even though it meant his capture and subsequent execution.

Four centuries later, civil rights icon Martin Luther King Jr. urged us to love our enemies by not defeating them "when the opportunity presents itself." Eventually we'll have chances to get back at people who misuse or gossip about us, he said. But "the meaning of love" is in not doing so. "In the final analysis, love is not this sentimental something that we talk about," said King. "It's not merely an emotional something. Love is creative, understanding goodwill for all [people]. It is the refusal to defeat any individual."

## EPIPHANY EPIPHANIES

Sometimes brief words of ancient wisdom can spark an "aha!" moment — a revelation of new insight about God or faith. Here are some epiphanies for the *season* of Epiphany.

"If we approach with faith, we too will see Jesus ... for the Eucharistic table takes the place of the crib. Here, the Body of the Lord is present, wrapped not in swaddling clothes but in the rays of the Holy Spirit."

—St. John Chrysostom (347-407)

"So that we might also have the means to go, the one we were longing to go to came here from there. And what did he make? A wooden raft for us to cross the sea on. For no one can cross the sea of this world unless carried over it on the cross of Christ."

—St. Augustine (354-430)

"You wish to see; listen. Hearing is a step toward vision."

—St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)

Worship  
WITH US

Early Worship Service

Returns on January 9th 2022

Sundays at 9:00 AM

(Contemporary Casual Worship Service)

In Person & Online Worship

Sundays at 11 AM

# UPCOMING EVENTS



A congregational meeting will be held for the members of Louisa Christian Church on January 9th. A change to the LCC By-laws and the approval of the 2022 Deacons is on the agenda.

For your convenience, the meeting will be held after both the 9am and the 11 am service. You may attend either or both meetings.



## Board Meeting

Next Meeting

January 11, 2022

7:30 PM

Look for meeting documents and Zoom info on January 10, 2022.

JOIN US FOR OUR  
ANNUAL CHURCH BREAKFAST

ALL CHURCH

Fell  wship

BREAKFAST

January 2<sup>nd</sup> 2022 @ 9:00 A.M.

# JANUARY Birthdays

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Matthew T.	January 3
Michael T.	January 3
Kash M-C.	January 5
Linda K.	January 5
Michael V.	January 12
Justin W.	January 14
Harold P.	January 15
Steven F.	January 19
Deanna C.	January 20
Helene P.	January 20
Janet P.	January 20
Danny D.	January 22
Lucie S.	January 22
Kyle F.	January 24
Robert S.	January 25
Katie D.	January 28
William S.	January 30

## January 6, Epiphany (Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12)

by Laurel Mathewson (as printed in the Christian Century)

(Laurel Mathewson is co-vicar at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in San Diego.)

My husband and I started our ministry with our congregation in summer 2016, but in those hot, sun-drenched early months we kept hearing the language of the Epiphany. The church's primary matriarch, Suzy, told the church's story as the story of keeping the light of Christ burning, visible to any wanderers or travelers seeking his presence, even if the size of the flame was modest. The small congregation was rich in faith but poor in budget, and the darkness of potential closure loomed. With minimal pastoral leadership, Suzy and other lay leaders kept the light of Christ aflame in the most unglamorous of ways: arriving early to clean the bathrooms, running upstairs to sing in the choir, running back downstairs to steep the chai tea spices before the service ended, mopping the floors and re-setting the tables for another week of recovery group meetings. Many of the leaders came straight from working a night shift, painfully delaying sleep.

"We just had to keep the light going. We couldn't let it go out on our watch," Suzy said. Only God knows how many souls encountered Christ's gracious light on those hard-pressed Sundays, but I stand as one witness: when we visited the church for the first time, a Sudanese elder placed her hand on my back as I knelt at the communion rail, and I experienced it as the hand of Christ. Two years later, I sat in her living room and told her this story, a pivotal part of my vocational discernment at the time. "You probably don't remember," I said. She looked me straight in the eye and said, "I remember. I meant it as a blessing." Christ's light, manifest to the stranger. Small but mighty, hidden to the world in a run-down cinder block building.

The manifestation of Christ to the gentiles is celebrated throughout the season of Epiphany, but Matthew 2 is the dramatic and tone-setting lead. At first glance the Epiphany seems high and mighty, with grand images fit for plays and movies and Christmas cards: royal courts, wise men from the East, the capital's chief priests and legal advisers, new stars on the move, secret delegations. Big, important people at the center of the world. But then, at the climax of the passage, when "they saw that the star had stopped" and "were overwhelmed with joy," the colors are more muted and the stage setting becomes sparse.

We see only "the child, with Mary his mother." The holy family has moved from a stable to the stability of a house, but there is little to indicate the identity Matthew points to in these verses: king of the Judeans, the anointed deliverer, one who will lead and shepherd. The passage reminds us four times that Jesus is a *child*. Yet somehow these wise men respond as if Jesus' greatness is indeed manifest to them.

How do they know that the glory of the Lord is upon this small child? A compelling star. How do they know not to return to Herod? An alarming dream. How does Paul become the apostle to this child-turned-man? A revelation of "the mystery of Christ" on the road. How does the young church know that this risen Christ is for the whole world? It has been revealed by the Spirit (Eph. 3:5-6). All this wondrous activity makes me think about the miscommunications between the world and the church when it comes to signs and wonders.

Yet on Epiphany, our scriptures invite us all to reconsider *how* Christ was manifest to the gentiles then, and how we might witness to the same light in concert with those stories now. Some of that witness—and the wondrous, God-given signs—will come through humble and familiar church work, like an altar candle kept burning, like Suzy's faithfulness. Other hearts might more readily approach the flame of Christ's presence among us, like the wise men stumbling step by step toward Bethlehem, if we can more fully communicate what even the Puritan Jonathan Edwards knew: that God ceaselessly reveals himself "alike by his word and works" in nature.

