



Article Title— "Missing! ...from God's Whole Armour"

Article Category— Practical Christianity



Perhaps you've observed remarkable behavioral differences in people who've acquired a genuine passion for something and those who lack any meaningful passion. The most observable characteristic of that more common mindset about anything truly important is lip service. Here's an example of the less common mindset: Syndicated newspaper columnist, Leonard Lyons, wrote in a 1959 Reader's Digest® article, "The world's foremost cellist, Pablo Casals, is 83. He was asked...why he continued to practice four and five hours a day. Casals answered, 'Because I think I am making progress'."

Christians who lack a genuine passion for Christ are called Believers. They are primarily characterized by lip service and going through all the religiously correct motions the visible church expects of them. Those who've acquired a genuine passion for Christ and diligently pursue that passion are called Disciples. What percentage of each do you think there are in the church you attend? Why is that? The following insight may prove helpful...

The visible church pursues a mission that is aptly expressed like this: "To Get People Saved."^A Is that the mission Our Lord prescribed for His Church? We think you'll want to grab a Bible (several versions of it if you have more than one) and re-read The Great Commission at Matthew 28:19,20 and then answer this burning question: Which did Jesus command us to do?

- Make Believers?
- Make Disciples?

Some observers might conclude, then, that the most significant accomplishment of the visible church is giving multiple millions of Believers a false sense of Salvation Security. Might that be the essence of the 2 Thessalonians 2:3 "great falling away?"

^A Follow this hotlink to learn the history of "getting 'saved'": https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/a359a3_3d67d6224bee4c1ab9d7f8f333c02f63.pdf

Yes, I know: Nobody can make Disciples from behind a pulpit or podium or on television or radio or even in a classroom. That would be as futile as trying to "teach" roomfuls of young children how to ride their first bikes! It's true: Some things can simply not be "taught;" they must be "coached." So where and who are the Coaches in the visible church? Who's coaching them on how to coach Believers effectively? On a scale of 1-10, how pleased do you think Our Heavenly Father is with all that? Have the gates of Hell already prevailed against the visible church?



Please don't wrestle unnecessarily with that question. That's because God always has a remnant of passionate Disciples He can count on. There's the visible church and there's The Church. The latter is, for the most part, invisible. (Yes; you can take that to the bank.)

So what kinds of things might a Believer need to gain from his Discipleship Coach(es) in order to start becoming a Disciple? How about full comprehension something like this for Phase One?

- "My people are destroyed for lack of [sincerity?] [prayer?] [holiness?] [righteousness?] [regular church attendance?] [faith?] [hyperspirituality?] ["getting truly 'saved'?"] [frequent participation in "praise and worship?"] [believing "what 'we' believe?"] knowledge..." —Hosea 4:6
- "Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, [and] liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as [for] hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." —Proverbs 2:3-5
- "The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge." —Proverbs 18:15
- "Apply thine heart to instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge." —Proverbs 23:12
- "How long, ye simple ones will ye love simplicity?...and fools hate knowledge?" —Proverbs 1:22
- "Every prudent [man] dealeth with knowledge...." —Proverbs 13:16
- "The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge..." —Proverbs 15:14

All that is based on the premise that whenever one loves another person with a passion, one wants to know everything about them. God is fully aware of that. It's why, per Hebrews 11:6, He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek to learn all they possibly can about Him. Yes, that is a life-long pursuit of passion. One of a Discipleship Coach's primary functions, then, is to help

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each Believer acquire such a driving passion...keeping in mind that there is just one scripture in the entire Bible that tells us how to gain God's personal approval—2 Timothy 2:15. (You should feel free to stop here for a minute to read that verse.) That'd be the essence of **Phase Two**.

Phase Three might be to help each Believer learn how to put those first two phases of discovery into action. The initial function of a Discipleship Coach in this phase should be to ensure full comprehension of the message of 1 Peter 3:15. It is this: "...[be] ready always to [give] an answer to every man that ASKETH you a reason of the hope that is in you..." Once a Believer has a full grasp on that, he should be well on his way to responding sensibly to others whose observations of a *difference* in him has yielded "ears to hear." Much too often, I've heard the unlearned respond something like this: "Well, I'm not a Bible scholar, but my preacher is. You've just gotta come and hear him on Sunday. He's absolutely wonderful! (Parcel to the message of 2 Timothy 2:15 is never having a need to be ashamed...)

That brings us to the primary focus of Phase Three: A Discipleship Coach's assignment is not finished until he has led a Believer through a series of rigorous Practice Exercises. Those can take several forms, including Q&A, but my personal favorite method is interactive Role Playing. In those, the Discipleship Coach plays the role of a third party who asks the Believer several observation-based questions, indicating that he (the third party) has acquired ears to hear.^B

^B When people observe a *difference*, they get curious. When they get curious, they start asking questions. When they start asking question, they want answers. Follow this hotlink to much more about that: https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/a359a3_6f4b0759ee0b47efb996df936fea4483.pdf

Paul instructed the church folk at Ephesus and Thessalonica to put on the whole armour of God:

- ☞ Belt of Truth
- ☞ Breastplate of Righteousness
- ☞ **Shoes of Practice unto Readiness^C**
- ☞ Shield of Faith
- ☞ Helmet of The Hope of Salvation
- ☞ Sword of the Spirit
- ☞ Wisdom of Alertness

How many sermons have you heard on each of them?

^C Ephesians 6:15_[KJV] reads like this: "And your feet shod with the **preparation**^{G-ZU91} of the gospel of peace. The original New Testament Greek word is transliterated *hetoimasia*. Strong's one-word definition for it is "preparation." Overlooked for centuries by the visible church is a credible answer to the question, "How might a soldier in the Army of the Lord prepare, except via frequent vigorous Practice?" **BIBLE BOOT CAMP_{SM}** anyone? (See the bottom of page 3 for more on that.) Follow this hotlink for confirmation— <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg=G2091&t=KJV>

The objective of **Phase Four** Coaching is to help the new Disciple identify a focus for his own ministry^D within the body of Christ. **Phase Five** is when the Discipleship Coach seeks to help the new Disciple get started with his new ministry^D. There are few, if any limits on the variety of possible ministry^D roles a Disciple might pursue with a passion. Among them, of course, would be Discipleship Coaching. There's an enormous vacuum in that category...


^D "The ministry" is not – and was never intended to be – a career choice for people who wish to earn a living by sharing the Gospel message. That may initially sound like blasphemy to you. I understand that. I would've objected, too: Several of the people on both sides of my family tree spent their entire adult lives as Professional Christians. They each encouraged me to travel that road, too. In retrospect, it is clear that my resistance was inspired by The Holy Spirit. I have written several articles about it. I think you may want to read at least a couple of them and even share them with a few others who may benefit. Here are two hotlinks—

- ✓ https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/a359a3_7c325d6022ec4f43a8fe79a07c770fc9.pdf
- ✓ https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/a359a3_44a8cc5b9f9b4935821779f0806411ac.pdf

So! The Shoes of Practice unto Readiness have been missing for centuries from the visible church's cache of articles of The Whole Armour of God! Consider this: How effective might one be with a sword if one has never used it in regular combat Practice exercises? How might one effectively practice with it if one's knowledge of it is both passive and limited to what someone else has *told* one about it?

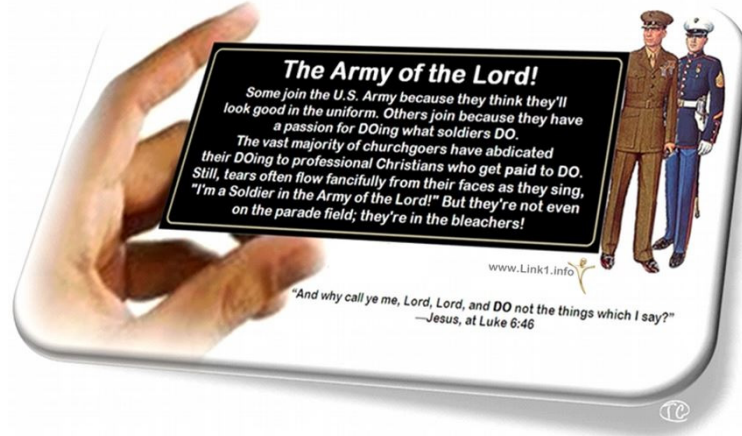
Unfortunately, it is not "practice" that makes perfect. Only "perfect practice" makes perfect. Role plays in your church's "what 'we' believe" seminars and workshops are justly characterized as imperfect practice. For perfect practice you will want to align with a few other believers who'll resolve to separate denominational dogma from First-Century Truth. Then and only then can you enjoy "perfect practice." Your Shoes of Practice Unto Readiness will get broken-in and really dirty, too...especially where there is reciprocal Discipleship Coaching. You will each grow in skill and spiritual muscle for bearing the weight of God's combat armor and in stamina—for enduring to the end.

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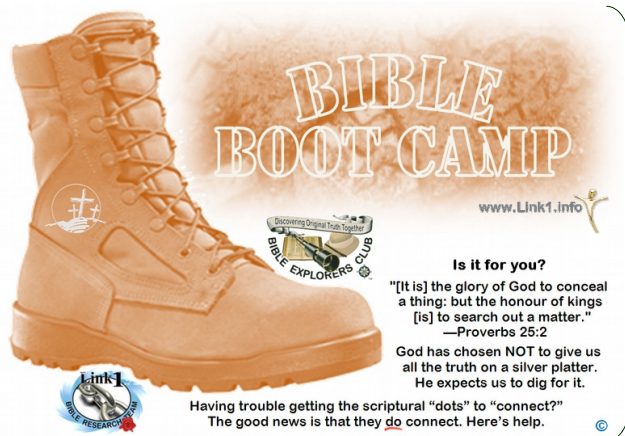
Not only must we each be receptive to reciprocal instruction, correction and reproof (even occasional rebuke), but we must actively cultivate such environments and relationships. Otherwise we can gain no skill. Without skill there can be no perfect practice. Without perfect practice there can be no readiness. Without readiness soldiers in the army of the Lord grow lethargic and weak: The weight of God's armor causes weak soldiers to collapse even before any real combat begins. Even if those soldiers were to make it into combat, if their armor still feels awkward from lack of perfect Practice, they'll be quickly and easily defeated. It's easy to sing about being in the army of the Lord, but who will practice to learn how to fight effectively in the ranks of the real army of the Lord? (Have you ever worn shoes that weren't completely broken in?)



The genuine passion of a good Discipleship Coach is likely to be contagious. That's when the Holy Spirit shows up. When the Holy Spirit enables a person to achieve an objective that he'd normally NOT be able to achieve, it's a lot like driving a car with power steering and power brakes. One must go through the exact same physical motions as with manual steering and brakes, but the task becomes a lot easier. So don't be nervous about doing your personal part in helping The Church fulfill The Great Commission. Just close your eyes and focus on that critical role The Holy Spirit will play and then go for it!

—T. C. Newsome

PS: Comments? Questions? Scriptural rebuttals? They're all welcome! www.Link1.info/contact-us.
 To participate in sensible Bible-related discussions, join us at TC's Friends Club. Here's the hot link:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/136708110091989/>



This is to be the theme for our 2019 Bible Study Series.

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