

Contents

Introduction: The Need for Kingdom Disciples	9
Part 1: The Foundation of Kingdom Discipleship	
1. The Missing Key	15
2. The Primary Concern	37
3. The Bold Confession	55
4. The Cost of Commitment	77
Part 2: The Formation of Kingdom Discipleship	
5. Our True Identity	95
6. A Deep Intimacy	117
7. A Steady Increase	133
8. The Heavenly Incentive	147
Part 3: The Function of Kingdom Discipleship	
9. The Individual	163
10. The Family	179
11. The Church	197
12. The Community	217
Conclusion	239
Appendix A: Kingdom Discipleship Action Steps	243
Appendix B: The Urban Alternative	245



CHAPTER I

The Missing Key

One of the greatest tragedies of the twentieth century was the sinking of the *Titanic* in the chilly North Atlantic Ocean on April 15, 1912. Over 1,500 people died in the frigid waters of the Atlantic during the maiden voyage of this elegant ship that was believed to be unsinkable. The cause of the catastrophe is commonly understood to be the ship's hull being ripped open by a largely submerged iceberg, but the tragedy occurred primarily because of a lesser-known yet more strategic reason.

David Blair was the second in command, scheduled to make the journey from South Hampton, England, to America. However, on the day before the scheduled departure, Mr. Blair was reassigned. Mr. Blair had in his pocket the key to the crow's nest locker, which contained the high-powered binoculars that were used by the crewmember who watched from the elevated crow's nest for any potential dangers.

Because Mr. Blair inadvertently kept the key with him, the binoculars were unavailable at the moment they were needed most. Thus, the iceberg was not visible in the distance as it

would have been had the binoculars been available. This ultimately led to the deadly crash we know today as the sinking of the *Titanic*.

If it wasn't for the missing key, the tragedy could have been averted.

Similarly, a key is missing in Christianity today. It is a critical key—its absence has resulted in weak, defeated believers, family disintegrations, ineffective churches, and a decaying culture. Without the full use of this key, followers of Christ lack the tools needed to fully live as heaven's representatives on earth.

What is the missing key?

You guessed it—it is discipleship.

Kingdom disciples are in such short supply that a bevy of powerless Christians attend powerless churches, resulting in a powerless presence and impact in the world. Until this key called discipleship is recovered and utilized, we will continue to fail in our calling to adequately live as heaven's representatives on earth. The power, authority, abundance, victory, and impact promised in God's Word to His own will be ours only when we understand and align ourselves with His definition of discipleship. Until then, we can anticipate that disappointments and losses will be the norm in spite of all the Christian activities we engage in.

Discipleship is the missing key to a life of authority under God. But surrender to Christ's lordship and obedience to His rule of love are the grooves that make up that key, which when used rightly will unlock the power to bring heaven to bear on earth.

A kingdom disciple can be defined as *a believer in Christ who takes part in the spiritual developmental process of progressively learning to live all of life in submission to Jesus Christ*. The goal of

a kingdom disciple is to have a transformed life and to replicate God's kingdom values in the lives of others. Through His kingdom disciples, God exercises His rule from heaven to earth.

THE NEED FOR COMMITTED FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST

After He rose from the dead, the Lord Jesus Christ took steps to ensure that there would be followers. He immediately called a meeting—but it was not any ordinary church committee meeting. It was held on a hillside in Galilee, not in a conference room.

This meeting was also different because of the people who were there. According to Matthew 28:16, Jesus' eleven remaining disciples showed up; it's likely another five hundred-plus witnesses also were present (1 Cor. 15:6).

But a third, much larger group of people was indirectly part of that post-resurrection meeting—all Christians, including you and me. At the end of the meeting Jesus said, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). Since the age Jesus was speaking of hasn't ended yet, and since you and I are living in that age, we are also part of that historic occasion.

Let's read the "minutes" of Jesus' meeting:

The eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matt. 28:16–20)

No doubt you have never read any church committee minutes like those before. But even though this meeting included all the saints in church history from Pentecost to today, one of the problems preventing the current church from restoring the culture is this: we don't have enough committed followers of Jesus Christ. Kingdom disciples are in short supply.

SUBMITTING TO—
OR RESISTING—CHRIST'S AUTHORITY

Don't get me wrong. There was never any question about the ultimate outcome. God was never in danger of losing to Satan. But throughout history, Satan made every move possible to defeat God's plan and take over. He continually resisted God's authority and the authority of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Satan even tried to make Jesus worship him. When that failed, he tried to kill Jesus.

Satan thought he had succeeded—for about three days. Hell must have had quite a party on the Friday evening of Jesus' crucifixion. It lasted all day Saturday too. But the resurrection was God's way of saying to Satan, "Sorry. You lose. My Son is alive, and all authority is in His hands. He's in charge."

That's what the word *authority* in Matthew 28:18 actually means. It means "being in charge." It's power resting in the right hands. When Jesus said that all authority was His in heaven and on earth, He was saying that He possesses the legal right to wield that power.

Now the idea of heaven and earth reminds us of the prayer Jesus taught His disciples to pray: "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). So according to Jesus, a disciple's first concern should be that God's will is done on earth just

as it is done in heaven. So how is God's will done in heaven? Completely and perfectly, no questions, no objections, no debate. In fact, Satan and the evil angels who followed him were the only ones to ever challenge God's will in heaven, and they were kicked out (Rev. 12:7–9; Luke 10:18).

So Jesus' plan is that there would be a group of people who function as His legal representatives to reflect and implement God's will on earth. This would be the role and responsibility of kingdom disciples. The discipleship process is designed to transfer Jesus' authority to—and through—His followers. That way, no matter where people live, if they want to know what is going on in heaven, all they have to do is check out the lives of believers individually and collectively. As disciples who submit to Jesus and to the Father, God's people are to exercise heaven's authority in history. Kingdom discipleship and authority go hand in hand (Luke 9:1–2; Acts 8:12–13; 1 Cor. 4:20) and involve the transfer of the rule of our King and His kingdom to the world over which He has been given authority. If visible authority is not being exercised then the full understanding of the purpose of discipleship is not being understood and experienced.

OUR ROLE: OCCUPY!

Since Jesus has already achieved victory and Satan is a defeated enemy, what is our role as followers of His who have been left behind here on earth? Jesus answered that Himself in Matthew 28, but He also gave a very succinct answer on one occasion when He and the disciples were nearing Jerusalem just before His crucifixion.

The disciples thought that Jesus was going to Jerusalem to set up His kingdom right then. Jesus, knowing what they were

thinking, told them the parable of the nobleman who went on a long journey and left certain sums of money with his servants. Then the nobleman said something very interesting. He told them, “Occupy till I come” (Luke 19:13 κῆϛ). In other words, “Do business for me while I’m gone. I’ll be back” (cf. NASB).

I like that word “occupy.” As Jesus’ disciples, we’re like the occupying army that a conquering general leaves behind in the conquered country to maintain stability and progress after the battle has been won. Even though Satan is a defeated enemy, he still has a lot of fight left in him, and he wants to take as many people down with him as he can. So our task as Jesus’ occupying force is more involved than just sitting back and keeping an eye on things. The purpose of the church is to make disciples, not just add names to the roll or increase small-group Bible study attendance. It’s not enough for the church just to be open a certain number of hours a week or offer a variety of programs. We are to make disciples.

Recall that Jesus gave His disciples—and the entire church—final instructions in Matthew 28:19–20, in what is commonly known as the Great Commission. In the original language, there is only one command: “make disciples.” Three participles (action words ending in “ing”) explain how to do that one command. They involve: (1) going, (2) baptizing, and (3) teaching.

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

But before any of that is done, it is important to be sure what a disciple is. *A disciple is a person who has decided that following Jesus Christ takes precedence over everything else.* Or to express it another way, a disciple looks and acts like the one he or she follows.

Jesus did not say being a disciple would be easy. Disciples have to take up their crosses and follow Him. In Mark 8:34–36, Jesus made one of the most profound statements in all of Scripture:

If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?

The cross symbolizes an instrument of death. In order for someone's soul to become fully alive, it must first die to self. And it will need to die daily. The self-life, your selfish thoughts that dominate your mind and are in conflict with the will and Word of God, must die. Much more important is to save your soul, which remains forever, either in hell or heaven.

Yet in these verses, Jesus adds the teaching about saving and losing your life.

How do you save your life yet lose it? By going after the temptations of this world. When you do that you forfeit your life, because life consists of more than the stuff you accumulate. Many people have a house but no longer have a home. Many people have money but don't have peace. Many people have plans but don't have any purpose. This principle of saving and losing your life is fixed. It's another way of saying you can't find God's purpose for your life when you're busy trying to find your own.

Giving yourself totally to God is giving Him full power over your life as His follower. When you do that, you experience the abundant life He has promised you.

Years ago when the military draft was still in operation, young men were often called into the service at very inopportune

times. It didn't matter if the draftee had just been married. It was good-bye bride, hello Uncle Sam. The same was true if the draftee had just begun a great job. As a new soldier, he now became the property of the US government. His new master dictated every detail of his life: when to get up or go to bed, what to eat—even how to dress, stand, and walk.

After boot camp, the military took a further step in controlling this soldier's life. It selected a new location for him, usually far from home, and a new occupation. If there was a war underway, this soldier might be sent to the front line where he might be killed, all in the line of duty.

If young men could be expected to sacrifice everything for their country, how much more should we as believers be willing to do whatever our Commander, Jesus Christ, asks of us? That's what is expected of us as His followers.

A SHORTAGE OF DISCIPLES

Of course, not everyone who heard Jesus speak while He was on earth became His disciple. Whenever He drew a large crowd, He eliminated most of them by talking about the requirements of following Him. If Jesus were interested in just building a large fan base, He would have kept quiet about the cost of discipleship.

But Jesus wasn't playing the numbers game. He was making disciples. Unfortunately, most of the people who heard Him weren't interested in absolute commitment to His authority. Getting by and enjoying the benefits of Messiah was good enough for them.

Sadly, that's too often the case with Christians today. Too many of us serve Christ as long as He doesn't start messing with our comfort. We're willing to follow Him as long as He keeps

money in our pockets and smiles on our faces. But we don't want to be inconvenienced.

"Yes, I love the Lord, but I'm not really interested in serving others."

"I want to serve God, but my job keeps me too busy."

"Wednesday prayer meeting is during my favorite television programs. But I'll give God two good hours on Sunday."

Few church members would ever say things like this out loud, but that's the message they convey. As a result, there are too few disciples around to enable the church to impact the world.

This helps explain why so many people go to church every Sunday in the city, yet the city doesn't change. It helps explain why countless numbers of Christians work in the cities of America every weekday, yet our country doesn't change.

The primary problem in our country is not that we don't have enough money, not that we can't work through the sociological problems, and not that there are not enough government programs. The problem with our country is not even that we don't have enough churches filled with Christians. The problem is we don't have enough disciples. Where are the true followers?

This shortage of disciples explains why we have so many Christians and so little impact within our own churches, let alone in the country at large. What we need now are not more bodies in the pews. What we desperately need are more disciples, visible and verbal unapologetic followers of Jesus Christ.

If we are going to see our country change, if we are going to see the suburbs, small towns, and rural America claimed for Christ, it will be because we make disciples in obedience to Christ's command and see them exercise the authority of heaven in history.

Until we become disciples ourselves and make disciples, we cannot hope to see change. The church in America will remain weak and ineffective, resulting in the continual deterioration of the culture. But there's still hope that the church can get its strength back if it moves from a focus on membership to a focus on discipleship.

READY TO UPSET THE WORLD?

Notice in Matthew 28:19 that Jesus told the people who were gathered at that meeting in Galilee to make disciples “of all the nations.” So the concern of discipleship is not just for individuals but also for systems that affect people’s lives, including government. That was a big job when the known world was the sprawling Roman Empire. In order for them to do that, those early disciples would have to be big dreamers and mighty doers. They would need to possess and carry out kingdom authority.

Disciples were not just sent out to build a church. Christ sent them to exercise dominion. That is why the Jewish leaders got angry when the apostles came on the scene (Acts 4). They couldn’t keep these guys quiet. They jailed them and whipped them, but Peter and the others kept right on preaching Jesus. Later on, the Jews in Thessalonica said, “Uh-oh. Here come these men who have upset the whole world” (see Acts 17:6).

What was it that gave the apostles the boldness to stand in the temple and preach right under the noses of the religious leaders who had the authority to flog, imprison, and even execute them? What had happened to change their lives so radically?

The answer is back in Acts 2, in that upper room where Christ’s followers were gathered together after His ascension

into heaven. The answer came out of their own prolonged time for a collective solemn assembly. There were only 120 of them (Acts 1:15), but they were serious about Christ, about paying the price, about enduring the pain and inconvenience of being His kingdom disciples.

God knew it, so He sent the Holy Spirit to indwell them just as He had promised. Those men and women, dedicated to Christ and filled with the Spirit, started making disciples in exactly the way Jesus told them to do.

Although 120 isn't a large number, there is a big lesson for us in that small figure. How often do we judge the importance of a church by the size of its membership? When we do that, we're missing the point. It's not how many members are in a church that matters; what counts is the number of disciples.

I'm convinced that some huge churches in our country today couldn't find five true disciples. And in some small churches, many members are disciples. The size of the building means nothing about how well it produces true followers.

The difference between the church of the first century and the church today is that when those people showed up, people either got real nervous or angry, or they got saved. But either way, when those early disciples showed up, people got shook up.

Often when Paul came to town, a riot broke out. Soon after he became a believer, he had to leave Damascus hidden in a basket that friends lowered over the city wall late at night to keep his enemies from killing him (Acts 9:23–25). In Thessalonica, the enemies of Christ mistreated the man in whose house Paul was staying (Acts 17:5–9).

Paul was always starting something, but not because he was a troublemaker. Wherever Paul went, things started to happen

because he preached Jesus. He lived and breathed Jesus and expected others to do the same.

Do you realize that Christ has commanded His disciples to impact their community? He doesn't want you to be just another resident of your neighborhood or church, or your church to be just another church on the corner, not making any impact for the kingdom. When Jesus was on earth, no one was neutral toward Him. People either loved and revered Him or hated and tried to kill Him, but nobody ignored Him.

The world is ignoring Christians and the church these days in a myriad of ways and on a myriad of issues because they are not witnessing the authority we speak about, sing about, pray about, and preach about. What's worse is that many Christians aren't interested in Jesus either; they've grown cold toward Him. What we need are people who are on fire for Jesus, people with a burning desire to serve Him, people so excited about Him that they shake up the church and the community.

You can't be like Jesus on your job, in your neighborhood—and possibly, even within your church—and not have opposition. Tribulation is a part of the Christian experience, or it isn't the Christian experience. If you're having an easy time with it, if Satan never bothers you, you'd better check the direction you're walking. You may not be walking hand in hand with Jesus, and thus not reflecting Him.

READY TO BE SLAVES TO CHRIST?

The sermons I preach at our church are recorded on master compact discs. These masters are then put on a duplicating machine to produce CDs for our church members and to listeners of our national radio ministry, The Urban Alternative.

There is only one master CD for each message, but of course this master can produce any number of duplicates. It's interesting that the duplicating machine into which the blank CDs are placed to receive the master's message is called the "slave unit." The task of the slave unit is not to create its own message, or to distort the message it is receiving, but to faithfully record and play back what is said on the master.

That's a picture of the discipleship process. Jesus is the Master, and we are His slaves (Eph. 6:6) with the task of reflecting and replicating His character and conduct and rule in history. It would be through the mass producing of disciples on a local, national, and international scale that would fulfill God's original intent to rule through mankind.

Discipleship was not a new idea in New Testament times. It was a well-established concept in the Greek world in the centuries before Christ. The word disciple means "learner, student," and the Greeks had disciples in the realm of philosophy.

In Matthew 10:24–25, Jesus described what a disciple should look like. We read, "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become as his teacher, and the slave as his master."

THE GOAL

The goal of discipleship is conformity to the Savior, being transformed into the image or likeness of Christ (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18) in our character, conduct, attitudes, and actions. Discipleship also results in the exercise of His authority through us in the world.

A pastor friend of mine was visiting a college campus several years ago. He didn't know that my son Anthony Jr. was a

student there. He said he was walking across campus and saw a young man off in the distance.

My friend said he looked and then stopped dead in his tracks. “That has to be Tony Evans’s son,” he told himself. “He looks like Tony; he’s built like Tony; he even walks like Tony.”

He was right, of course. The young man he had spotted was Anthony. Even though the man was a long way away, Anthony’s characteristics were so obviously like mine that my friend told me, “I didn’t even know Anthony was in college yet. All I knew was that nobody could look that much like you and not be yours.”

In the same way, people ought to be able to tell by the way you walk and talk, by the total orientation of your life, that you belong to Christ, because nobody could function the way you function and not know Him. They can only conclude, “That person has to be a follower of Jesus Christ.”

The family resemblance ought to be obvious. That is discipleship. It means to so pattern your life after Christ, to follow Him so closely, that you speak, act, and think like Him and help others to do the same.

We have Jesus’ authority and command to make disciples. This is exciting because it means that He is with us in the process to ensure that it works when we do it right.

JESUS’ PLAN FOR MAKING DISCIPLES

Now that we know what a disciple is, let’s take a closer look at Jesus’ three-step plan in Matthew 28:19–20 for making disciples.

It may seem simple, but it requires commitment and trust in Jesus if we are to follow His plan for making disciples. The plan involves three elements: (1) going to people, (2) helping

people identify with Christ, and (3) teaching people Christ's commands so they may obey and honor Him.

1. Go to People

The first of the three things we need to do to make disciples involves going. As mentioned earlier, the original Greek of Matthew 28:19 can be translated, "As you go, make disciples." In other words, Jesus expects us to be going out. We could even say that our going is assumed.

What we are talking about is the ministry of evangelism. You can't make disciples out of unrepentant sinners. They must repent and they can only do so when they hear, understand, and respond to the gospel. Notice that the nations are not told to come to Christians for the gospel. We need to go to the people of the nations. Christians are not doing the work of the church if we are not winning souls to Christ and bearing public witness to the message of the gospel.

We must keep evangelism front and center in the life of the church. If the church is to grow by making disciples, its people must be willing to go into the whole world as Christ's witnesses. That's one reason Jesus sent us the Holy Spirit. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses . . . even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The absence of evangelism is proof positive that the work of the Spirit is not occurring in the life of a believer or the church. You may call it fear, or lack of opportunity, but the Spirit whose fruit includes love and peace (Gal 5:22) will give you boldness and opportunity to speak on His behalf.

Evangelism can be defined as sharing the good news of Christ's substitutionary death and resurrection and His free

offer of forgiveness for sin and eternal life to all who come to Him by faith to receive it. Evangelism is done with the clear intent of bringing the hearer to faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. People must be born from above into the kingdom before they can be developed into disciples of the kingdom. The church, then, must challenge, encourage, and equip its members to effectively share their faith with unbelievers.

2. Help People Identify with Christ

Jesus said that another part of making disciples is baptizing those to whom we have gone and who have accepted Christ. He was not telling us simply to get people wet. There is much more to baptism than just undergoing a ritual involving water. In fact, the primary meaning of the Greek word for baptism is “identification.”

Baptism was a very picturesque word in New Testament days. It was used of dipping a cloth into a dye so that the cloth became completely identified with the dye by absorbing its color. The cloth was immersed in the dye until it took on the character of the dye. The cloth underwent a complete identity change.

This is the picture behind Romans 6:3–4, where Paul wrote,

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

When we put our trust in Christ, we became so completely identified with Him that His death and resurrection to new life became our death and resurrection. When we immerse believers

in the waters of baptism, we are picturing their death to the old life and resurrection to a new way of life. That happened the moment they trusted Christ, but the ordinance of water baptism was given to the church as an outward testimony to this inward change.

Many Christians struggle in their daily lives because they don't understand their new identity. They don't know who they are in Christ. We have to realize that being "in Christ" is such a radically new way of life that whatever happens to Christ happens to us. That's why the Bible says that when Christ died we died, and when Christ arose from the dead we arose.

It's like putting a letter in an envelope and sealing it shut. When I do that, I don't have to ask where the letter is because the letter is safely sealed inside the envelope. So wherever the envelope goes, the letter will go too—and it's against the law for anyone but the recipient of that sealed envelope to break that seal.

Believers are now citizens of a new kingdom (Col. 1:13) and their identity and point of reference is to be in line with that of their new King. They are to be Trinitarians (Father, Son, Holy Spirit), reflecting the rule of God in all that they do.

3. Teach People Biblical Truth

Once people have believed the gospel and have been identified with Christ, we must teach them "to observe all that I commanded you" (Matt. 28:20).

I'm a seminary graduate and a Bible teacher, so I can really get into this one. But teaching the nations involves more than teaching them theology, Christology, soteriology (spiritual salvation), and all the other "ologies" of the faith. Jesus said the goal is that people "observe," or obey, all that He commanded

us. Unfortunately, many Christians want to audit the Christian life like a college student does a class. They want the information without incurring any course responsibility. The result is that they don't get credit for the course. Information must be combined with obedience in order for heavenly representation to be authorized. Thus accountability must be a key component of our instruction since obedience is the goal.

Of course, our teaching must have solid content, because Christians are people of the truth and people of the Book. Jesus' commands that we are to obey are contained in the Word. But the goal is not content alone. The church today has too many "spiritual bulimics" who take in the Word at church on Sunday, but then throw it up as soon as they get home so it doesn't do them any good.

The goal of biblical teaching is to combine information and knowledge with skill in applying the truth to daily life. If you are sick and need surgery, you don't just want a doctor with an academic medical degree. You also want one who has skillfully performed the surgery before. That's why, for example, after Jesus had taught the people and then fed four thousand (Mark 8:1–9), He "immediately" had His disciples get into a boat and head out (v. 10).

Why? According to Mark 8:14–21, one reason was that He wanted them to apply the lesson they had just learned about His power to meet their needs. There wasn't enough food on board for the group, and the disciples were trying to figure out what they were going to eat. So Jesus asked them some pointed questions that ended with, "Do you not yet understand?" (v. 21). Obviously they didn't, but you can be sure they thought about it for a long time and eventually the message got through.

Making disciples is a process of spiritual development. It's similar to film processing, in which you take your negatives to the developer, who turns them into positives with the result that your pictures look the way they are supposed to look. God wants to take the negatives in our lives into His darkroom and turn them into positives so that we come out looking like His Son. The church and its ministry provides that darkroom where believers are brought to spiritual maturity through accountable relationships.

COMMITTING TO THE KINGDOM

Unless you are committed to becoming a kingdom disciple, you will not experience kingdom authority. In fact, since Jesus' instructions to make disciples is an imperative, to not be involved in the discipleship process is to be in disobedience, which is sin. Jesus concludes His instruction with the promise that He will be with us always (Matt. 28:20). This is not primarily a general promise to all believers but rather a specific promise to disciples and disciplemakers. There is a direct correlation between the kingdom, discipleship, and the exercise of authority. The greater and deeper the discipleship, the greater the access to kingdom authority. The lower the degree of discipleship, the lower the experience of kingdom authority. Jesus does not share His rule with all believers equally, for He knows what is in our heart (John 2:23–25). If we are not trustworthy, our authority will be limited.

You may say, "Tony, I'm a Christian, but I don't have a sense that I am living as a kingdom disciple, exercising kingdom authority, and I'm also not making disciples out of others." Perhaps that's because you have not fully committed to the kingdom.

A man once became lost in the desert. His throat was parched, and he knew he wouldn't live much longer if he didn't get some water.

Just then off in the distance he saw a little old shack. He made his way to the shack and found a pump inside with a jug of water sitting next to it. He reached for the jug to take a drink only to find this note on the jug: "The pump will give you all the water you need. But in order to prime the pump, you must pour in all the water in the jug."

This man had a dilemma. Should he drink the water in the jug and then be out of water and perhaps be unable to get more, or should he believe the note and use the water he had to prime the pump?

He began to think through his choices. "Suppose I pour all my water in the pump and nothing happens? I not only lose the water; I may lose my life.

"On the other hand, if there is a well underneath this pump and I use the water I have to prime it, then I can get all the water I need."

This thirsty man's dilemma is the question we have to ask ourselves as Christians. Do we get all we can get now because there might not be much later, or do we give up what we can get now because of all that's available if we are willing to take the risk of committing ourselves to Christ?

The man thought for a moment and then decided to take the risk. He poured the contents of the jug into the pump and began to work the handle. Sweat broke out on his forehead as nothing happened at first.

But as he pumped, a few drops of water appeared, and then came a huge gush. He drank all he wanted, took a bath, then

filled up every other container he could find in the shack.

Because he was willing to give up momentary satisfaction, the man got all the water he needed. Now the note also said, “After you have finished, please refill the jug for the next traveler.” The man refilled the jug then added to the note, “Please prime the pump. Believe me, it works.”

We need to prime the pump. Some of us are half-stepping on Christ. We’re trying to live in two worlds at the same time. We want to be sacred and secular, worldly and spiritual. We want to love God and love this world order. But my charge to you to remember is this: you can have the world if you want it—you just can’t have the world and God (1 John 2:15–17).

You have to pour all the water—give God everything you have—if you want God to pour His covenantal blessings back on you and share in His authority with you as His kingdom representative. Only in the domain of the kingdom will you discover God’s abundance and power to experience personal victory in your life.