

The Four Steps in the Christian Life

Luke 15:11

1. What God needs to have

People in general consider God unknowable and do not even try to think about what He needs. It is true that we cannot completely understand Him, but we should think about His need even through the Scripture.

He does not need more knowledge, for He is the origin of wisdom. Does He need more belongings. He was the creator of all things. Does He need more power? He is already the ruler of the visible and invisible worlds.

One thing He still needs to do may be that which He cannot do by Himself: fulfill the ideal of His love. God is the origin of love, and His ideal of love cannot be fulfilled without the object to be loved. He could not help creating man and all things! Creation was His necessity.

2. The goal of religions

Mankind fell, and lost God and His love. The goal of religion must be to help mankind discover God and His love. All religions must teach God's love and show the way of restoration toward it.

3. The parable of the prodigal son shows us three different types of personality:

- A. The mind of the prodigal son – complaint, self-conceit, and arrogance led to his leaving his father, but, as the climax of suffering, he came to repent and wanted to be accepted in his father's house.
- B. The mind of the elder brother – he did not fully understand the heart of his father who was really happy with the returned son. Even though the elder son attended the father many years, his mind was far away from his father's mind. He shows how difficult filial piety is to fulfill.
- C. Parental mind – the father was happy to embrace his returned younger son and forget about all the sorrowful past. To the elder son, his father said,
“Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thin.”

Through this parable, we should learn about the relationship between God and humankind.

4. The four steps in the Christian life

According to the above parable we can talk about the four steps in the Christian life.

First, the step in which we repent over the human fall; second, the step in which we came back to our father's house; third, the step in which we (just like the elder son) share the household with our father, but still do not fully understand the father's heart; finally, the step in which we can empathically feel Heavenly Father's heart (e.g., how He has been missing His prodigal son, how long He has been quietly preparing to bequeath His household to His first son).

In the first and second steps we cannot yet say we are loving God, because we are still under our own burden. In the third step we externally work for God if not reaching His heart in depth. In the final step we share everything with Heavenly Father and we are His eternal children. This step is the ultimate goal of the Christian life.