

CNL 2009

## 9.1 SEVEN STEPS TO DISCIPLE SUCCESS pt 1

### Transcription

Okay, today, let me encourage you if you'll get your bulletin, inside your bulletin is an outline, and this outline is Seven Steps to Disciple Success. You've heard of many seven steps, you've heard of seven steps by Steven Covey. Well today, to be a successful disciple, there are seven steps, and it deals with, pretty much, overcoming challenges that you have in your life, and it's a critical study, so I pray that today, God really blesses as we go into this study, so let's pray. There were these two guys, one was named Earl, and one was named Elliott. And Earl and Elliott were baseball fanatics. Now I don't know if you like sports, but these guys were fanatics. Whenever there was a baseball team playing, a professional team, they would be there. And they'd go home, they'd actually study the stats, and who made a home run and who hit and who was on base, and they, 24 hours a day, were obsessed with baseball. I loved baseball as a kid, but these guys, they were crazy for baseball, and in the off season, they would just study the stats and they would quiz each other and try to remember in 1955 when so-and-so hit a home run, who was on third? They just were crazy for baseball, and they would watch TV and watch all the games on TV. As they went through their lives, they were both Christian men, and as they went through their lives, they said, "You know what? Boy, when we die, I wonder if there's going to be baseball in heaven?" And so they made a deal with each other. Elliott said to Earl, "You know what, Earl, if you die first, if you get to heaven, somehow come back and let me know that there's baseball or not in heaven." So Elliott and Earl made a deal. Forget about the theological correctness of this story. So Elliott and Earl made a deal. That one would come back and tell the other. Well sure enough, one night, they're getting older, and of course they're baseball fanatics, and one night they're watching the Rangers, and he goes, "Okay I'll see you Earl." And Elliott goes home and Earl is sitting there and he closes his eyes and he dies right there. And Earl goes to heaven. A couple of days Elliott's at home, and

he hears a voice, "Elliott." He turns and says, "Who's— that?" "It's me, it's Earl" "Earl, that's incredible, Earl, you came back." "I came back, I promised I would." "Oh that's cool man, well come on, big question, don't make me wait. Okay, Earl, is there baseball in heaven?"

"Well, Elliott. I can tell you, but I've got both good news and bad news." "You got good news and bad news?"

"Yeah, I got good news and bad news, Elliott." "Yeah, okay, all right Earl, well just give it to me." "Well do you want the good news first or do you want the bad news?" "Okay, Earl, just give me the good news first." "Okay, let me just tell you, Elliott, not only is there baseball in heaven, but it's the most beautiful stadium you've ever seen. Why the crowds are there every night, the lights are bright, the bases are pure white. The green is greener than you've ever seen out on the

field, and the mound is perfect, and people hit home runs out of there. And every night when they hit a home run it goes miles and miles." Oh man, Elliott's like, "You've got to be kidding, that's

incredible." "Oh yeah, the crowds are awesome, and the games go on and on and on, hundreds of innings." "Oh you've got to be kidding me." "No, no, it's true, it's true." "Well, then tell me then, what's

the bad news. If that's the good news, that's incredible news. What's the bad news?" "Are you sure you want to hear it, Elliott?" "Yeah, I want to hear it. What is it?" "Well of course the good news is there's

baseball in heaven. The bad news, is Earl, you're pitching tomorrow night." (Peter and the audience laugh) Now the great thing about that story is rather simple, and that is this. As we are disciples who

follow Christ, we can't ever forget that God is in control and there is going to be a day He takes us, whether we want to go or not. And there are things He is going to do whether we want Him to do it or

not, and at times we can be frustrated with this or we can be celebrating God, and you know why? Because we should be excited over the, fact that we do have a God who's in

control. That He didn't just wind up the earth and leave it running on itself and that He's got hands off.

So today, lets praise the Lord that we're disciples of a God who's going somewhere, and He's in charge.

If you'll read James Chapter 4, verse 1, it's on your notes, once again your notes are inside your bulletin, James Chapter 4 verse 1. Let's read them together. For where do conflicts and fightings among you come from? They come from your lusts that war in your bodies. You lust and have not, you murder and covet others goods that you cannot attain, you fight and battle but have not because you ask not. You ask and receive not because you ask amiss to consume your pleasures. You adulterers and adulteresses, don't you know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God

Now, I want you guys just to look at this for a second. First of all, you're saying, "Okay, what's the deal, Spencer? You've been teaching how the two commandments, Love the Lord with all they heart, and love one another as you would love yourself, you've been talking about loving other people, but now the bible's saying that if you love the world that you're an enemy of God. I mean, what's the deal? Are we supposed to love or not love?" What James is doing here, is he's explaining the concept of love. Now there are various kinds of love, you all know. There's the country western song, you know you love your girl, you love your pickup truck, and you love your dog. I mean that's a kind of love, (in a country twang) There's songs written about that all the time. And there's that kind of love. And there's the Eros, the erotic, that kind of love that God is not pleased with. Then there's agape, or phileo the other kind of love which is a brotherly love, there are all kinds of love. And James says, "Let me just tell you something. It's critical to be able to love the world enough to give them Christ, but don't love the world so much that you become like the world. In other words, you need to know to learn how to draw lines in your life. Because if you don't, you'll be consumed." So if you notice, it's pretty strong words, I've got to admit. James is the kind of guy that in 30 seconds, he has bluntly told you his opinion. You know anybody like that? It's like, you know, he says,

"Hi, what's your name." "Yeah, are you a Christian?" "No?, You're burning in hell."

And you're like, "Oh, nice to meet you too."

I mean, he's kind of that kind of guy. But I kind of like James too because he's right there in your face. It's like, what you see is what you get, and I like people like that actually. And so, if you look at this passage, he says, "You adulterers and adulteresses." He's not just talking to people who cheat on their spouses. He's saying, basically, because if you look at the passage, friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God. He's saying, "You know what your problem, is folks? You're cheating on God. You're an adulterer and an adulteress because you're more in love with the world than you are with God. And He, according to scripture, should be your spouse." Christ represents the bridegroom and the church represents the bride. So he's talking about cheating on God. Now that sounds like a strange concept, but it's very clear here in scripture. In other words, do you have a greater passion for the things of the world than you do for the things of God? And he'll show that your love of God will actually wane the more you're in love with the things of the world. Now, let's see where else he talks about this. He goes back up and it says, if you'll notice toward the middle of the verse, it says, "You ask and don't receive because you ask amiss" to what, can you read those words? "To consume your pleasure." In other words, when you pray to God is it so that you can "gimme gimme gimme", consume, and fulfill your pleasures, or is it to glorify God. Now just listen to something. If your prayers are built upon, "God I want this pleasure, I want this new car because Bob got a new car and I want one too because he's always making fun of my old beat up car." Or, "If I want this nice bigger house because Mark and his wife have a bigger house." If "me, me, me", if your prayers are built upon consuming your own pleasure God says you're asking amiss, you're asking wrong. But if you ask for things so that you can not only be blessed as a family, but also glorify God, then you're asking correctly. But the glory of God has got to be involved in that request, because that's the only thing that really lasts in your life, is the relationship you have with God. So here he says, you ask amiss. Now let me tell you what the word amiss is. The word "amiss" comes from the same concept as "sin." In

the Old Testament, the word "sin" comes from the concept of missing the mark or missing the target. Back in the old days, I don't see a piece of cloth in here to do it, but back in the old days, the Benjamites, they were a tribe in Israel. The Benjamites would take a piece of leather, and they'd put a stone in it, it was a sling. They were all left-handed, don't know if you know that, but all the Benjamites were left-handed, which is interesting. But they would all put a rock in a sling and they'd go like this, (whirling noises), and go "feeewww." And they would throw this rock at such a high velocity, that at about 100 paces, that's a long way, about 300 feet, that rock, that stone, kind of like David used to knock down Goliath, would fly and would split a horse's tail hair in half from 100 paces. Now if you're the enemy, they're not going to have a hard time hitting you in the forehead if they can hit a horse's hair from 100 yards. And if they missed it, the word for sin comes out of the word for missing it. If they missed the hair, if they didn't split it on either side, if they missed it, it was called missing the mark and that's actually where the word sin came from, it was missing the mark. So when you and I are sinning, it's not just the gross stuff that you see on soap operas all day long, what sin is. Missing the mark means that you're missing the perfection of God. Now who hasn't? We all have. So what hope do we have? Well, that's where Christ came in and gave His sacrifice so that we could hit the mark in Christ Jesus. But this was missing the mark, and he's saying, when you're praying, you're missing the mark. You're more preoccupied with just your own fleshly desires getting fulfilled, than having your desire that God, having fulfilled what His desires for you are. It doesn't sound like much, but it's a major difference in the way that we ask Him. Now let's look at the beginning, this is very blunt. Let's look at the first words that are there. Where do the conflicts and fighting, church divisions were going on then, among you come from? They come from the lusts that war in your bodies. Now you guys, let's all be honest. Every one of us has, at one time had a lust war in our body. If you've ever lusted after something you shouldn't eat. If you've ever lusted after your neighbor's wife. Have you ever lusted that

you have something that your neighbor has? You kind of wish you had what they have and you don't have it, and so it creates contention. Anybody here ever, don't raise your hands, but have you not lusted at one time or another? (laughing) Yeah, all the lusts raise your hands. (audience laughs) As the person next to you moves away. Okay. We've all, at one time or another lusted, and he's saying that the reason you have contention and division in your lives is because you're constantly wishing you had what is on the other side of the fence. You're desiring the things you shouldn't desire. And that's where we have warfare, isn't it, inside our spirits? It's that constant preoccupation with (whining) what I don't have, what I don't have, what I don't have." Instead of, "Thank you, God, for what I have, thank you, God, for what I have." So this is what he's saying, he says, "Because of your lust, your desires, you become divisive, and you begin to cheat on God, because you're preoccupied with what you shouldn't be preoccupied with." Would you look at Mark 4:19 and read that with me. And the cares of this world choke the word and it becomes unfruitful. Now the word choke there, let me tell you, can also be translated from the Greek, "suffocates." Have you ever seen quicksand? I remember as a kid I'd watch movies, Tarzan movies, whatever, and there would always be quicksand. There always had to be a quicksand scene. We don't see a lot of quicksand in Texas, but quicksand is that thing which when you step into it you just go in and you begin to sink. Now what is the one thing that you're supposed to do if you fall into quicksand? Struggle. Yeah, that's really kind of dense. I mean, if you're like by yourself, and it's like, "Oh, just peacefully go down." I mean it's a natural thing to struggle. I remember seeing on this animal channel, or whatever they call it, years ago the crazy guy that wrestles the crocodiles, and all that, you've seen this guy on TV. He says, what you do, is if you fall in you immediately throw yourself up in the air and back and lay on top of the quicksand. And what you're actually doing is, instead of putting all your weight upon just the area at the bottom of your feet, which presses you down into the sand, you're re-distributing your weight and kind of amortizing it out into a broader area, like snowshoes, and

now you're not going to sink as fast. But I mean, the last thing you really want to do is, when you hit the quicksand,

throw yourself upon it, close to it where your face is within inches of the sand. But he said that's actually the best thing to do. Now that takes faith. But that's the only way you're going to survive, and it takes faith to throw yourself upon this quicksand. And then he gave the next step, which was, kind of move your feet and kind of swing your body toward the edge, and just grab a hold of whatever is there, and pull yourself in. Now, that's great advice. But he said if you keep

doing it where you're upright and kicking, you're just going to go down and you'll suffocate. And as I saw this verse, I thought about the cares of the world. Have you ever, and don't raise your hands—you don't need to, have you ever been in a sin that it seems the harder you battle this sin, the deeper you get in it? Now you know what I'm talking about, right? No matter how hard you battle this sin, this one sin, if you could just get over this one sin, you could really

have a very productive life for Christ, but this one sin is just eating you up. And the harder you struggle, the deeper you get. Well the word of God shows there is actually a way, for whatever that lust is in your life, that problem, that you can overcome that, but it's going to take an act of faith. You'll have to do some things that are just the opposite of what the world would suggest that you do, and today we're going to look at those seven steps, we're going to do them in a real

quick order. So stay with me. Number 1, fill this in. We need to submit to God. Submit to God. Now, before we go

into that I want you to read Romans 12:2 with me. It's up there, under the Mark 4. Read this with me if you would:

Be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind Conformed, the word "con" . "with". Do not be formed "with" the likeness of the world. "Trans" means across, but be apart. Be changed, transformers, those who alter. Be altered, and be like Christ, not "conformed" or

with the form of the people around you that are sinning. So he's saying, you want to be changed, but not like the world. I John 2:15, read that with me if you would. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. In other words, listen to this folks. Do you know, in your lives, have you ever noticed when you've been on fire for the Lord, the things of this world didn't seem that important, and as you start getting on fire for the things of the world, the power and the love of the Lord starts to wane? Anybody here, or has this happened only to me? The more you focus on the things of the world, the desires of the world, if you're in sin and you go deeper into sin, do you notice that your time with the Lord is less and less and less? And your passion for Christ wanes as your passion for the world increases. But as your passion for the world wanes, your passion for Christ increases. Has anybody noticed this? Well this is not an accident. You were made to have a relationship with one, that's Christ. Not both, with one. So today we want to see how we can have that kind

of victory. Submit to God, submission. The disciple loves discipline. I went to, the other night, I had the privilege of sitting at the front table of Charles Flowers. Now you remember Charles' Christian Boot Camp? He's the guy that takes kids who just need to kind of get themselves oriented with the Lord all the way from just simple getting oriented with the Lord, to kids that are selling crack and the police have arrested them so many times, they're about to throw away the key. Charles takes all kinds of young people into this program and it was amazing watching some of the kids, I mean, many of them whom my wife and I know, that, you know, just need to get right with the Lord. But some of these kids, one of them who was a crack dealer, on the East side of town, who have spit in the face of the police, had nothing to do with submission to authority. That 32 days after a couple of these kids, violent anti-social kids, 32 days with Charles Flowers, we watched them come up to the podium, and in front of Charles, standing there going like this, and salute him, and take that diploma and talk to Charles and keep their eyes on him and weep as they took their diploma. Now 32 days, after years of rebelling against all authority, they were saluting this man, weeping as they took this diploma from him after 32 days. It was

the power of Christ, not only unto salvation, but the power of God to change, to transform lives. And that's the good news here, folks. The disciple can be transformed. Even in the most difficult, tempting situations, God can transform you. He can transform me. But it takes submission to Him. And I'm going to tell you what it is, he's a tough love kind of guy. He is tough. I don't know if you've seen any of the videotape on Charles. We have a video called "Christian Boot Camp." But I mean, if somebody says,

"I don't want to do..." "Give me 20!!!"

"One, two, three, four..." I mean he wears the brim hat, the Sergeant's hat, you know. And he is commander, you know. I remember when we were praying before he came out and spoke that time, and I said, "You know, in James chapter 4:1..." "No, it's James 4:2..." and I kept talking, and he goes, "Hey, Mister, I'm not going to let that go by. That was a mistake." I said, "Well I meant James 4:2..." And he goes, "Give me 20!!!! One, two..." I mean he's tough, man. (audience laughs) You get in shape quick around Charles. But discipline is the natural part of the disciple, so if you want to have power in your life, watch these kids be transformed. It makes you realize that if I submit to God, my life can be changed, but submission is critical. Story... Okay, this will give you an idea. A guy is in his 4-wheeler, in the middle of the Arizona desert. Boom, breaks down. No phone, no way to get help, for miles around, nothing but desert. He gets out of his 4-wheeler and begins to walk. Walks day and night, day and night. Three days and nights, but then he's had no water, he's dehydrated, his tongue is swollen, his feet are swollen, he's now crawling in the sand. He comes over a dune, and there before him, he sees a shack. He crawls up to the shack and he knocks on the door. The door opens, he goes, "Water, water." The guy goes, "Oh man, I'm sorry I don't have any water. But I sell ties, do you want a tie?" He goes, "I don't need a tie. Water." He goes, "Man, I'm really sorry, buddy, I only sell ties, but, I tell you what, the shack next door, that's my brother Sam's shack, he sells water." He goes, "Okay, thanks." So he crawls over. Now he's almost dead. He pushes the door open, and he begins to crawl into Sam's shack, and Sam suddenly stands and says, "Hey buddy, where you going?" He goes, "I need water." He goes,

“Water? Hey man, we don’t serve anybody without a tie.” (audience timidly laughs) That’s all right, my self-esteem doesn’t come from your laughter, I’m fine. The point is, there was an order to things. And as we look at these 7 points, the greatest encouragement I can give you is very simple. Don’t go through these 7 points on how to literally have power in your life to overcome the swamps. Those quicksand places you keep going to, you can’t skip any of these points, because they come straight out the scripture, they’re not my points. Actually, these points, if you strung them together, are the exact verses that you will read in the book of James. So, it’s critical today that you don’t leave a single point out, and check your life, and Peter Spencer needs to check his life to see if there are any points that are missing, that I need to begin to enact to be powerful in Christ. Number 2. What do we do after we submit to God? You’ve got to yield to God, folks. Quit fighting the Lord. Number 2 is Resist the devil. He will flee from you. That’s actually what the verse says. Now think about that, that’s pretty phenomenal. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Now where probably you’re thinking, “Yeah, resist the devil, fine and dandy, and he just keeps there slapping me.” No, actually the Bible says if you resist the devil, don’t yield to his temptation, he suddenly will (click) before you know it, take off. Now think about that.

Tacitus, second century, BC, Roman writer, said, “The power of the Roman army was very simple.” They would line up on the battlefield, you’ve seen the pictures, they have the shields, and then they’ve got the shields sticking out, and they were hiding behind the shields, and the enemy would charge them, thousand and thousands could come pouring over the hills. And Rome, as you know, pretty much took over the known world at the time, and thousands would come over the hill and crash into these shields and start backing away at the soldiers behind it, and arrows would come flying behind their heads, and the Romans would be hit by arrows, and they’d be catching on fire, and they’d still be standing there. No matter what happened, the Romans would not break rank. And for four or five hours the enemy would be clubbing them and be smashing against these shields, and these shields would stay right there, and the Romans

would be fighting back and hacking them to pieces, but the Romans would not be advancing on them, they would be simple defense. And after four or five hours, the call of the General would be, "Move forward, advance." And they would go from defense to offensive posture. And what would happen is Tacitus would say, the reason the enemy would flee, was because the enemy figured, "If they're this tough when they're not even on the offense, if they are just standing there on the defense, and they're hacking us to pieces, killing us, and we're unable to move them, imagine what it's going to be like when they go on the offensive against us." And what would happen, is once that General yelled that, they realized that these guys, if they're this diligent when they have to stand still and take it, imagine what it's going to be like when they're about to dish it out. And the enemy would turn and flee and that is how Rome would take huge sections of a country. The enemy would flee, not because of the advance of the Romans, always, but because of the ability to resist without breaking rank. Are you all with me? In our lives, we act like we know that we have a more powerful God, but we act so wimpy when the enemy comes. I mean if the Romans had, you know, the enemy comes, and they're like, (whining) "Don't... stop... no... 1." Can you imagine the Roman empire growing like this? You know, and Christians, we go to Bible study and something like that and say "We're ready to go," and the devil comes, and we're like, (whining) "Don't, stop stop, don't... Why doesn't he flee?" (audience laughs) He's having too good a time whipping you, that's why! That's why he doesn't flee. Scriptures are clear. When the fight comes on, you stand. Don't yield. Don't give in. Don't do what the temptation wants you to do. And eventually, ironically enough, the devil will literally, at a time when you least expect it, turn and flee. And it's a guarantee, but you must resist. Number 3 and if he's fleeing, then if you do any sin, you can't say, "The devil made me do it." It's totally yours, on your own time. Number 3. The next thing he says to do is Draw near. He will draw near to you. Actually the full thing says, "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." Now what's this

all about? I will tell you, this is the beginning of real power. Drawing near to God in prayer, drawing near to God in Bible study. Drawing near to God. Once, somebody said to me, "Peter, people are friendly to friendly people." Now think about that. People are friendly to friendly people. You may have personality, when you walk in a room, for whatever reason that happened during your childhood, and things that may have happened, it's a very common thing, that you walk into a room and you figure that nobody likes you there. Nobody likes you. In fact, you're positive nobody likes you. And when that one person looks at you, and looks you up and down, and then turns their back to you. "I knew it man, they all hate me." They may not even know you, but you think that they don't like you. And so what you do is you walk around with this sour look on your face like you smelled something bad, like somebody took their socks off or something, and you're walking around that room looking like this (gesture?) and you can't figure out why nobody's nice to you. You know what it is? In fact, I have a quote for you. Dale Carnegie said, "You can make more friends in 2 months by becoming interested in other people, then you can in two years, trying to make other people interested in you."

Now, did you all catch that? The word of God is showing here, you want a relationship with God, make... an... effort. God is like, "Okay, I came down to earth, came in the form of man, got crucified, died for you. I've made my effort. Your turn!" (audience laughs) And we're like, "Oh, no, Lord." Make an effort! It says, let me just tell you. We can do this fast, it says "draw near to God." Did you know that if I were to say, "Breathing air is natural." You'd say, "Of course." If I said, "Eating food is natural." You'd say, "Of course." If I said, "Drinking water is natural, it's just a natural part of us." You'd say, "Of course." Did you know that drawing near to God is the first natural thing shown in the word of God as to what human beings need? What did Adam do in the garden, every single day with God? He drew near to God, and walked in the garden. He didn't walk in the garden 40 feet away, he walked in the garden, with the Lord. Second person, the Trinity, probably,

Jesus Christ Himself walked in the garden every day with Adam. And they talked, they conversed. And he drew, neigh, or near to God as He talked. Now that is how man was built, was to walk near God, to be near Him. That's actually how we were built, like breathing air, and drinking water, walking near to God. No wonder we're dysfunctional people, because we remember the part about drinking water, and about eating food, I don't remember anybody here fasting for three months, no water, no food. You'd feel dumb lying on the floor going,

"Why do I feel so miserable?" "You haven't drunk water for three months." "Ofcourse!" But we're going, "Why is my relationship not good with the Lord?" You haven't done what you were built to do. Draw near to God. Drawing near to God is as literally natural to the human being because of the way we were created in the garden, as

drinking water is. And yet we don't do it. (audience claps) And that's why we always have this void that we fight, because we're literally going without the natural water of the Spirit of God which was created out of a need within us to have. Let me just tell you, there's power in drawing near to God.

Many years ago, my Mom was in the word of grace, my Dad was a theologian, as you know, he has a worldwide radio ministry. My Mom, one night, stayed late, and she forgot to lock the front door. She heard a sound in the front part, and she walked out in the front room and there stood this very big guy, a very frightening looking guy, and he turned and he locked the door behind him. And he began to walk toward my mother. My mother is petite, she's maybe 5' 1". And he went over and grabbed her by the throat, and he took her to the back room and he slammed her to the floor, and he took take and he duct taped her ankles together, and he tied her hands together. He said some pretty violent and fierce things to her, and began to rampage through the office, he was trying to rip it off, and so he was just ransacking the office. He kept coming back, and he would start to ransack the office. And the entire time that she was hog-tied there on the floor, she just kept running over passages that she had spent with the Lord for years, being neigh, or near to the Lord. And my Mom

lived near to the Lord. And this continued to go on for about an hour, and he kept coming over and almost threatening to do something, and he would go back and ransack some more. Well, finally he went out the front door, and my mother dragged herself over and pulled the phone cord down and literally using her nose, pushed my brother's phone number and called him and he came, and it took about an hour for her to do all this. He came, and she was untied, and about three hours later they caught the guy, who had just hog-tied three women and raped the three woman and murdered the three women. And my Mother is convinced to this day, that the reason that did not happen to her was very simple. She lived in a world neigh to God, is what she said. She lived in a world where she was near to God, and that literally as she spent that time on the floor, her mind was not preoccupied on what this man might do, her mind was preoccupied walking with the Lord in the garden. And I'm going to tell you what happens in our lives, a lot of times in our lives, suddenly a trauma happens, we go, "Lord, where are you! !" And we're like running around in the garden looking for Him because we haven't been there in so long, we kind of forget where he hangs out.