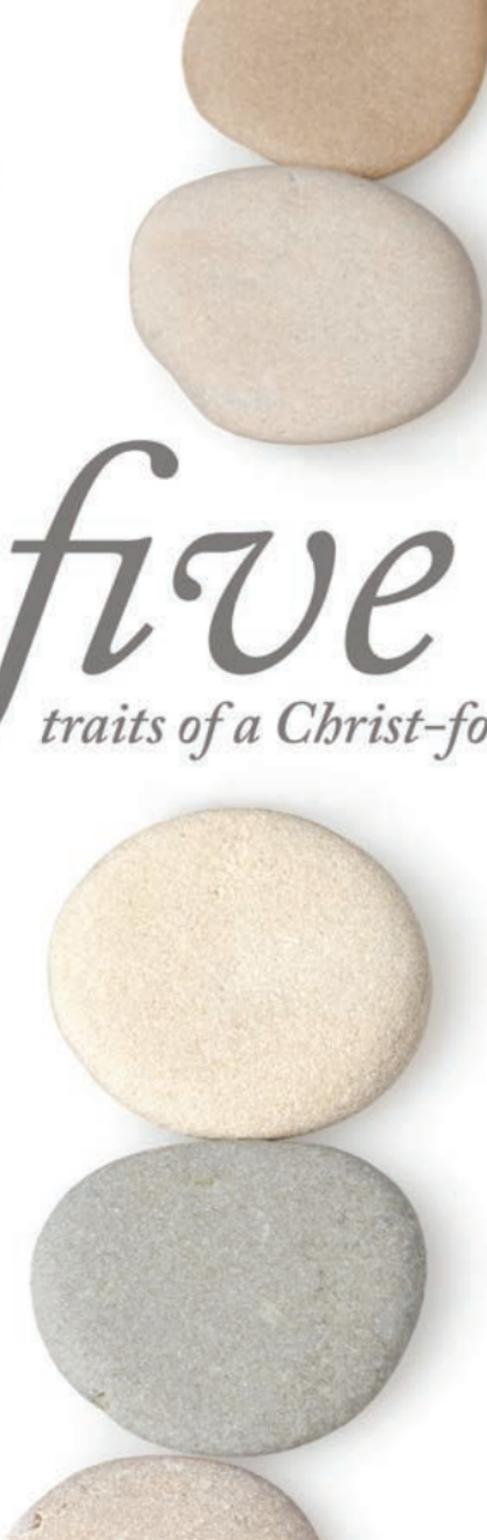


Foreword by
**JERRY
BRIDGES**



five
traits of a Christ-follower

**DOUG
NUENKE**
*General Editor,
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The Navigators*

Five Traits of a Christ-Follower

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DOUG NUENKE
General Editor

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Five Traits of a Christ-Follower

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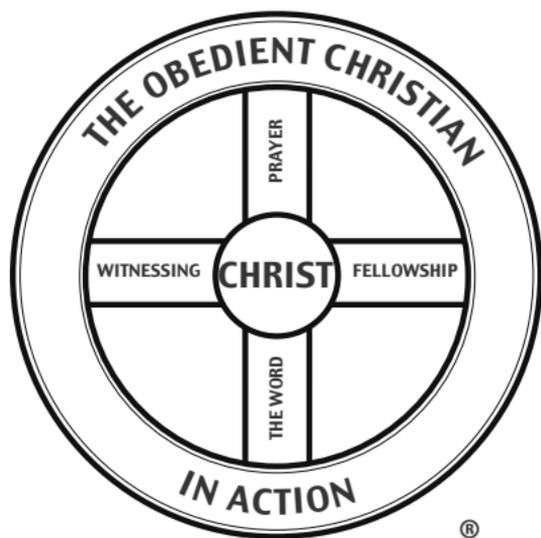
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Foreword

DAWSON TROTMAN, who began The Navigators ministry among sailors in 1933, had a knack for developing illustrations to make spiritual truths easy to remember and apply. The most well-known of these illustrations is “the Wheel.”

The hub of the Wheel represents Christ—the life and driving force of the Christian life—while the rim represents the lived environment of the obedient Christian, especially the people in the Christian’s life. The two vertical spokes represent the Word of God

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FOREWORD

and prayer, the principal means by which we draw upon the life and power of Christ. The two horizontal spokes represent fellowship among believers (what we now call “community”) and witnessing (what we now call “evangelism”). Thus the vertical spokes emphasize our relationship with Christ, and the horizontal spokes represent our relationship with fellow believers and with unbelievers.

The Wheel may seem a bit simplistic to many today. In fact, I have at times been specifically asked to not refer to the illustration when teaching these principles to college students. But the basic truths of the Christian life illustrated by the Wheel are timeless. They are as old as the Word of God itself.

The five areas of Christian growth and competency covered in this devotional are a modern-day restatement of and enlargement on those fundamental principles illustrated in the Wheel. There is, however, one area of competency in the devotional that is not included in the Wheel: reproducing generations, an aspect of discipleship ministry that has been a primary emphasis of The Navigators from its early days. It was known as “the 2:2 principle,” based on 2 Timothy 2:2: “And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (ESV). In fact, Dawson Trotman would often ask young men,

“Where’s your man?” by which he meant, “Whom are you discipling for the next generation?”

Regardless of what strategies and techniques we develop in our discipleship, we must always keep going back to the basics. There is a famous story about Vince Lombardi, the legendary coach who led the Green Bay Packers to victory in several NFL championships and the first two Super Bowls. Once, standing before a team of disheartened players, he held out an oblong leather object and said, “Gentlemen, this is a football.” Why would he say such a thing to a group of men who had played football from childhood and were now professional players? This was his way of saying, “We are going back to the basics of the game.” This is what we believers need to do constantly. We need to keep going back to the basics of the Christian life. This book of devotional readings on the five primary areas of Christian growth is designed to take us all the way back to the fundamentals of Christian growth and competency. It is my prayer that this book will accomplish that objective in each of our lives.

Jerry Bridges

Author, *The Pursuit of Holiness*
Navigator staff member, 1955–2015

Introduction:

Getting Caught Up in the Love and Purposes of God

ARE YOU SOMEONE who is living with joy and purpose? Is the “song” of your life flowing freely from the person God has made you to be? Or do you, like many people, lack confident knowledge of God’s love and purposes?

Do you believe that your life matters and that you are destined to bring healing to a broken world that needs what *you* bring?

The gospel is a redemptive ballad of God’s love and purpose for a sin-drowned world. We are each destined to experience closeness with God and to draw others into that same relationship.

“To Know Christ and Make Him Known”—a phrase that has been the driving motivation for The

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Navigators (and many other churches and mission organizations)—summarizes so much about a life dedicated to following Jesus. Jesus' appeal to some of His first disciples reflects a twofold calling: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19, ESV). They were called *to* Him and to work *with* Him.

To be a follower of Jesus means that no matter our career, our education, or our season of life, we are called to know Him and to work with Him in a spiritual harvest. This devotional is intended to help each of us walk closely with God and work more effectively with him in our world. You'll be led through five areas of growth for each of us.

1. *Walking with Jesus.* Howard Hendricks once said, "You cannot impart what you do not possess!" Jesus makes it clear that only as we are connected to Him will we experience a healthy spiritual life: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).
2. *Knowing and living the Scriptures.* The Scriptures are God's means of bringing guidance and wise counsel to the life of each believer. The Holy Spirit guides us into knowing and living the truth of the Scriptures. As the psalmist said, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105, ESV).

3. *Participating in community.* The life of discipleship is not meant to be experienced alone. God has designed us for community. We can only grow spiritually and be used by God as we are connected to others who love Him.
4. *Engaging with those who don't know Christ.* Every believer is called to engage with people in our broken world, where they live, work, study, and play. Each day opens opportunities for us to be salt and light among those who do not yet know Jesus and to bring hope found only in Him.
5. *Reproducing spiritual generations.* As we follow in the footsteps of Jesus, who invested in a small group of disciples, we aim to raise up others who will follow Christ and who themselves will help others as well. Psalm 145:4 assures us that “one generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts” (ESV).

But before we immerse ourselves in these areas of growth, there is something more foundational. Before we do *anything*, our life in Christ is grounded in who we are and who we are becoming in Christ Jesus. The true test of life in Christ is our *character*: the extent to which we are a reflection of the Spirit of God to a watching world.

If the five traits discussed in this devotional are like the five smooth stones that David grabbed out of the

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stream to battle Goliath, our character is the sling. It is the *character of Christ* we envision being reproduced in the lives of everyday people (Philippians 2:1-8).

Your prayerful time in this book will help you connect with God's plan, conceived before the beginning of time. Growing in these traits will be a life-long process, and in each season of life, you'll find them adapting and shaping you into a partner with God in His kingdom mission. Your life will be used today but also will be creating a ripple of impact that will last for generations to come!

Dr. Doug Nuenke

US president, The Navigators



TRAIT ONE:

Walking with Jesus

Fruits of Living in Connection with Jesus

JOE BROWN

I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

JOHN 15:5, NLT

THERE'S A DIFFERENCE, in our world today, between calling yourself a Christian and being connected to Christ. As a young Christian I memorized John 14:21:

Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them. (NLT)

At the time, I viewed this verse as a threat: If I really love God, I reasoned, I'd better obey Him. Otherwise He won't reveal Himself to me. He won't love me.

One day I was struck with an epiphany: This passage is not a threat; it's a promise!

One chapter after Jesus made this statement to His disciples, He offered them an analogy: Jesus is

a vine; they (and we) are branches. The relationship between the two is organic. “If I love God,” the logic goes, “I will obey Him, because He is filling me with new life and a new nature” (2 Corinthians 5:17). It’s a done deal!

The life-giving power that flows out of Jesus, our Vine, flows into us, His branches. As we face the challenges and victories of life, we have Christ’s strength, wisdom, and courage available to us “on demand.” If we stay connected to Him, we can rely on Him to nourish and strengthen us by His love (obedience is not required for that love!). We even bear fruit. Only when we cut ourselves off from the Vine do obedience and fruit bearing become a struggle.

In John 14:23, Jesus reinforces the organic dynamic of our new nature: “All who love me will do what I say” (NLT). In Christ, the Father and the Son have moved into our hearts, taking up residence in our lives. Not only that, but the Father sends the Holy Spirit to teach and remind us of everything He has told us (verse 26). We may slip up in our obedience in the short term, but in the long run we can’t help but obey because we have been possessed by the triune God; we draw our life direct from the Vine!

- Do you truly believe that God loves you regardless of what you do? Do you trust God enough to believe that you don’t need to earn His love?

Spending Time with Jesus

MARTHA LAWRY

“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

LUKE 10:41-42

WE ALL LIKE TO HAVE our circumstances under control. How many times do we try to make things play out the way we want them to, or to assert our own will over seeking God?

This is demonstrated by Martha, who opened her home to Jesus, only to quickly busy herself with preparations for a meal. Meanwhile her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet listening to what He had to say.

“Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”

Martha wanted to put dinner on the table, regardless of whether the goal of her guest was to eat. The text tells us that she was “distracted by all the preparations.” Her plea, “Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself?” and her subsequent order, “Tell her to help me!” show that while she had

made Jesus her guest, she was preoccupied with everything but Jesus.

Mary, by contrast, was focused on Jesus: She humbly sat, “listening to what he said.” Mary and Martha and Jesus were all in the same place, but only Mary was with Jesus (see Luke 10:39-40).

When we try to grasp control of a situation, like Martha, we sacrifice our connection to God and His purposes. God’s plans are superior to ours, and they include meaningful, consistent connections between us and Him. This connection is the “one thing” that is needed. Jesus wants us, like Mary, to spend time with Him and to seek Him and surrender to His superior plans.

- What is one situation you will likely face today that could distract you from your connection to God? How can you properly prioritize your time with God today?
- Where on your daily calendar could you intentionally book an appointment with Jesus? What time and place can you spend regular, uninterrupted time with Him?

Knowing and Hearing from God

JOHN STARKE

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

JOHN 16:13

A HEAVY GRAYNESS had settled over my life. It was like daily walking through a cloud. This wasn't how I pictured my life! I'd envisioned success, confidence, and impact for God's kingdom, but getting out of the dark became all I could think about.

Then one day, as I spent time praying and reading God's Word, His Spirit brought a question to my mind. "If you never stop feeling like this, is knowing and following Me enough for you? Am I enough for you?" In other words, if I boiled away all my "spiritual" and "reasonable" motives, was I really just interested in feeling better? Or did I just want Him?

The Spirit guided me into truth as I read Hosea 6:1-2:

Come, let us return to the LORD;
for he has torn us, that he may heal us . . .
that we may live before him. (ESV)

Hosea calls Israel to openly acknowledge that their circumstances—fully orchestrated by *God*—are really painful. But he urges them to not stop there: Israel is to look beyond the scenery toward God’s heart.

God unveils His intentions powerfully. He is willing to let us experience struggles and inconveniences as ways of knowing Him more deeply—“that we may live before him.”

There are still days I live in the haze. But as I talk with God about what’s going on and give Him the opportunity to speak truth back to me, He shows me that simply resolving my inconveniences is fool’s gold compared to relating intimately with and following Him.

- Make a list of the hard things in your life right now. Tell God about them. Then, instead of focusing solely on “getting better,” ask Him how He wants you to know Him better through them.
- Since growing a healthy relationship involves two-way communication, spend some time growing your relationship by talking to God as you would a friend and letting Him talk back to you through His Spirit and His Word. What is He saying to you through His Spirit of truth?