

# Living, Loving And Leading Like Jesus Through The Four Stages Of Christian Experience

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**Scripture:** Psalms 65:4, John 15:16, John 6:44, 1 John 4:16, Ephesians 3:19, Matthew 20:28

**Denomination:** Evangelical/Non-Denominational

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**Summary: To fully enjoy the Christian experience, we need to go through a few steps. Let us look at them**

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Four Stages of Christian Experience

Psalm 65:4 (NKJV) Blessed is the man You choose, And cause to approach You, That he may dwell in Your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, Of Your holy temple.

We have different types of participants who come to our encounters. We have different types of Facilitators who come to our encounters. Let us briefly see how we can help each of them to Live, Love and Lead like Jesus through a four stage experience found in Psalm 65:4

The single verse of Psalm 65: 4 has a very deep meaning for all those who look for instant gratification in Christianity. This verse tells us that there are four distinct stages of Christian Experience Viz; Chosen, Approaching, Abiding, Satisfied. You might want to note that "satisfied" comes last, not first. So let us examine these four stages and as we examine these, let us introspect and see which stage we are in actually and how to help our participants who come the encounters. I am sure all of us and our participants want to be in the "satisfied" stage. But can we jump the gun and reach there? Psalm 65:4 says we have to go through the four stages in sequence.

## Chosen

When I became a Christian first, I was very proud of what "I" have accomplished. I thought "I" made the right decision, "I chose the right faith . I decided to follow the right God etc. That is when the Lord spoke to me through John 15:16 (NKJV) You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. This was a real revelation for me. Suddenly it was all clear to me, it was not because of anything that I did, that I became a Christian, it was purely by His Grace and the choice that he made despite my several shortcomings. That is the first stage of Christian Experience. The stage of being chosen. This is important, because many of come to an encounter with an attitude that I have made a choice to come here, and invest time. The first step in becoming a Christian and a Leader Like Jesus is the humble acceptance that it is not because of anything that I have done that I am a Christian, but it is because, in God's abundant Grace, He chose to save me despite what I have done. I am here by His choice. This is where the heart section of LLJ helps.

## Approaching

Once we have been chosen, it is our responsibility to approach Him. Let us remember that even

approaching God is a privilege and we should never take it for Granted. In the Old testament, there used to be rigorous rituals before the priests could approach God. In our new testament times, through the Grace that has been given to us through Jesus Christ, those rituals are no more required, but it is still a privilege. John 6:44 (NKJV) , says No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. So let us Approach God with reverence and love.

I believe LLJ plays a huge role in doing this. We do this by holding onto the new covenant that He gave us. We do this in humility, setting our affections on Him and letting Him know our desire for Him. This is done by intentionally connecting with Him through Solitude, Prayer, reading of the word and corporate worship and fellowship with others (the Being Habits we talk about). .

### Abiding

The third stage that is stated in Psalm 65:4 is abiding. This is to dwell in the house of the Lord as the priests and Levites did. To be constantly in His presence. This requires us to accept and abide in His unconditional love. This is what we help the participants through in the Doing Habits Section. 1 John 4:16 (NKJV) tells us; And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Abiding in Him means trusting Him completely, believing in His promises, knowing that He has plans for us, plans to prosper us and not to harm us. Demonstrating our faith that he will come searching for us when we are lost. Showing through our behaviour that God demonstrated His love for us by dying on the cross for us while we were still sinners. When we abide in Him in this manner, His love will flow out from us to others through Forgiveness, Grace, Encouragement and Building communities.

### Satisfying

Then we come to the last stage which is Satisfaction. This is where the fruits of our being chosen by Him, and having approached Him and abiding in Him starts to show. This is the result of our Head and Hands sections of LLJ. Then as Ephesians 3:19 (MSG) says, we will be able to Live full lives, full in the fullness of God. And this is satisfaction, Psalm 65: 4 ends with saying "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, Of Your holy temple". God's house is abundant, well kept, all provided for, a safe place. We shall be satisfied with such a house once we go through the stages of being chosen, approaching and abiding. But, our satisfaction is not just for us, but for others. In other words, we become significant. That is when we truly emulate Jesus example of "Even as the son of man came not to be served, but to serve and give his life for many (Matthew 20:28)

So let us examine ourselves. Are we looking for instant satisfaction in Christianity? Do we believe that just because we are Christians, we will be satisfied? Le us recalibrate ourselves and offer ourselves up, once more to be His chosen ones, approach him with reverence and humility, abide in His unconditional love and then rest assured that we will then be satisfied. And then let us seek his help to take our participants through these four stages.