

FIFTH LAY TALK

TALK #8 CHRISTIAN ACTION

Overview of All Talks

One message is delivered during The Walk to Emmaus 72-hour experience; it is communicated throughout the music, meals, clergy meditations, attitudes and actions of the team members, and the talks. You have been selected to deliver one of the 15 talks. In reality, you will deliver 1/15 of the Emmaus talk—one message, fifteen presenters.

Prepare your talk using the outlines provided. In general, 2/3 of your presentation will come from the outlines; the remaining 1/3 will come from your original insights and personal experience.

The talks are sequenced in a defined order; each builds on the next to provide pilgrims with the complete message of Emmaus. Do not try to cover more than your assigned topic. The expanded outline intends to provide a solid understanding of the material from which your talk will be developed. The abbreviated outline helps you see the progression of the main points. *Neither outline is a script*; you will need to add personal examples to give life to the content and make it real to the hearers. Use visual aids to help convey the main points.

The Holy Spirit, as well as feedback from the team after your talk preview, will provide additional guidance for your unique presentation of this talk. Once you incorporate the suggestions offered after your preview, your presentation no longer belongs just to you but to the team God is forming to deliver the Emmaus message.

This presentation is allotted a maximum of 20 to 25 minutes. Please honor the time limit out of a spirit of cooperation, charity, good stewardship of time, and consideration for the hearers.

Overview for Speaker

This talk introduces the theme of Christian action, which is further developed in the next three lay talks. The CHRISTIAN ACTION talk focuses on Christians' call to share Christ in word and deed—in all that we do. Through Christian action, we communicate God's friendship in Christ to persons we naturally come in contact with and in situations of human need in society (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

The style of Christian action should fit naturally with each person's gifts and personality. To make it effective, we must feel comfortable with our faith and with the situation in which we find ourselves. Always remember, you are sharing Christ and Christ's love with *people*, not

with situations. Likewise, you are representing a way of life in God's love, not trying to manipulate or control their response.

Christian action seeks to share Christ as fully and effectively as possible in every situation. In one situation, it may mean making friends and introducing them to Christ. In another situation, it may mean offering a helping hand, relieving suffering, and acting to change situations that cause human need. In many situations it means doing all of these activities.

Offer personal illustrations that will help pilgrims envision how they can engage in Christian action in a way that is natural to them. The talk should help pilgrims listen for how God may be calling them to action in Christ's name.

This talk is scheduled for Saturday at 3:00 p.m.

Expanded Outline: CHRISTIAN ACTION

Begin by leading the Prayer to the Holy Spirit:

Please turn to page 48 in your Worshipbook and join me in the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Opening Story (1-2 minutes)

Choose a story or experience from your life that is brief, personal, and directly related to the main point of this talk. If you cannot think of an appropriate introduction, consult with the Lay Director or a Spiritual Director for assistance. A good introduction will engage the hearts, minds, and attention of pilgrims and move them into the theme of this talk. For example, you might do the following:

- Option 1: Share a specific way you have changed your practice of Christian action and how this has changed your life. Feel free to name the fears or obstacles that had to be overcome.
- Option 2: Share the life story of someone else that illustrates the main theme of the talk.

My name is _____, and the title of this talk is **CHRISTIAN ACTION**.

I. Introduction

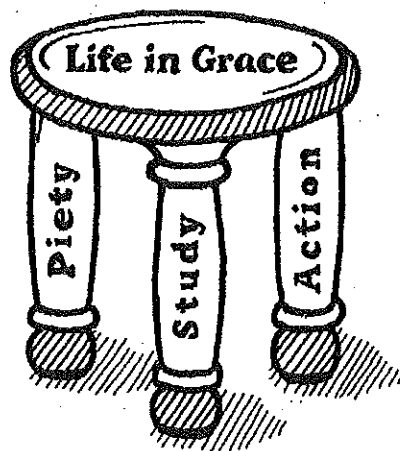
A. Christian action characterizes a Christ-centered life. It is action that flows from one's personal relationship and commitment to Christ.

1. Christian action means representing Christ and his church in works of compassion (Luke 10:29-37).
2. It bears witness to Christ wherever you may be, in all you say and do (Acts 1:8).
3. It carries on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world according to the gifts given you. Christian action makes Christ and his love real in the world (2 Cor. 5:18-20).

B. Briefly review where we have come thus far in the weekend:

1. The LIFE OF PIETY talk encouraged us to give our hearts to God.
2. The GROW THROUGH STUDY talk encouraged us to give our minds to God.
3. In this talk on CHRISTIAN ACTION, we want to begin looking at how we can give our hands and feet to God.

[Use the three-legged stool or tripod image to remind pilgrims of the three disciplines supporting a life in grace.]



- C. Jesus said, "I am the way [piety], and the truth [study], and the life [action]" (John 14:6). Christian action characterizes life in its fullness—a life overflowing with God's love for people.
- D. This talk concerns the action of offering Christ to the world through the witness of your life.

II. Christian action is a natural response to God's grace.

- A. God's grace comes to us in such a way as to enlighten, unbind, and strengthen us. By grace, we are awakened to the greatest reality of our lives—God's redeeming love, and the realization that we have a spiritual kinship with God (made in God's image) and with all people.
- B. It is only natural that if you receive the very best—God's grace—you will be eager to share it with others. This is a basic quality of God's grace: it creates enthusiasm for passing it on.
- C. Each person responds uniquely to grace through Christian action according to the gifts God has given him or her.
 - 1. We have been given the Holy Spirit. Those who have received the gift of the Holy Spirit display certain spiritual qualities that Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22). The fruit of the Spirit are a result of God's grace coming alive in us, and each is an avenue of Christian action.
 - 2. Paul makes us aware that spiritual gifts are given to us for ministry. He makes clear that the most excellent gift is love; without love all other gifts are empty (1 Cor. 13).

3. These gifts are not given for the private ministry of a few exceptional individuals but for the ministry of the entire community of faith.
- D. Consider what qualities and gifts God has given you for sharing Christ and his grace.

III. Christian action calls for a plan.

- A. Make a plan based on your real situation and resources.
1. Christian action does not happen by accident but by decision to show forth Christ's love in specific ways in word and deed.
 2. Ask yourself: What situation needs God's love? What resources, both personal and physical, are needed? What will be the consequences of my action?
 3. Think and pray about your plan for action.
- B. Work your plan.
1. Trust that when you step out in faith, you will experience the strength and support of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 10:20).
 2. Do not be disheartened by difficulty (Matt. 5:10-11). Remember that God sometimes uses momentary failure for success in God's own time.
- C. Keep perspective.
1. A Christian does not neglect family, job, church, or community in order to do the Lord's work.
 2. Christian action does not consist of occasional heroic acts but is a way of life that occurs naturally every day.
 3. The rest of life cannot stand still while you are doing Christian action. Likewise, Christian action cannot wait until you take care of life's necessities.
 4. Christian action is every action a Christian lives.
- D. Don't try to do Christian action alone.
1. The Holy Spirit is available to guide and empower Christian action.
 2. Seek for committed Christians to join you in your efforts; the disciples went two by two (Luke 10:1).
 3. Your local church can serve as your base camp/community for Christian action.
- E. Christian action must be authentic.
1. It flows from care for persons, not from one's own need to be needed or a desire to control or manipulate others' response.
 2. It flows naturally from one's own faith experience and personality; it is not forced to fit some preconceived image of evangelism or witness.
 3. Christian action does not convey a "better than thou" attitude.

- F. Consider potential areas for Christian action in your life:
1. Individuals you naturally come in contact with;
 2. Groups, clubs, organizations you associate with; and
 3. People you know who need assistance and support.

IV. Friendship is the style for offering Christ to others.

"All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into his friends, and gave us the task of making others his friends also" (2 Cor. 5:18, GNT).

- A. Reach out to persons with whom you naturally come in contact.
1. **Start by making a friend.** Take initiative to get to know a person. Understand the person's life situation, needs, and strengths. Listen and support.
 2. **Be that person's friend.** Share your own life. Make yourself available in tough times as well as good times. Reach out, help, offer assistance, and show agape love. Let the person see that you have a living faith.
 3. **Introduce your new friend to Christ.** Share your relationship to the Source of life and love. Your new friend will need to have seen Christ in your life for this introduction to be natural and authentic. Jesus calls us not just to witness but to be witnesses (Acts 1:8) in our words and deeds.
 4. In summary, *make a friend, be a friend, and bring your friend to Christ.* Sharing Christ becomes authentic and natural when we make it part of the course of our everyday interactions and sharing of ourselves in relationships.
- B. Reach out to those who need a helping hand, to people you may not even know personally, regardless of differences. In this way, you make God's friendship real to them (Luke 10:25-37).
1. Respond to people's needs, and seek to change situations that cause the need.
 2. Listen to those to whom Jesus listened: the young, the sick, the oppressed, the poor, the excluded. The persons to whom we listen determine what we hear, and what we hear determines our Christian action.
 3. Stand with those with whom Jesus stood. Do you always remain in safe places, insulated with comfortable surroundings, with the spectators and the powers that be? Or do you step out and risk standing with those who need a friend or an advocate? Where we stand determines what we see, and the human reality we see determines our response.

- C. Reach out with Christ and grow in God's love toward all persons.
1. Just as you do with prayer and study, make service a regular part of your life—a discipline—not something you do only when you feel moved. This discipline is most effective for outgrowing self-centeredness.
 2. Christian action requires that you consider other persons' welfare as important as your own. Identify with those in need, and do for others what you would want them to do for you (Matt. 7:12).
 3. Christian action involves a commitment to take up the towel (John 13:14-15) and become a servant with Jesus Christ. Serve selflessly, without concern for results and recognition.
- D. *[Describe your plan of action.]*

V. Conclusion

- A. Remember that Christian action is a grateful response to God's grace, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and it helps us grow in the likeness of Christ.
- B. When you involve yourself in Christian action, you authentically live up to the image of God in which you were created—you live into your potential for loving God and your neighbor with your whole life.
- C. Your mission is to pass on the gift of grace you have been given.
- D. Christian action extends Christ's work.

In Zell an der Mosel, Germany, a statue of Christ lost its hands during a World War II bombing raid. On the wall beside the statue is a sign that reads: "Christ has no hands but yours."

God counts on you to continue the work of Christ in the world.

De Colores!

Abbreviated Outline: CHRISTIAN ACTION

Begin by leading the Prayer to the Holy Spirit:

Please turn to page 48 in your Worshipbook and join me in the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

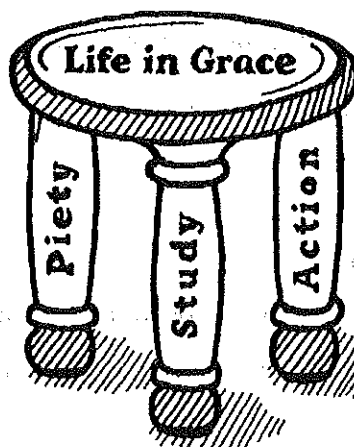
Opening Story (1-2 minutes)

Choose a story or experience from your own life that is brief, personal, and directly related to the main point of this talk. If you cannot think of an appropriate introduction, consult with the Lay Director or a Spiritual Director for assistance. A good introduction will engage the pilgrims' hearts, minds, and attention and move them into the theme of this talk.

My name is _____, and the title of this talk is CHRISTIAN ACTION.

I. Introduction

- A. Christian action characterizes a Christ-centered life and flows from a relationship with Christ. It bears witness to Christ and carries on his work wherever you are, in all you say and do.
- B. Whereas piety is giving God one's heart, and study is giving God one's mind, Christian action is giving God one's hands and feet. *[Show a visual of a three-legged stool to illustrate the disciplines supporting a life in grace.]*



- C. [Jesus said] "I am the way [piety], and the truth [study], and the life [action]" (John 14:6).
- D. This talk focuses on the action of offering Christ through the witness of your life.

II. Christian action is a natural response to God's grace.

- A. God's grace awakens us to the greatest reality of our lives—God's redeeming love and our spiritual kinship.
- B. Because we have received such a gift, we are naturally enthusiastic about sharing it with others.
- C. Each person responds uniquely to grace in Christian action according to his or her gifts and talents.
- D. Consider what qualities and gifts God has given you for sharing Christ and his grace.

III. Christian action calls for a plan.

- A. Make a plan; Christian action doesn't happen by accident.
- B. Work your plan; the Holy Spirit will support you.
- C. Keep your perspective, integrating your action with other aspects of your life.
- D. Don't try to do it alone; call on your Christian friends and your local church.
- E. Be authentic in your action, acting out of natural concern, not with a "better than thou" attitude.
- F. Consider areas for your Christian action; relationships, groups, and other people needing assistance and support.

IV. Friendship is the style for offering Christ to persons.

- A. Reach out to individuals you naturally have contact with.
 - 1. Make a friend.
 - 2. Be a friend.
 - 3. Bring your friend to Christ.
 - 4. Reaching out this way naturally displays the spiritual qualities given you.
- B. Reach out to those who need a helping hand, to people you may not even know, regardless of differences.
 - 1. Meet people's needs and seek to change circumstances that cause the needs.
 - 2. Listen to those who cry out to Jesus.
 - 3. Stand with those who need a friend or an advocate.

C. Reach out with Christ and grow in selfless love as a servant. Live in union with Jesus Christ.

D. *[Describe your plan of action.]*

V. Conclusion

Christian action is response to God's grace, a discipline by which we live into our potential as persons made in God's image. Our mission is to pass on the gift of grace we've been given.

De Colores!