

# THE BISHOP OF THE BAHAMAS AND THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

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## **A Pastoral Letter from the Rt. Rev'd. Laish Boyd** **TO BE READ and distributed in all parishes** **on Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2018 (Advent 3)**

Dear Friends,

God has blessed us by bringing us to Advent, the beginning of the Church's year. This is a new start for all of us and we should embrace it. In our society and culture, the rush and excitement of Christmas begins in late November. Let us not allow this wave to swamp our Advent focus on spiritual preparation for Christmas.

As a province, we continue to work on "Intentional Discipleship". Plan to be more INTENTIONAL about your DISCIPLESHIP than you have ever been before ... ever. Plan, set out, purpose, strategise to be what God wants you to be.

Christianity is a way of life, not a philosophy or a habit or a club. It is the way that we LIVE based on a relationship that we have established with God. Here are some suggestions about what WE can do every day to make this happen, and to be better disciples:

1. Begin every day by acknowledging that "today" is a gift from God and that your life is a gift from God. Take a few moments to think about this and to thank God for it.
2. Set aside at least 15 minutes of quality time every day for devotions. Ideally this should be in the morning or at the beginning of your day, but it can be whenever you can get time to be alone and free of disturbance.  
Use this time to think about how good God has been to you and your family, to consider how His hand has been upon your life, to pray for others first, and then for yourself.
3. During your devotions, read a passage of Scripture. Try to understand what it means in its context (i.e., in the time it was written), and then what it is saying to you today and for the future. In this regard, bibles with notes or bible commentaries, dictionaries and handbooks are helpful. Using some kind of daily devotional booklet is also helpful because these give a scripture passage to read and a reflection which helps to focus our thoughts and to give us a compass for the day.
4. Begin the day as if you are on a mission from God to do God's work TODAY. Set out to do what Jesus would do (WWJD) in the situations of daily life. Try to use your day to draw closer to God.

5. When you fall short, admit it (to God and to others who have been affected), ask for forgiveness from God and from others, and then seek to do better going forward. Too many of us never acknowledge to ourselves or to others that we have made mistakes and that we have caused hurt. Mistakes happen but we have to be sorry for what has happened, to seek reconciliation, to keep on going and to keep on trying. Always ask God to help you to be a better person.
6. At the end of the day, or at some available time near to it, examine your conscience. This means that you reflect on the day past and all that has happened. Recall your actions: what you did that was right, what you did that you should not have done, and what you could have done better. This influences what you have to thank God for, what you have to seek forgiveness for AND how – with God’s help – we can plan to improve ourselves. This exercise will help us to stay in touch with ourselves and to have an honest consciousness of who we are before God.

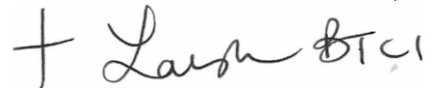
### Conclusion

The above six-part exercise is not new. It is the approach that Christians have always been encouraged to use in daily living to stay closer to God and to be conscious of His will for us. Use it in Advent and in 2019.

I call on all Christians in our two nations to be more INTENTIONAL about our individual DISCIPLESHIP every day. That is the only way that God’s Kingdom can be built up, i.e. if God can use us in our daily lives.

Have a blessed Advent and allow this daily devotional plan to launch you into 2019.

Yours in the Master’s Service,



The Rt. Rev. Laish Z. Boyd

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LZB/lr

December 12, 2018