

Dr. Hudson Taylor: Lessons in Discipleship by Roger Steer Crowborough, E. Sussex, England, Monarch, OMF International, 1995. (31 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. A Servant Can Expect the Same Type of Journey As the Master

Archbishop George Carey has said that ‘the Spirit-filled servant cannot be denied a ministry different from that which his Spirit-filled Master passed through. Often following Christ will take us into suffering and hardship, and his Spirit is as much there as he is in the smooth and pleasant places.’ [Page 24]

2. Everything in Christ’s Service Has a Cost

Hudson Taylor knew that China would never be won by quiet, ease-loving men and women. Everything in Christ’s service has a cost. But the rewards, in this life as much as in the next, are great. Cross-bearing doesn’t mean anxiety. God wants us to enjoy his perfect peace: we should be unburdened, fully supplied, strong, and happy. There’s no work which is so royally rewarded as the service of God.

In his book *THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: ‘Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our church. We are fighting today for costly grace.’ Cheap grace is ‘the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross’. [Page 25]

3. Taylor Exhibited Unconscious Humility

Hudson Taylor visiting Australia in 1890 stayed with a doctor and his family who wrote of Taylor: ‘So constantly did he look to God, and so deep was his communion with God, that his very face seemed to have upon it a heavenly light. He had not been many hours in the house before the sense of disappointment gave place to a deep reverence and love, and I realised as never before what the grace of God could do... In the house he was all that a guest could be, kind, courteous, considerate, gracious. He at once fell into the routine of the household, was punctual at the meal table, studied to give the minimum of trouble, and was swift to notice and to express his thanks for every little service rendered. We could not help noticing the utter lack of self-assertion about him, and his true because unconscious humility.’ [Page 28]

4. Trying Experiences

‘Oh friends! When we are brought into the position of having practical fellowship with God in trial and sorrow and suffering, we learn a lesson that is not to be learnt amidst the ease and comfort of ordinary life. That is why God so often brings us through trying experiences.’ [Page 33]

5. Christ Needs to be Lord of All

How few of the Lord's people have recognised the truth that Christ is either Lord of all, or is not Lord at all. "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). Shall it not become our holy ambition to all who have health and youth to court the Master's approval and tread in his steps, in seeking to save a lost world? And shall not Christian parents encourage their enthusiasm?' [Page 34]

A Team to Share His Commitment

6. Laborers Needed Different from the Norm

The twenty-four 'willing, skillful labourers' Hudson prayed for were intended to be two for each of the eleven provinces which until then were without a missionary, and two for Mongolia. The qualities he was looking for in the men and women who would make up the first two dozen CIM missionaries differed somewhat from those sought by other societies. The Church Missionary Society and the London Missionary Society wanted ordained men, preferably from the universities. So Hudson Taylor took care not to draw away such men from their church societies.

He wanted intelligent, educated men and women, but was convinced that the crucial thing was the candidate's spiritual qualities. The door would be open to those with little formal education. And the most important spiritual quality needed would be the unshakeable conviction that there was a faithful God - coupled with the ability and willingness to trust him.

Few of the other societies gave much scope to women except as teachers. From the outset, the CIM was to be open to women of the right kind - and the younger they were the quicker they would learn the language. Women would have an indispensable role in working with Chinese women.

The new recruits would have to accept Hudson and Maria Taylor as their leaders: they were the only ones with experience in living and working in China. In exchange, Hudson Taylor would give them basic preliminary training and provide them with suitable clothing. [Page 42]

7. Faith That Rests in a Great God

'People say, "Lord, increase our faith". Did not the Lord rebuke his disciples for that prayer (Luke 17:5-6)? He said, "You do not want a great faith, but faith in a great God. If your faith were as small as a grain of mustard seed, it would suffice to remove this mountain!" We need faith that rests in a great God, and which expects him to keep his word, and to do just what he has promised.' [Pages 43-44]

8. Faith in a Great God

Hudson Taylor trusted God. He believed, as have so many great men and women of faith, that Christians should be taken up less with the nature of faith and more with the reality of God. 'You do not need a great faith, but faith in a great God.' What, then, was his concept of God?

Hudson Taylor's insights into the nature of God, his character and ways, were illuminated by his interest in the laws of science. His starting point was to urge people never to forget three important statements: 'There is a God; he has spoken to us in the Bible; he means what he says.' [Page 51]

9. Christ Was Born to Reign

'Born to reign, he acted consistently throughout his life of ministry. As a king he called his apostles authoritatively to leave their properties and employments and follow him. As a king he laid down the laws of the kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount. And as a king he dispatched his ambassadors to preach the gospel of the kingdom. With royal dignity he witnessed before his sacrificial death to his kingship; the title over the cross proclaimed it, and he was raised as Prince and Saviour.' [Page 54]

10. Faith Is Stepping into God's Light

In the closing years of the twentieth century, many people regard faith as simple-mindedness and as the expression of an uncritical spirit which is inappropriate to men and women 'come of age'. The Bible, on the other hand, portrays faith as stepping forward not into darkness but into God's light and truth. [Page 55]

11. Trust in God by Looking to Him

'Want of trust is at the root of almost all our sins and all our weakness; and how shall we escape from it, but by looking at him, and observing his faithfulness? As the light which shines from the dark waters of the lake is the reflection of the sun's rays, so man's faith is the impress and reflection of God's faith. The man who holds God's *faith* will not be reckless or foolhardy, but he will be ready for every emergency. The man who holds God's faith will dare obey him, however impolitic it may appear.' [Page 56]

12. God's Giants Trusted Him

'All God's giants have been weak men, who did great things for God because they reckoned on God being with them.' [Page 57]

13. Two Sides of Faith

'There are the two sides of faith. There is the Godward side, and there is the manward side. It is when God's faithfulness is fully recognised by us that we shall be enabled to rest in quiet confidence and faith that he will fulfill his word.' [Page 58]

14. Avoided Fund Raising Pride

One of the reasons why Hudson Taylor adopted a policy of never appealing for funds -- 'non-solicitation' -- was that he was anxious to avoid diverting money from the established missionary societies to the CIM. Like George Muller, who became a close friend and supporter, he never attacked or criticised the financial principles of other missions or claimed that the CIM's policy was necessarily better or more biblical. [Page 64]

15. Seek God's Kingdom First

The great resources of our great God are undiminished, and we rest upon them with a full assurance that his Word is as true now as it has ever been. Our business is to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness", and all these things shall be added unto us. [Page 68]

16. Taylor Trusted God's Way

Even when funds barely kept up with outgoings, Hudson Taylor still envisaged expansion of the work as long as he was convinced that he knew God's will. 'Not to advance,' he wrote, 'would be to retreat from the position of faith taken up at the beginning. It would be to look at difficulties rather than at the living God. True, funds were low - had been for years, and the workers coming out from home few, while several retirements had taken place in China. Difficulties were formidable; and it was easy to say, "All these things are indications that for the present no further expansion is possible." But not to go forward would be to throw away opportunities God had given.' [Pages 69-70]

Working with God

17. God Does Not Break His Word

Much of Hudson Taylor's writing emphasises the principle of what he called 'working with God'. The phrase captures the two vital elements of, on the one hand, God's power and, on the other, our trustful response of practical service. He often quoted Philippians 4:6 'Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, present your requests to God.'

'If the work is at the command of God,' he argued, 'then we go to him with full confidence for workers. And when God gives workers, *then* we can go to him for the means. We always accept a suitable worker, whether we have the funds or not. Then we very often say, "Now, dear friend, your first work will be to join with us in praying for money to send you to China." As soon as there is money enough, the time of the year and other circumstances being suitable, the friend goes out. We do not wait until there is a remittance in hand to give him when he gets there. The Lord will provide that.

‘Our Father is a very experienced one: he knows very well that his children wake up with a good appetite every morning, and he always provides breakfast for them; and he does not send his children supperless to bed . . . He sustained three million Israelites in the wilderness for forty years. We do not expect that he will send three million missionaries to China; but if he did, he would have plenty of means to sustain them all. Let us see that we keep God before our eyes; that we walk in his ways, and seek to please and glorify him in everything. Depend upon it, God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supplies.

‘When the supplies do not come in, it is time to inquire, “What is wrong”? It may be only a temporary trial of faith; but if there be faith it will bear trying, and if not it is well that we should not be deceived. It is very easy, with money in the pocket and food in the cupboard, to think you have faith in God. Miss Havergal says: “Those who trust him wholly find him wholly true”. But my experience proves that to those who do not trust him wholly, he does not break his word. “He cannot disown himself” (2 Timothy 2:13). [Pages 70-71]

18. Be As Christ

In a meditation on the words of Christ, ‘Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect’ (Matthew 5:48), Hudson Taylor wrote: ‘We are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, not to break one of the least of the commandments, not to give way to anger, nor to tolerate the thought of impurity, to give no rash promises, or in conversation to say more than yes or no. The spirit of retaliation is not to be indulged in; a yieldingness of spirit is to characterise the child of the kingdom, and those who hate and despitefully use us are to be pitied and prayed for. In the little frictions of daily life, as well as in the more serious trials and persecutions to which the Christian is exposed, he is manifestly to be an imitator of his heavenly Father. [Pages 80-81]

19. Christ Will Never Leave You

‘I do wish I could have a talk with you now, about the way of holiness,’ McCarthy wrote. ‘Do you know, dear brother, I now think that this striving, effort, longing, hoping for better days to come, is not the true way to happiness, holiness or usefulness; better, no doubt far better, than being satisfied with our poor attainments, but not the best way after all. I have been struck with a passage from a book of yours left here, entitled *Christ is All*. It says:

‘The Lord Jesus received is holiness begun; the Lord Jesus cherished is holiness advancing; the Lord Jesus counted upon as never absent would be holiness complete ...

A channel is now formed by which Christ’s fullness plenteously flows down. The barren branch becomes a portion of the fruitful stem ... One life reigns throughout the whole.

Believer, you mourn your shortcomings; you find the hated monster, sin, still striving for the mastery, help is laid up for you in Christ. Seek clearer interest in him.

... He is most holy who has most of Christ within, and joys most fully in the finished work. It is defective faith which clogs the feet, and causes many a fall.'

'The last sentence I think I now fully endorse ... How then to have our faith increased? Only by thinking of all that Jesus is, and all he is for us. Not a striving to have faith, or to increase our faith, but a looking off to the Faithful One seems all we need; a resting in the Loved One entirely, for time and for eternity.'

When Hudson Taylor finished reading McCarthy's letter he wrote, 'As I read it I saw it all! "If we are faithless, he will remain faithful" (2 Timothy 2:13). I looked to Jesus and saw (and when I saw, oh, how joy flowed!) that he had said, "I will never leave you". Ah, *there is rest!* I thought, *I have striven in vain to rest in him. I'll strive no more. For has he not promised to abide with me - never to leave me, never to fail me?*' [Pages 84-85]

20. Habitually Drinking In Christ

'Perhaps we should draw attention to the words of Christ: "whoever drinks" not "drank" -- once for all -- but "drinks", that is habitually. After promising that out of him "streams of living water will flow" it is ended: "by this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him" (John 7:38-39) -- that is, keep believing -- were to receive.' John Stott made the same point, commenting on the same verses, one hundred years later in his booklet *The Baptism and Fullness of the Holy Spirit* (London, 1964). [Pages 93-94]

21. The Holy Spirit Given to Those Obedient

God gives His Spirit not to those who long for him, *not* to those who pray for him, *not* to those who desire to be filled always -- but he *does* give his Holy Spirit to them that *obey* him. (Acts 5:32)

'If as an act of obedience we were to determine that every district, every town, every village, every hamlet in this land should hear the gospel, and that speedily, and were to set about doing it, I believe that the Spirit would come down in such mighty power that we would find supplies springing up we know not how. We should find the fire spreading from missionary to flock, and our native fellow-workers and the whole Church of God would be blessed. God gives his Holy Spirit to them that obey him.' [Pages 94-95]

22. The Power of Prayer

Hudson Taylor believed in the power of prayer. His life as a Christian had begun in answer to his mother's and sister's specific prayers. And his response to God's call to serve him in China was itself an answer to a prayer offered by his parents before his birth. It's not surprising therefore that his own life was characterised by prayer.

One missionary with whom he travelled in the summer of 1877 never forgot his habit of praying for the mission three times a day, mentioning each of his colleagues by name.

His son Howard noticed that his father, 'prayed about things as if everything depended on the praying . . . but worked also, as if everything depended on the working.' And a classic example of this occurred in 1870 during one of Taylor's spells in England. On 31 December the CIM observed a day of prayer at the mission's headquarters in Pyrland Road at a time when many small children were dying of 'spasmodic croup'. During the evening session, a nurse appeared at the door with a child she thought had died. They called Taylor, who rushed to the back of the room. As he ran, a woman suggested that he should pray. 'Yes, pray,' he shouted back, 'while I work!'

Taylor found that the small girl was blue and limp. His first efforts to revive her failed. Then he tried the kiss of life. After several minutes, the child's colour changed and she began to breathe. In the night she had occasional convulsions but survived without harm, and grew up to be a CIM missionary.

Our Prayers Are Answered Now!

Late in 1886, the idea of praying the ambitious prayer that one hundred new missionaries would join the mission during 1887 was born. A veteran Shanghai missionary said to Hudson Taylor, 'I am delighted to hear that you are praying for large reinforcements. You will not get a hundred of course, within the year; but you will get many more than if you did not ask for them.'

'Thank you for your interest,' Taylor replied. 'We have the joy of knowing our prayers answered now. And I feel sure that, if spared, you will share the joy of welcoming the last of the hundred to China!'

Back in England during 1887, Taylor spent an incredibly busy year addressing hundreds of meetings; dealing with an enormous correspondence; interviewing hundreds of candidates who were anxious to go to China; facing opposition from the CIM's London Council and advising his deputy in China on detailed administrative problems.

By early November, Taylor was able to announce that one hundred and two candidates had been accepted for service with the CIM, and that enough money had been given to pay for their passages to China. The figure of one hundred and two included two associate missionaries, so that God not only answered the many prayers, but answered them with total precision!

Among those who welcomed the last of the hundred was the elderly missionary who had felt so sure that the mission's prayers would not be completely answered. [Pages 100-101]

A Divinely Appointed Means of Grace

23. Greatest Hindrance Is Our Imagined Strength

When Hudson Taylor visited Shanxi, a northern province of China, he met Chinese Christians who were in the habit regularly, alone and together, of spending time in fasting and prayer. He discovered that 'they recognised that this fasting, which so many dislike, which requires faith in God, since it makes one feel weak and poorly, is really a divinely appointed means of grace. Perhaps the greatest hindrance to our work,' he continued, 'is our imagined strength; and in fasting we learn what poor weak creatures we are - dependent on a meal of meat for the little strength which we are so apt to lean upon. However the blessing comes, this I know: we do find that when we have had a serious difficulty in the CIM, and set apart a day of fasting (we have had very many) God always interposes. He goes before us, and makes crooked places straight: he goes before us and makes rough places plain.' [Page 104]

24. Jesus First for Those Who Wish to Win China

'China is not to be won for Christ by quiet, ease-loving men and women ... The stamp of men and women we need is such as will put Jesus, China, souls, first and foremost in everything and at every time -- even life itself must be secondary ... Of such men, and such women, do not fear to send us too many. They are more precious than rubies.' [Pages 110-111]

25. Lead by Godly Rule

Writing in the CIM's *Book of Arrangements* about leadership, Taylor said, 'The principle of godly rule is a most important one, for it equally affects us all. It is this- the seeking to help, not to lord; to keep from wrong paths and lead into right paths, for the glory of God and the good of those guided, not for the gratification of the ruler. *Such rule always leads the ruler to the Cross*, and saves the ruled at the cost of the ruler ... When the heart is right it loves godly rule, and finds freedom in obedience.' [Pages 111-112]

26. Do What We Can for the Poor and Needy

Early in 1877, Taylor wrote an editorial for *China's Millions* on 'Concern for the poor and helpless' based on Psalm 41:1-3, 'Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth ...' (AV).

'Who, then, will be blessed in this way? Not the one who cheaply relieves his own eyes of a painful spectacle by a trifling alms, or relieves himself of the importunity of a collector for some benevolent cause. Not the one who quiets his own conscience by gifts which really cost no self-denial, and then dismisses the case of the poor and needy from his thoughts, complacently claiming the blessings promised to the charitable. As for those who seek fame and name by their gifts, we altogether dismiss their case from consideration.'

Those who would be blessed are those who *consider* the poor, those who turn their thoughts and attention towards the poor and needy, and those who do what they can, at the cost of personal self-denial, to reduce the sum of human unhappiness.

Hudson Taylor issued a warning against spiritualising the text of Psalm 41 (and other parts of Scripture) so that it lost its obvious meaning. 'This,' he said, 'we Protestants are often in no small danger of doing. How much of the precious time and strength of our Lord was spent on conferring temporal blessings on the poor, the afflicted and the needy? Such ministrations, proceeding from right motives, cannot be lost. They are God-like; they are Christ-like.' [Page 113]

The First Priority

27. The Gospel Is the Power

'When God's grace is triumphant in my soul,' Taylor said, 'and I can look a Chinaman in the face and say, "God is able to save you, where and as you are" that is when I have power. How else are you going to deal with a man under the craving for opium? The cause of lack of success is very often that we are only half-saved ourselves. If we are fully saved and confess it, we shall see results...

'Let us feel that everything that is human, everything outside the sufficiency of Christ, is only helpful in the measure in which it enables us to bring the soul to him. If our medical missions draw people to us, and we can present to them the Christ of God, medical missions are a blessing; but to substitute medicine for the preaching of the gospel would be a profound mistake. If we put schools or education in the place of spiritual power to change the heart, it will be a profound mistake. If we get the idea that people are going to be converted by some educational *process*, instead of by a regenerative recreation, it will be a profound mistake. Let all our auxiliaries be auxiliaries-means of bringing Christ and the soul into contact - then we may be truly

thankful for them all . . . Let us exalt the glorious gospel in our hearts, and believe that *it* is the power of God unto salvation. Let everything else *sit at its feet*... We shall never be discouraged if we realise that in Christ is our sufficiency.’ [Pages 115-116]

28. Separation from Wife, the Cost of Ministry

In December 1882, a spell of service in China had kept Hudson Taylor apart from Jennie for fourteen months. He wrote saying that he hoped it wouldn’t be long before they were reunited, and asked the agonised question, ‘Is anything of value in Christ’s service which costs little?’ [Page 125]

29. Deny Self

Jesus said, ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up the cross daily and follow me’ (Luke 9:23). Commenting on this verse, Hudson Taylor wrote, ‘We might naturally have thought that if there is one thing in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ which belonged to him alone, it was his cross-bearing. To guard against so natural a mistake the Lord Jesus teaches us that if any man will be his disciple he *must* - not he may - deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow his Lord.

‘Is there not a needs-be for this exhortation? Are not self-indulgence and self-assertion temptations to which we are ever exposed and to which we constantly give way without even a thought of the unChristlikeness of such conduct? Self-denial surely means something far greater than some slight and insignificant lessening of self-indulgence!

‘As believers, we claim to have been crucified together with Christ; and Paul understood this, not imputatively but practically. He does not say, “I take up my cross daily” in the light modern sense of the expression; he put it rather as dying daily; and therefore, as one “in deaths often”, he was never surprised, or stumbled, by any hardship or danger involved in his work.’ [Page 126]

30. Do We Have Rights?

‘What does the Word of God teach us about our rights, our claims, our dues?’ he asked. ‘What did our Saviour intend to teach us by the parable of Matthew 18:23-35: “Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow-servant just as I had on you?” (v.33). Can that slave, under those circumstances, assert and claim his right over his fellow?’

‘Is not this principle of non-assertion, of this aspect of self-denial, a far-reaching one? Did our Lord claim his right before Pilate’s bar, and assert himself; or did his self-denial and cross-bearing go the length of waiting for his Father’s vindication? And shall we be jealous of our own honour and rights, as men and citizens of western countries, when what our Master wants is witness to and reflection of his own character and earthly life?’ [Page 127]

31. Resting in Christ's Joy

By the autumn of 1876, Hudson Taylor was complaining that he had four times the amount of work he could do. He had just gone down with dysentery, an illness which recurred throughout his life: on the trip out for his fourth visit to China, his document box containing all the work he had intended to do on the voyage got left behind and after a long delay had now turned up in Zhenjiang; Charles Fishe, secretary to the CIM in China, had returned to England and there was no one else to take his place; the mission's magazine *China's Millions* had to be edited.

At the end of the day -- or sometimes at two or three in the morning -- Taylor would sit at his harmonium and play his favourite hymns usually getting round to: *Jesus, I am resting, resting, in the joy of what thou art; I am finding out the greatness of thy loving heart.*

On one occasion a fellow-missionary was with him when a pile of letters brought news of dangers and problems facing a number of CIM members. Taylor leaned against his desk to read them and began to whistle, *Jesus, I am resting, rest...*

'How can you whistle, when our friends are in such danger?' his colleague asked.

'Suppose I were to sit down here and burden my heart with all these things; that wouldn't help them, and it would unfit me for the work I have to do. I have just to roll the burden on the Lord.'

[Pages 128-129]

Steer, Roger. *HUDSON TAYLOR: Lessons In Discipleship*, Crowborough, E. Sussex, England, Monarch, OMF International, 1995.