**CHRISTIAN ACTION**

**LAY TALK 20 minutes maximum, including introduction, prayer, etc.**

**Note to Speaker:**

*The objective of this talk is to convey to the Participants that to be a Christian is to be a follower of Jesus. However, without action on their part, it just becomes simply a title, an empty adjective added to their name. Jesus makes it abundantly clear that while there are costs and rewards to being a Christian, the action is fully contained in one word: LOVE*

*In the action of love, they not only can share God with others, but they will find the presence of God in their lives affirmed and renewed.*

Prayer: Kairos Community Prayer, Page 11, FG

***Speaker introduces self, telling name, whether lay or clergy, and giving the name of the talk.*** *This information should also be displayed on poster board, flip chart, or written on a chalk board.*

I. A CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A THREE-DIMENSIONAL RESPONSE TO GOD’S

 UNQUALIFIED LOVE FOR US. THERE IS ALWAYS GOD, OURSELVES, AND

 OTHERS.

 A. In the *Opening the Door* talk, we learned about maintaining a relationship with God and how we can help that relationship grow day by day through various spiritual exercises. We also learned these spiritual exercises give us the strength to love and to encourage others. A relationship with God is the base from which all Christian action begins. In the *Discovery* *Through Study* talk earlier this morning we also heard how we can deepen our relationship with Jesus and come to know His will for us. In this talk, *Christian Action*, we will hear that Christian Action is a consequence of being Christian. Our action is an expression of our desire and responsibility to share God’s love with everyone. Christian Action, our response to God’s love for us, is the activity which brings everything together and cements everything into place:

 B. It is the result of ongoing spiritual exercise

 C. It is the result of continual exploration and discovery through study

 D. An authentic spiritual life requires Christian Action, the third leg of support

 E. And finally, being a follower of Christ is difficult, especially in a prison setting.

II. IN RESPONSE TO CHRIST’S GIVING OF HIMSELF FOR US, WE GIVE OF

 OURSELVES TO OTHERS. THIS IS CHRISTIAN ACTION.

 A. The Christian life is a life of reaching out in love.

 1. This means that truly living a Christian life involves God, self, **and others**.

*(Speaker should have chart or poster displaying this concept. A suggestion may be that the speaker could use the cross as an example of how our vertical relationship with God, through Jesus on the cross and the horizontal relationship, Jesus reaching out with His arm spread out, is what we also must do as Christians in our Christian Action).*

 2. Repeat: Christian Action grows out of Spirituality and Study.

 *(Note: It is very important that you complete the visualization of the 3-legged stool that was started by previous speakers, and that following speakers will rely on).*

 Christian Action is the 3rd leg of our “Friendship with God” stool. Notice that it can now stand on its own. *(Speaker attaches 3rd leg to stool).* This 3rd leg provides the necessary support that allows us, Christian women/men, to fulfill our role as true followers of Jesus.

 B. The very act of being Christian moves us to reach out so that others, too, may experience God’s love and begin a friendship with God.

 C. Walking your talk may encourage others to walk their talk.

 D. Being Christian may be costly. In Paul’s letters, he describes the cost of his apostleship in terms of whippings, shipwrecks, snake bites, imprisonment, stonings, and other dangers.

 E. But it is also rewarding:

 1. In the Present: Colossians 2:13, Romans 5:6-11

 2. In the Future: Matthew 25.31-40

 III. THE ONLY ACTION WHICH IS FOR GOD IS “TO LOVE”

 A. Let’s stop here for a moment and have some honest talk about what the word “love” means. After all, we’ve been talking about “love” all Weekend, and frankly, many of us have a poor concept of what that means. In our lives, many of us had some difficult family experiences that were not very loving. And sometimes love has been used by others to manipulate us, and maybe we’ve used love to get what we wanted. But that’s not what God means when we talk about Christian love. There is a very good term for what is meant by Christian love; it is called **agape**, and it’s unconditional. **Christian love is not physical love**. Said another way, Christian love or agape means wanting the very best for another person. So, our Christian Action for God is to love. So how do we accomplish that?

 B. To follow Jesus we pursue a love relationship

 1. With ourselves

 2. With others

 3. With God

 C. This requires some intentional action. It is not accidental. Let me give you what we lovingly call the Ten Commandments of Agape Love.

 1. Begin with prayer

 2. You must “get real”

 3. Accept your own weakness: remember that being perceived as weak can result in demands for goods or services

 4. You must be willing to forgive yourself

 5. You must be willing to forgive others

 6. You must be willing to make amends

 7. You must trust another person with your pain and fear

 8. You must recognize and share their pain and fear

 9. You must **listen** without judgment

 10. Seek God’s guidance

It can be done, with God’s help and the help of others on this compound

IV. LOVE IS THE MOST DIFFICULT ACTION WE’RE COMMANDED TO DO

 How do you treat the other person in such a way as to always help him/her become a better person and grow in a Friendship with God?

 A. Use the **head**. What you hope to do must be carefully thought out before you begin to act. Luke 14:28-30.

 B. Use the **heart**: Have compassion for the other person's struggle.

 C. Use the **will**. As Christians, after you have done your head-work, then make a decision about the way you are going to act and be unwavering in your action. Be aware that your efforts may be misunderstood by some.

 D. Use your **feet**. You must go! You must be there! Look for the opportunities to be in community with others. Also learn to provide the opportunities to occur by what you say and how you act.

 1. Share a meal or a snack in the mess hall or canteen line;

 2. Be there to encourage them in times of trouble or sorrow

 3. Talk to another inmate on the yard, in the recreation areas

 4. Share with others through prison publications or broadcasts

 5. Remember: the idea is to share Christian fellowship in as many situations or environments as possible.

 E. Use the **knees**. Prayer is the basis of everything we do as Christians! It is the beginning and the end of all that we do in Christ. Two scriptures bear directly on this: “Without me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5) and “I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.” (Phil. 4:13)

F. Use your **love**. You should do all things in love (I John 4:19-21).

V. THERE IS A CHRISTIAN METHOD FOR EFFECTIVLEY REACHING OUT TO OTHERS

 A. **Make a friend**. (Find someone who needs a friend, or doesn’t think they need a friend)

 B. **Be a friend**.

 C. **Bring a friend to Christ**.

VI. WITNESS OF THE SPEAKER

 A. *The speaker should be able to witness to a specific, long-term, and* ***planned***

 ***Christian action*** *to change a relationship with another person from one of hostility to*

 *one of hospitality. This witness should identify God’s acts of grace and the input and*

 *support of the speaker’s Reunion group. It is essential in this witness that the speaker*

 *use the three steps set forth in the outline for the method of Christian Action and not*

 *digress into a sharing of his/her whole life. The witness is to be specific to this*

 *talk and to the main points in order that the dynamic of the Weekend not be*

 *disrupted. An understanding of this talk plays a significant role in the talks that will*

 *follow.*

B. You may be the only Bible some Residents in this institution will ever read. You may be the only example of Christ they will ever see.

IF YOU ARE WILLING TO TRUST GOD TO CARE FOR YOU, TO GUIDE YOU, AND

TO PROTECT YOU, YOUR **NEW LIFE OF ACTION** BEGINS HERE AND NOW.

Please bow your heads for 2 minutes of silent meditation. *(Speaker walks away)*