

WALKING w i t h JESUS



Discipleship Guide
by Rob Rash

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Being a Christian is a statement about what Christ has done for me; being a disciple is a statement about what I am doing for Christ.¹

The Purpose of This GUIDE

The bible identifies the followers of Jesus as disciples over two hundred times in the New Testament. It rarely uses the word Christian to identify Jesus' followers. A recent public survey found that Jesus' followers were open to identifying as Christians but were reluctant to be called disciples. To be called a disciple makes a statement about the quality of our "followership" of Jesus. In other words, to many being a Christian is easy. But being a disciple requires a level of commitment some are unwilling to make.

Are Jesus' disciples making a difference?

A Gallup poll a few years ago found that there was little difference in the moral values and lifestyle choices between Christians and non-Christians. We believers should be the salt and the light of the world, but we seem to have lost our influence on the world at times. And, unfortunately, many of our churches have become little more than sermon factories. We love Jesus, so we show up on Sunday mornings to hear great music, listen to an inspiring sermon and we go home. And little happens in the faith of the believer to build the kingdom as Jesus commands during our week.

Those last two sentences describe my life as a believer perfectly, prior to understanding discipleship. For far more years than I want to confess to you, I was an excellent pew sitting Christian. There wasn't much evidence that I was a true disciple of Jesus.

One of my favorite pastors was preaching one Sunday and did a visual demonstration from the stage. During his sermon, he was holding a clear glass cup full of hot water and he dipped a tea bag in the water just one time. What was the result? Weak tea that was undrinkable. The tea bag did not remain in the water, so there was no transformation from plain water to rich, hot, flavorful tea. Because I wasn't prioritizing my walk with Jesus daily, my discipleship was understandably weak.

What's the goal of discipleship?

In Luke 6:40 it says, "The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher." Jesus is telling us that he is the only model to follow and our lives should be fashioned after him in every respect. This growth into maturity as a disciple is Jesus' goal for every one of his children who love him.

Of course, I've repented and been forgiven of ignoring Jesus' calling on my life to grow in spiritual maturity. I can now shout from the roof tops and tell you that your greatest blessings will come from undertaking this journey of discipleship with all your energy.

And my experiences have motivated me to write this discipleship guide. I just asked myself this question: what if I had something like this guide and a small group of other committed disciples to walk with in this journey when I was young in the faith? How would that have accelerated my maturity as a disciple and brought me sooner into the full joy of my Lord?

*...the goal is
not to just study
Jesus – it's to
become like
him in every
way...*

My prayer is that you use this guide as one of your tools so that Jesus could transform you from “plain water” to the spiritually rich, flavorful disciple he needs you to be. Please remember the goal is not to just study Jesus – it’s to become like him in every way showing that we really are his disciples.

So, this guide was written with the inspiration of someone who was in a dry spiritual desert for far too long. As you join Jesus on your own journey of striving toward spiritual maturity, I know you will experience him personally working in and through you in ways you never dreamed possible.

What is my purpose as a disciple?

Once we confess our sins before Jesus and truly seek his forgiveness, we then enter into an eternal relationship with him as our Lord. Being right with Jesus is not just a transaction. We don’t receive a “get out of Hell card” and keep living life on our own. Jesus now must become the Lord of our lives. The great news, in addition to receiving total forgiveness and the guarantee of eternity, is that many remarkable things happen to us spiritually when Jesus is our Lord.

I’ll cover those transformational promises in depth in this study, as they are truly life changing. But the greatest change is that as a disciple of Jesus we are now eternally joined with him. In fact, Jesus considers your relationship with him just like a spiritual marriage. It’s intimate, it’s exclusive, it’s holy and it lasts for all eternity.

As Jesus’ disciples, our sole motivation in life is to love and please him above everyone and everything else in our lives. Jesus said that just as he loved us, we should love one another. And by loving one another Jesus says the world will know that we are his disciples. Jesus’ love now defines and guides our lives. And as the heavenly source of all power, he promises to empower each of us to achieve his purposes in and through us every day.

*Jesus considers your
relationship
with him just like a
spiritual marriage.
It’s intimate, it’s
exclusive, it’s holy
and it lasts for all
eternity.*

¹Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ*, IVP Connect, 2007

*Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth."
Matthew 28:18*

WHO IS JESUS? LESSON 1



Is there an authoritative source to learn about Jesus?

The name of Jesus is arguably the best-known name in history. But if someone sincerely wants to learn who Jesus really is, what source can they trust? We have only one authority we can trust and that is the actual word of God, the Holy Bible. Many people have written about Jesus in history, but only God himself can tell us who Jesus is. Since the entire bible is recognized as the inspired word of God, it is trustworthy and true. In fact, the bible has never been proven wrong or in error. It's remarkable that we have such an authoritative source that has stood the test of time for thousands of years. It is the work of a Holy, unchanging God.

Why is the bible our supreme authority in life and the source of all Truth? See Psalm 18:30; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Since Jesus is alive, are his words still alive?

How could Jesus claim to be God?

Any human being claiming to be God is foolish, to put it mildly. If you think about the qualities of the Holy, all-knowing, all-powerful God, absolutely no human can make that claim. Yet, Jesus did exactly that. So, how could his claim be valid? Jesus, a man, claimed to be God. Was this even possible?

One of my favorite verses is from John chapter 1, where Jesus is described as the "Word." It says that Jesus, the Word, was with God and was God in the beginning. Jesus is claiming to be the eternal God since before time began. Word is a beautiful way to relate to us that Jesus is the perfect expression of God. Just as we express ourselves through our words, God has fully expressed himself through his revelation of Jesus to us.

There are several wonderful descriptions of Jesus as God in the bible. Read and discuss John 1:1-5; Hebrews 1:1-4; Colossians 1:15-20. How do these passages put the Lordship of Jesus in a better perspective for you?

In the Old Testament, many centuries before Jesus came to earth, Moses met God on Mt. Sinai. When Moses asked him his name, God told him his name was "I AM." (Read Exodus 3:14.) Jesus used the phrase "I AM" frequently in the New Testament to describe his nature. For example, John 11:25 says, "I am the resurrection and the life." John 6:35 says, "I am the bread of life."

What is Jesus saying about who he is by utilizing the phrase "I AM?"

Do bible prophecies help prove Jesus was God?

One of the more remarkable proof points that Jesus was God, are the numerous prophecies that told us about the coming of God to save his people. The promised Messiah would be very unique, as he would be both God and man. One of the proofs to validate Jesus' claim to be God is his birth by a virgin. Jesus was a product of both God in heaven and his earthly mother, Mary. God told us in Isaiah that he would come in human form to be with us and to save us. That prophecy that a virgin would bear a son and he would be called Immanuel, or "God with us" was written seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus by the virgin Mary.

The prophet Jeremiah also wrote that the "Branch" or Messiah would be called the "The Lord is our righteousness" and he would be a descendent of King David. Therefore, a human King would be the righteous one, signifying again that God would come to us in human form to save his people.

See Jeremiah 23:5-6 and Isaiah 7:14 and discuss the miracle of the fulfillment of these prophecies in the Lord Jesus and how they prove Jesus is the promised Messiah.

Do Jesus' miracles also prove that he was God?

The bible is remarkable in that it was written by eyewitnesses of Jesus and his life. John the Apostle was one of those eyewitnesses and God inspired John to write significant parts of the New Testament. In John's gospel, he specifically focused on seven of Jesus' miracles as signs of his deity. Jesus' miracles were important in those moments, but to us they remain undeniable proof of the presence of God in the Lord Jesus.

When a devout follower of Jesus named John the Baptist (a different John than our author) asked Jesus if he was the Messiah, Jesus told John to look at his many miracles as proof that only the Messiah could perform such wonderful deeds.

Read the reply Jesus gave John the Baptist in Matthew 11:2-6 regarding his position as the Messiah. Discuss how the many publicly seen miracles of Jesus affect your faith.

Read John 2:9-11 and 2:23. How do the miracles of Jesus point to the fact he is God? How do these signs elevate your own thoughts of Jesus in your heart?

Why do we need a Messiah?

In the time of Moses, God established a system of animal sacrifices to temporarily cover the sins of the Jewish people. The blood of a spotless lamb was to be spread on the doorposts of a believing household every year at a time called Passover. This was an external sign of their reverence for God and their need for forgiveness. And it was a time of personal confession and a call to repentance before the Holy God of Israel. This sacrificial system was required by God to cover their sins, but also to remind them of their sinful nature and their need for cleanliness from sin before God.

*Jesus told him,
"I am the way, the
truth, and the life.
No one can come to
the Father
except through me."
John 14:6*

Discuss Romans 5:12 and Romans 6:23 regarding the sinfulness of all mankind. Have you personally admitted your sinful nature to Jesus and sought his forgiveness? See Romans 10:9-10. Is your heart ready to confess Jesus as Lord?

Read and discuss what Romans 5:8 and John 1:29 tell us about the loving nature of our Messiah, Jesus, who was the final sacrifice for all sins.

God promised to permanently save his people through the coming of a Messiah and to establish an eternal kingdom for them in heaven. The coming of the Messiah was for many heavenly purposes: to prove God's love through his personal sacrifice for all sins on the cross, to build his church which would occupy his coming kingdom, and to dwell in his people through the gift of the Holy Spirit until he returns for his church, among many others.

Read and discuss Isaiah 9:6-7, which is another prophecy regarding the purpose of the Messiah. Do you have hope for the future based on this promise?

Does Jesus' resurrection from the dead prove that he was God?

The Apostle Paul experienced the risen Jesus in a miraculous way. As an eyewitness to the resurrected Jesus, his personal testimony, radically changed life and fruitful ministry are proof of his encounter. Paul also tells us that Jesus appeared to many people as the risen savior in Jerusalem over a period of forty days after his resurrection.

Read and discuss 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 and John 11:25-26 where Jesus again uses the "I AM" claim to establish his power over all life, death and the resurrection. What do these passages tell us about Jesus' power and authority?

Our own resurrection is our ultimate hope and joy. Jesus has conquered death and promised his disciples eternal life with him with a new, wonderful, resurrected body.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 and discuss the hope of your own personal resurrection. How does that promise effect your life and testimony today?

What should our response be to the overwhelming evidence that Jesus is the Messiah?

When Jesus was speaking with his friend Martha, whose brother had died, he asked if she believed in the resurrection of the dead in John 11:21-43. Then, Jesus called her brother Lazarus out of his tomb to new life. The Apostle Paul tells us that without the resurrection of Jesus, we have nothing, and he is correct (see 1 Corinthians 15:12-23). But with it, we have everything.

What do you believe about your own resurrection?

God's way is perfect and his Word is flawless. A perfect God could have nothing less than perfect communication with his people. It is we who read hastily, skip prayer, and fail to meditate on his Word, who find it confusing.
— Tim Keller

The BIBLE

as Our Authority

LESSON 2



Is the bible accurate?

The bible is the most printed and read book in human history. It was written over a fifteen-hundred-year period by forty men whom God inspired directly to record his truth. Tremendous work has gone into translating and authenticating the thousands of ancient manuscripts we have today.

Without a doubt, the bible is the most examined and researched book ever written. Questions abound about the thousands of ancient manuscripts from which today's bible was written. Are they accurate? How did they survive for hundreds or thousands of years? Can we trust what we know as the bible today?

An excellent source of research on the validity of the bible is Evidence That Demands a Verdict by Josh McDowell.² It is really an encyclopedia of painstaking research by the author to uncover the facts about the bible and is exhaustive in its detail. It was voted as one of the most influential Christian books of the twentieth century.

Among historians, researchers and most experts who are unbiased, there is agreement that the sixty-six books we have in our bible are accurate and trustworthy, and more importantly they are authoritative as the written words of God.

What is the original source of the bible?

God tells us that he is the inspiration behind every word of the bible. This means that since God inspired the entire bible then his word is absolute truth and without error. This is the defining value of our bible: it is God's truth on which we can build our entire lives.

Read and discuss the following: 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12. If God validates his own word, how should that affect our treatment of the bible as authoritative?

When Hebrews 4:12 says the word of God is active and alive, what does that mean regarding the transforming power of the bible in our lives?

How much prophecy is in the bible?

One of the most spectacular methods we have of proving that God wrote the bible is found in God's foretelling of future events called bible prophecy. The bible is filled with hundreds of scriptures where God tells of events he will bring to pass. Since the writing of the bible, scholars have documented that a huge percentage of those prophecies have been fulfilled. For only one prophecy to be fulfilled accurately is a miracle. For hundreds of prophecies to be fulfilled is beyond our capacity to understand – they are the work of an infinite God.

For example, there are about three hundred prophecies telling of a Messiah that would come to save all mankind as God in the flesh. In Lesson One, we noted that Isaiah 7:14 told of a virgin that would have a son, and his name would be "God with us", or Immanuel. Isaiah wrote this God inspired prophecy about seven hundred years before it actually occurred. It would be fulfilled when a young virgin named Mary gave birth to Jesus. She and her husband Joseph were both visited by angels to confirm this miracle and to give them hope and peace for the shame they would endure as unmarried, but expectant parents.

Read Luke 1:26-38 and Matthew 1:18-24 and discuss the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14 in the birth of Jesus. What does this say about the accuracy and validity of the word of God?

*"Every word of God
is flawless;
he is a shield to
those who
take refuge
in him.
Proverbs 30:5*

There are also many unfulfilled prophecies of the bible yet to occur. They tell of major world and spiritual events that captivate our imagination, as they should. They include the war of Gog against Israel (Ezekiel 38 & 39), the rapture of the church to be with Jesus forever (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4), the great tribulation (Matthew 24:15-21), and the new heaven and the new earth (Revelation 21:1-5).

Read some of the future prophecies mentioned above in your group. Since all of God's prophecies will be fulfilled, how should these prophecies shape our lives as disciples of Christ? What urgency do these prophecies bring to Jesus' command for all of us to go and make new disciples (Matthew 28:18-20)?

How can I understand the bible?

If a heart surgeon goes deep into technical language about a heart procedure, we non-surgeons would be lost. The conversation would make no sense, because we have no medical training. For the bible to make any sense whatsoever, there is one huge requirement for the reader. To fully understand, revere and put into practice God's words, we must be his children. We must be born again spiritually as followers of Jesus.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:13-14. Do you have doubts about the bible? Does this scripture explain why?

If you're really struggling with the bible and you are doubting its validity or accuracy, you may not be filled with the Holy Spirit. Every believer is filled with the Holy Spirit when they confess Jesus as Lord. See Acts 2:38. So, there is a solution to grasping the truths of the bible. The answer is that you first must be a child of God.

Notice in 1 Corinthians 2:14 it says that that God's words are discerned only through the Spirit. To discern means to closely examine and evaluate. But we can't even evaluate the truth of scripture without the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Unless we possess a new spirit given only by faith in Jesus can we find the ability to interpret and apply the bible.

Discuss this requirement with your group. Have someone describe their life before faith in Christ and their attitude toward the bible, and contrast that with their understanding of the word after coming to faith.

What is the primary message of the bible?

If we were to sum up the single most important message of the bible, what would that be? Read John 3:16-17, Romans 1:16-17, Philippians 1:27 and Colossians 1:5-6.

What are our responsibilities, as disciples, now that we have been entrusted with the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

² Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Harper-Collins Publishers, 2nd Edition, 2017

No man is excluded from calling upon God, the gate of salvation is set open unto all men: neither is there any other thing which keepeth us back from entering in, save only our own unbelief.
- John Calvin

Do I Need to be **SAVED**? LESSON 3



What was Jesus' purpose?

Maybe you've heard the phrase, "Jesus Saves." We Christians talk a lot about salvation. But if you're new to the faith, or still evaluating, it's something you'll hear a lot. Why is being saved so important to our faith? Let me start with the story of why Jesus left the comforts of heaven to come to earth.

In the greatest act of love ever known, the Holy God left heaven and put on flesh, becoming the man Jesus. But why? Why did Jesus leave the glory and honor of ruling over the universe to become part of his creation as a man? The simple answer is that Jesus was on a rescue mission. His greatest creation, his children made in his own image, were in extreme danger. And that danger still exists at this very moment.

And what is that danger? It's the worst possible calamity that a person could face, which is eternal separation from our Creator. Since every person is born with a sin nature, we are separated from Jesus at birth. In other words, we have no relationship with God. If we die without a relationship with Jesus, he tells us that our eternal destiny is a place horrendously described in the bible as "a fiery furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." We all know this place as Hell.

What does Jesus say about Hell in the bible? Read Matthew 10:28; Matthew 13:41-43 and Revelation 20:14-15.

Read John 3:17 and Romans 5:8-11 and discuss Jesus' purpose for coming to earth and why it is so vital..

Is everyone really born a sinner?

This is an interesting question that I challenge everyone to answer in the quietness of their own heart. If you were alone with God who knows your entire life, would you really admit that you are not a sinner to him? Sin has broken every human being so that we cannot even enter his presence without confessing and repenting of our sins.

Read Psalm 5:4-6, Psalm 51:5, Psalm 53:2-3 and Romans 3:23. Can there be any doubt about how God regards our sin nature?

Does God have a plan to save us?

Thankfully, Jesus in eternity past, has always planned to deliver us from this penalty of death and to fix the broken relationship with him. How would he do that? He would not just say that he loved us from his throne in heaven, but he would prove his love for each of us by sacrificing himself on our behalf. Since God requires death as the payment for sin, he satisfied his own law and took our own death penalty on himself. Our loving God did not change his law or bend it to suit his needs. He satisfied his own law in his perfect righteousness, proving his holiness. Our God is truly amazing!

Read and discuss God's amazing plan to save us in Colossians 1:15-23.

Is Jesus the only answer for our sin nature?

Since Jesus provided the only solution for our sin nature through his sacrifice, he now offers each of us the choice of accepting his sacrificial act to cover our own sins. God says clearly in his word that he accepts only the sacrifice of Jesus as the payment for sin. There is no other path to repairing the broken relationship with God. Each person must admit their sinfulness to a Holy God and seek his complete forgiveness by accepting the gift of salvation that Jesus offers. The bible clearly states that we, as sinful humans, are never "good enough" to enter his eternal kingdom without the forgiveness of Jesus and then making him Lord of our lives.

Read and discuss the only path to eternity in Ephesians 2:8-9 and Acts 4:8-12.

Does Jesus forgive ALL of my sins?

The bible is very clear that Jesus completely cleanses us from every sin. Since we are born again spiritually, we have a new start with Jesus. Our old sin nature has been transformed into a new holy nature in Jesus' eyes. This is a miraculous and transformational change I'll talk more about in coming lessons. It's like having terminal stage four cancer one day, then being completely and forever cancer free the next. We are now seen as Jesus' own children and he gives us the right to enter his presence both now and also in eternity. In fact, Jesus guarantees our eternal future through the New Covenant, which I'll cover in Lesson Four.

Read about our total forgiveness in 1 John 1:9 and Colossians 1:22-23. If we are completely forgiven when we confess our sins, should disciples carry any guilt?

I've just made Jesus Lord of my life, now what?

Jesus asks every one of his disciples to make a public profession of faith through baptism by immersion in water. The act of baptism is symbolic in that it means each of us has died with Christ to our sins and our old sin nature. And we have been raised to new life through the promised resurrection of our own bodies to eternal life. So every new believer must make this public statement as soon as they can to honor the Lord and give testimony of our new life in him.

See some of the descriptions of baptism in these scriptures: Acts 2:38; Romans 6:4; Acts 8:12.

The New Covenant RELATIONSHIP with Jesus



This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.
Hebrews 8:10-12

LESSON 4

What is a covenant relationship with Jesus?

Long-term relationships are often formalized with an agreement. For example, in a typical contract, two willing parties negotiate the terms of an agreement to their satisfaction. Either party can decide to be part of the agreement or not. Marriage is also a common form of a covenant relationship where two people make promises to uphold the relationship until they die.

When speaking of God's commitment to our relationship, he establishes a covenant agreement with each of us. In this covenant agreement, the terms are set only by God. He makes a pledge to us that can never be broken. A covenant agreement is the strongest possible guarantee of security that we have in life. Our Holy God instituted the New Covenant between himself and those choosing to follow Jesus as Lord.

Read Hebrews 9:15. What will we receive, since we are now participants in the new covenant as his disciples? What did Jesus have to do to institute and seal this new covenant? What has happened to the debt we owe God for our sins?

Read Matthew 26:26-29. Jesus describes the new covenant he established through his blood sacrifice on the cross. What is the strength of this covenant promise as security for our lives?

What are the benefits of living under the New Covenant?

Read 1 John 1:9. Prior to meeting Jesus, the bible says we are stained by sin and separated from him. What happens when we make Jesus Lord and confess our sins?

Read Romans 6:5 and John 11:25. What are Jesus' disciples promised when they die? Read 1 Corinthians 15:42-44. What type of body will we receive at our resurrection? How should these promises affect the way we live now?

Read Romans 6:6. What has happened to the deadly power of sin in our lives? What power has Jesus given us to distinguish between right and wrong and overcome the power of sin in our lives? Read John 14:16 and Acts 2:38.

Read Galatians 5:22-23. What will be the result of the Holy Spirit living and working in us? Given all these benefits, where is our joy in life now found?

*He has enabled us
to be ministers of his
new covenant.
This is a covenant not
of written laws,
but of the Spirit.
2 Corinthians 3:6*

What is our part in the new covenant relationship?

Jesus conquered sin and death on the cross through his sacrifice. He now calls his disciples to a life of holiness as a requirement for the relationship. Just as every committed relationship has boundaries and expectations, repentance from a life of sin is Jesus' expectation of his disciples.

Read Romans 6:11-12 to understand how he has freed each of his disciples from sin. Since we can now choose to love Jesus over sin, should we object to repenting from our sins?

Read and discuss Romans 6:19-23. What do we receive when we repent from our sin nature and become "slaves to righteousness?"

How do we truly commit to the new covenant relationship Jesus has established with us?

Read John 6:38-39. Even though Jesus was God in the flesh, he demonstrated submission in his relationship with the Father. By trusting God the Father, what was the outcome of his life? Can we trust the Lord Jesus to lead our lives better than we can?

Read Galatians 2:20. Summarize Paul's life of submission and commitment to Christ. What evidence was Paul's faith based on?



Your New **IDENTITY** in Christ

*Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God."
John 3:3*

Part One: Spiritual Birth LESSON 5

What does it mean to be born again?

Jesus' plan of salvation includes giving us a new spiritual nature when we make him our Lord. It's a great mystery, but it's a fact that Jesus' own Holy Spirit now takes up residence in us. The term born again comes directly from Jesus and is found in John 3:3-6. Jesus emphatically states that unless we make him Lord and his Spirit gives us new life (which he gives freely to all his disciples), we cannot enter his kingdom.

Read and discuss John 3:3-6. Does this passage help you understand that Jesus is not offering a salvation transaction, but an eternal relationship?

Receiving Jesus' Spirit is transformational. We are not just "cleaned up," but from his perspective, our lives have started over eternally. So, Jesus equates the act of salvation with newness of life as it truly is.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. What does it mean that Jesus' Spirit in us creates a new person? What does this mean for how Jesus' views us?

Read Ephesians 1:13-14. What does God guarantee us through the gift of the Holy Spirit?

What does it mean to receive the Holy Spirit?

Receiving the Holy Spirit sounds mysterious and somewhat hard to believe. I agree with you, but let's look at the extensive teaching on the gift of the Holy Spirit which is given to every disciple.

For example, read Acts 2:38 and discuss who receives the Holy Spirit. How does this gift differentiate us from the world?

I hope you're beginning to understand that the gift of the Holy Spirit is what transforms us into brand new people. Jesus' own divine qualities now live in us to empower us.

Discuss 2 Peter 1:3-4 to help understand what Jesus' power in us means for our new lives.

The Holy Spirit is meant to give Jesus' disciples power for holy living and for giving witness to our transformation into new creatures.

Read Acts 1:8 and discuss how we, as the indwelt ones, should be fearless with our witness.

To learn more about the extensive work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, please see my guide called On The Rock We Stand, available at www.friscooutreach.org/resources.

How does Jesus see me now that I'm born again?

Being joined with Jesus in a spiritual marriage is his highest indication of love for each of us. We are now recipients of his Holy Spirit and heirs of an incredible eternal inheritance. Life has truly changed from darkness to light and Jesus now considers us radically different.

Read 1 Peter 2:9-10 and discuss the attributes that Jesus has given us in this new relationship. What is the value of being identified like this now? How should these attributes completely change our viewpoint of ourselves?

Notice in verse 9 that we are given an assignment due to our new identity. Discuss how this corresponds with Acts 1:8. How should we, as disciples of Jesus, be utilizing our new identity?

What does new life in Jesus mean for my identity?

The purpose of these three lessons on Your New Identity in Christ is to convey to you the radical transformation of who you are in Christ. Let me put it this way: if your Creator sees you as holy, how should you see yourself? If your Creator has chosen you for his purposes, what does this say about your value?

If I asked you to tell me about yourself, how would you respond? Would you tell me about your career, or your family or some other earthly attribute? Normally, don't we think of ourselves and others by earthly standards: appearance, family, income, career, personality, accomplishments, etc.?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-17. What is Paul saying about how we should now evaluate others, including ourselves? Now, our standards have completely changed as disciples. Human standards and measurements are now worthless compared to the riches we have in Jesus. This is the basis for our new identity: Since our creator has gifted us with priceless, eternal gifts and blessings there is no higher indicator of our value, worth or identity. We have been recreated in Jesus' image and are a part of his family.

Discuss with your group, what has more value than Jesus' approval and presence in our lives? What does this truth mean for our own self-image and usefulness?

What does my new identity in Christ mean for my happiness?

For the disciple, our happiness is now found in only one place and that is in our Lord. In fact, Jesus doesn't use the word happiness to describe our relationship, he uses the word joy. Joy is not a word I hear used much today. For the disciple, our visible joy should be one of the great indicators of our new life and hope in Jesus.

Read John 15:9-11. What should we base our joy on in life? How do our accomplishments, possessions, experiences and material things compare to the eternal joy of knowing the risen Savior? How much joy does Jesus say he gives his disciples?



Your New **IDENTITY** in Christ

*And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.
2 Corinthians 3:18*

Part Two: Conformed to His Image **LESSON 6**

What does it mean to be conformed to his image?

Our relationship with Jesus, our Creator, now defines who we are completely. Since we are now bound with him, he shares his holiness with us. Literally, we become his possession. This is the greatest news we could ever receive. The Creator has invited us into his family for all eternity.

Please read Ephesians 5:29-32. What do these verses say about the oneness we experience with our Lord? How does verse 32 characterize our relationship with Jesus as his disciple? Is Jesus near to us or far from us in this life?

That oneness, our spiritual marriage, determines our standing and image before Jesus. In other words, he sought us out so that we could become like him.

Read Romans 8:29 and notice that we are predestined to become like him. Once we have become his disciples, how does Jesus now view each of us? Are we saints or sinners? Holy or unholy? Saved or lost?

What qualities does Jesus give us to make us in his image?

Remarkably, by giving us the Holy Spirit, Jesus is actually sharing part of his holy nature with us. Read 2 Peter 1:3-4 and notice Peter mentions our access to Jesus' divine qualities.

What does this say about Jesus' generosity and his intent for us to become like him in every respect? What does his gift of these qualities demonstrate regarding his desire for his disciples to be like him in every way?

Since we are now like Jesus in his image, what qualities should the world see in us? How should this affect the world around us? Read Galatians 5:22-23. What does the Holy Spirit produce constantly in each of us that demonstrates our new image?

Read Ephesians 2:18 and discuss the access we have to our Lord, now that he has shared his qualities with us. How should we take advantage of this access to our Creator?

Given the direct access we have to Jesus and the gifts he has given us, how should we personally be utilizing his gifts to help grow the kingdom?

What is the biggest challenge to being made in Jesus' image?

First, we disciples must understand that our position as eternally saved believers never changes. Jesus' love is permanent and everlasting. We still live in a fallen world with our fleshly nature that has the ability to sin and be distracted by worldly desires. But, with the power of the Holy Spirit in us, those things are now a choice. Prior to faith in Christ, sin was not a choice and we lived by its desires.

Being conformed to Jesus' image means we have responsibilities in this life that come with our new identity. Our primary responsibility will be to place our highest affection and desire in our Lord alone.

Discuss Colossians 3:1-4 and its requirements and blessings for the disciple. When we are in harmony with this teaching, will we avoid sin and live in his image? Did Jesus follow this teaching?

What is the ultimate hope we have to conform to his image?

One day, this earthly battle with sin and our fleshly desires will be over. When we enter his holy presence in Paradise, we will reach our highest state of being: we will see Jesus personally and we will be like him forever.

Read and discuss the hope found in 1 John 3:1-3.

The old life is
gone; a new life
has begun!
2 Corinthians 5:17b

Scriptural Summary of Our New, **GLORIOUS IDENTITY** in Christ

Old Identity	Transformed Identity	Scripture
Spiritually dead & eternally separated from God	Spiritually born again to spend eternity with God	<i>Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. ⁷ So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.'</i> John 3:5-7
Guilty of sin and condemned to eternal death	Complete forgiveness of all sins and welcome in Heaven	<i>So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. ² And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.</i> Romans 8:1-2
No relationship with Jesus	Eternal relationship with the Holy Spirit of Jesus living in us	<i>And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago.</i> Ephesians 1:13
Isolated from God	Intimacy with Jesus through spiritual marriage	<i>And we are members of his body. ³¹ As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one."³² This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one.</i> Ephesians 5:30-32
Forgotten Pagan Sinner Alone	Chosen by God Priest Holy God's possession	<i>But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.</i> 1 Peter 2:9
Deceived	Knowing truth through Jesus alone	<i>Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.</i> John 14:6

Old Identity	Transformed Identity	Scripture
Chasing pleasure	Having joy	<i>When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!</i> John 15:10-11
Unloved	Fully loved	<i>For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.</i> John 3:16
Selfish	Servant	<i>Anyone who wants to serve me must follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And the Father will honor anyone who serves me.</i> John 12:26
Pointless life	Purpose in life	<i>For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.</i> Ephesians 2:10
Focus on the temporary	Focus on the eternal	<i>Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. ² Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. ³ For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God.</i> Colossians 3:1-3
Promoting self	Proclaiming Jesus	<i>And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. ¹⁹ For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. ²⁰ So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"</i> 2 Corinthians 5:18-20
Self-indulgent	Producing eternal fruit for others to enjoy	<i>But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!</i> Galatians 5:22-23



Your New **IDENTITY** in Christ

*He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed.
1 Peter 2:24*

Part Three: Overcoming Sin **LESSON 7**

What does it mean to sin?

When the concept of sin was originally taught by God to people, he used everyday symbolism they would understand to convey its meaning. Hunting for food was common with bow and arrow, so he used the term sin to literally mean “to miss the mark.” To a holy God, to miss the mark means disobedience of his standards and his laws. Since we all are born with a sin nature, we naturally fall short of his standards and permanently miss the mark.

The result of our sin is eternal separation from Jesus in Hell. Only through the saving work of Jesus on the cross is the punishment for our sins paid and the gift of new life given through his resurrection.

What was the Apostle Paul’s sin struggle?

I thought it would be helpful to study one of the greatest Christians who ever lived, the Apostle Paul. He met the Lord Jesus personally. He was inspired by God to write a massive part of our New Testament. And he evangelized an entire continent with the Gospel of Jesus during his lifetime. But Paul was as human as we are, and he had the same questions about sin as we do.

Read Romans 7:21-25. Do you all identify with Paul’s sin struggle? What did Paul call his struggle with sin in verse 23? Do you agree that choosing to sin is a very poor choice, now that you know the love of Jesus?

Paul characterizes sin as a war, which means we have an enemy trying to defeat us.

Read John 10:10. What is the goal of our enemy, the devil? What is the goal of Jesus for those victorious over sin?

Do we have any power over sin?

Paul teaches in the next chapter of Romans that we do have power from Jesus to overcome sin. Read Romans 8:9-10. With the Holy Spirit living in us, how does that affect our desire to sin? Have someone give testimony of the change in their desires before coming to faith and after receiving new life in Christ..

How can my relationship with Jesus give me victory over sin?

Before Paul came to faith in Christ, he hated Christians and was having them arrested, punished and killed.

Read the story of Paul's introduction to the risen Lord in Acts 9:1-4. Even though people were dying because of Paul, who did Jesus say Paul was sinning against? What does this say about the identity of Jesus with his disciples? What does this say about the damage we do to our identity and relationship with our Lord when we sin?

*But if through
the **power of
the Spirit** you put
to death the deeds
of your sinful nature,
you will live.
Romans 8:13*

The astounding key to our faith is that our Lord left heaven to personally save us. He endured pain and suffering on our behalf that we will never experience. He has given us eternal life and citizenship in heaven as a free gift of his love.

Why would we personally sin against Jesus who showed us this love?

*The church is the invisible made visible.
- Charles Colson*

Should I Belong to a Local CHURCH?

LESSON 8



What is the church?

One of my favorite definitions of the church is this: those called out of the world by God to himself into community. As we've learned, he has gifted us heavenly access, a divine nature and an eternal inheritance we can't imagine. The church is God's instrument through which he executes his will. Sometimes we have a tendency to think of church as just a Sunday morning gathering. But in actuality, the church is a 24/7 enterprise charged with taking the gospel to the world and creating more disciples. And we are led by the risen Lord Jesus who is the supreme authority in the universe.

Read Hebrews 10:24-25 and discuss what the church is doing as they meet together. What is the focus in this verse: what we can get out of the church (consumer mentality), or what we can put into the church (servant mentality)? What can we do to serve and encourage other disciples?

Read Acts 2:46-47. Notice where church activities took place. Can this model of worship and fellowship still work today?

Read Matthew 5:13-16. How should we, the church, prove ourselves to the world?

What does it mean to equip the saints?

This idea comes from Ephesians 4, where the Apostle Paul encourages the church to become mature, active disciples of the faith. The church is not just a place to cheer on Jesus. The church is a locker room where we receive preparation to take the field of play.

Read Ephesians 4:11-13 and discuss the roles of church leaders and disciples. What is the ultimate goal Jesus has for his disciples in verse 13? How are you progressing toward that goal?

Notice in Ephesians 2:10 that Jesus has prepared something important for each of us to do. What does this say about God's purposes working in and through us?

How will Outreach Community Church carry out the work of the church?

Here at OCC, we have five purposes that align with Jesus' plan for his church.

The first is **Magnify**. We fulfill this by following Luke 10:27. Please read and discuss how worshipping God regularly enhances our love for him and our neighbor. Are you privately worshipping Jesus every day and publicly worshipping him by gathering with disciples at least weekly?

The second is **Membership**. Jesus is looking for committed disciples not attenders. We accomplish this through dedicated focus to the activities of his church. Are you a consistent contributor to the growth and activities of the church as a family member?

The third is **Maturity**. As we read in Ephesians 4:11-13, Jesus expects us to grow in our maturity and fruitfulness as disciples. Are you totally dedicated to growing into a mature disciple?

Next is **Ministry**. Each of us has been given a purpose (Ephesians 2:10) and spiritual gifts that we need to exercise on behalf of the kingdom. Read and discuss 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. What spiritual gifts have you been given? How can you discover your gifts? Where can you apply those gifts to help make disciples?

Finally is **Mission**. Read Acts 1:8 and Matthew 28:18-20. What is Jesus highest purpose for the church? How are you as an active member of his church fulfilling this command?

*"Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."
John 13:35*

What is **DISCIPLESHIP?** Part One



LESSON 9

What exactly is a true disciple of Jesus?

Kyle Idleman wrote a fantastic book called *Not a Fan³*, in which he describes the state of discipleship in the church today. He has two basic categories of disciples: fans of Jesus and totally committed followers of Jesus. Of course, the fans are up in the stands, cheering on Jesus. They love Jesus, but they never get on the playing field and exercise their faith. Kyle describes this very low level of commitment as an epidemic in the church today. It's never what Jesus asks of his disciples.

So, what defines a totally committed follower of Jesus? Luke 9:23 is a great place to start, so please read it out loud. To give up our own ways and carry our cross is Jesus' outstanding visual of us dying to our old life. In the old life, it was our way or the highway and you and I were in total control. We were forging our way in this world, defining our own success and chasing our dreams.

How would you contrast your old life against your new life in Jesus?

Are you focused on the eternal or the temporary?

Then, something amazing happens. Jesus steps into our life and opens a new world to us. What we learn is that the world we were focused on was temporary. Jesus has offered us something permanent, something holy. He asks us to make sure we are focused on the eternal every day. And he asks us to be his representatives and witnesses to help rescue those trapped in the old world.

Discuss your level of commitment as a disciple among the group. Have you been just a fan of Jesus? What simple steps can you take to begin to move from a fan to follower? Think about the basics of our faith that would honor Jesus: daily prayer, feeding on his word, a personal ministry, total commitment to the church, readily forgiving others, etc. These are all just indicators of our willingness to lovingly sacrifice our will for our Lord. What does your commitment to the basics of the faith say about your love for Jesus? What is holding you back in certain areas?

What does Jesus want in his disciples?

Notice the last part of Luke 9:23 where Jesus says, “follow me.” He doesn’t say believe in me or acknowledge me, he wants us to go further. To follow him is bold, unashamed sacrifice of our total selves for his purposes.

What commitment can you make publicly to begin walking on the path of following Jesus completely?

I think it’s important to remember that Jesus already knows us completely.

Read and discuss Psalm 139:1-6. What does Jesus not know about us? Does this make the act of surrender to an all-knowing God easier?

Last, we should always remember that Jesus showed us what surrender looks like.

Read Romans 5:8 and discuss what Jesus did to bring us into this relationship. How should we respond to his act of surrender?

³ Kyle Idleman, *Not A Fan: Becoming A Completely Committed Follower of Jesus*, Zondervan, 2016

It is often asked, "How could the early disciples turn the world upside down when millions of Christians can't even keep it right side up today?" The answer is they didn't conform their faith to match the world. They had the truth, and they refused to water it down. They had a faith that would not compromise.
- Billy Graham

What is **DISCIPLESHIP?** Part Two



LESSON 10

What is Jesus' purpose for our discipleship?

I mentioned in the introduction to this guide that its purpose was not to help us learn more about Jesus, but to help us become like him. It's really a radical thought that our Lord would even allow us to do that, much less give us the ability to achieve his likeness. So, why is our discipleship and our conforming to his image so vital?

Read John 15:9-11. How do we stay in Jesus' love? Is there anything more desirable than the total love of our Lord? Whose joy will we receive when we are obedient? How much joy will we receive?

How do we mature as a disciple every day?

If you're married, how do you build a great relationship? Most of us would say that spending quality time with our spouse every day is critical. The same is true of our relationship with Jesus. In his case, I would say that we need to spend time personally worshipping him every day. Fortunately, Jesus wrote us an instruction manual for worshipping him, which is the bible.

Read the following scriptures: Psalm 1:1-3; Colossians 3:16; James 1:21-22. What do these verses teach us about the importance of knowing God's word?

Next, a committed disciple also spends quality time in prayer every day. In Lesson 12, I cover this subject of prayer in depth. Essentially, if you want to meet with your creator, prayer is your opportunity every day to meet with Jesus and worship him.

Read Matthew 6:5-8. What does God promise when we earnestly seek him in prayer? Matthew mentions that our prayers should not be just empty repetition of words. What should prayer be to be effective?

Read the following and discuss the vital nature of connecting with Jesus in prayer: Philippians 4:6-7; 1 John 5:14; Mark 11:22-25; Matthew 6:6-8.

And last, a committed disciple is an active participant in their local church, not just an attender.

Read Ephesians 4:12-13 and Ephesians 2:10 and discuss God's will for his disciples. Are you actively seeking to apply God's purpose for your life through maturing as a disciple?

*And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet.
John 13:14-15*

How does a disciple serve others to honor Jesus?

In John chapter 13:3-17, Jesus demonstrated what it meant to serve others. He performed the task of washing his disciple's feet, which was far below his stature as a Rabbi. And not only that, but this was the Lord himself washing feet. The lesson is powerful. Doing great things many times involves serving in ways that are far below our stature.

Read the account of Jesus performing this menial task. What can Jesus' disciples learn from his example?

Read Matthew 25:34-40. Who is Jesus asking us to serve on a regular basis? In actuality, who are we really serving?

How does a disciple help grow the Kingdom?

Of all the ways God could let people know about his kingdom, he chose an interesting method. He chose us to be his spokespeople. Why would he do this? Have you ever been part of the birth of a child as a parent or relative? There's no greater joy than seeing a new life being born. Jesus wants us to share in this joy of new spiritual birth and seeing those disciples grow up in the faith.

Read Jesus' commands regarding being his spokesperson in the following: Acts 1:8, 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Matthew 28:18-20. Is any disciple excluded from these commands? Acts 1:8 mentions we are given spiritual power for this mission and Matthew 28:18 tells us Jesus fully authorizes us to represent him. Can anything stop us from accomplishing his mission?



FELLOWSHIP with Jesus

*And now we live in fellowship with the true God because we live in fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the only true God, and he is eternal life.
1 John 5:20*

LESSON 11

Why is fellowship with Jesus so vital?

According to a recent research article, loneliness is at epidemic levels in our society. This article states “The crisis of loneliness poses as grave a threat to public health as obesity or substance abuse. It cuts across generations and reaches around the world...millions of people live with sparse human contact and research tells us that lonely people are more likely to become ill, experience cognitive decline, and die early.”⁴

God says the same thing to us in Genesis 2:18. He said it was not good for us to be alone, so he created us for intimate relationships here on Earth. In that scenario, he created man and woman for each other to enjoy total intimacy, companionship and support. But he had something deeper in mind for us also: intimacy with himself.

Can humans really have intimacy with our Lord?

One of the best testimonies of intimacy with Jesus comes from the Apostle John. He even described himself as “the disciple that Jesus loved.” But this was not boasting on his part, it was a testimony of what we too can experience. John is excited to tell us this remarkable truth: he personally experienced the love of Jesus and we, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, can experience the same level of intimacy.

Read 1 John 1:3-4. The Greek word for fellowship here is koinonia. It’s used to describe deep, personal relationships, such as marriage. What is the result of our fellowship with Jesus in verse 4? How can we have true spiritual intimacy with Jesus?

Read James 4:8 and discuss what you can do to develop your relationship with Jesus.

Where is intimacy with Jesus described in the bible?

Let’s spend some time breaking down Ephesians 5:21-32 to understand intimacy with Jesus.

First, Read Ephesians 5:24. Why should the church (his disciples) submit to Jesus in total reverence? Is intimacy possible without surrender to our Lord?

Read verse 25. Why did Jesus give up his life for us, the church? What was the result of his sacrifice for the church in verse 26? How can we show gratitude for his sacrifice and gift of eternal life?

Read verse 27. Think about your personal status before a Holy God in light of his sacrifice. What has Jesus re-created us to be before him? Why did he do this?

Read verse 32. What is the resulting relationship with Jesus and each of us in the church? Why does Paul use the marriage relationship to describe our intimacy with Jesus?

⁴*AspenIdeas.org, "The Epidemic of Loneliness", 2017*



You Have Direct **ACCESS** to God

“True prayer is neither a mere mental exercise nor a vocal performance. It is far deeper than that. It is a spiritual experience with the creator of Heaven and Earth.”
- Charles Spurgeon

LESSON 12

Does God really welcome our prayers?

I often wonder, how does God get everything done? He must be super busy running the universe and caring for eight billion people here on the planet. Does he have time to listen to me, one small voice on this huge Earth? Does he even want to listen to you and me?

Read Hebrews 4:16; Matthew 6:5-13; Matthew 7:7-11. Would you say we have direct access to Jesus through prayer? Summarize God’s attitude toward hearing and answering our prayers.

How does Jesus teach us to pray?

In Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus teaches all of his disciples a basic model for prayer. This is not the only prayer we should pray, but Jesus does tell us a great deal about the priorities of our prayers. The first thing we learn is with whom we are speaking, where our prayers are heard and the essential character of the one hearing our prayers.

Read Matthew 6:9. Jesus says we are speaking to the Creator, on his throne in heaven. In prayer, we are literally entering the holiest place in the universe. In the past, prior to Jesus the Messiah, God dwelt in the temple in Jerusalem and only one man, the High Priest could approach God in the Holy of Holies in the temple. And, that access was only allowed once a year on what was called the Day of Atonement. Read Hebrews 4:14 and notice it is saying that the resurrected Jesus is now our High Priest.

In Matthew 6:9 it says God is holy (hallowed). His essence and nature are far different from us finite humans. He is the infinite, eternal God who is above what we can imagine in purity and integrity.

Jesus, in Matthew 6:9, has set the stage for how we are to approach God in prayer. How should this affect our demeanor when going to Him in prayer?

What is God’s will for my life?

This is a very common question that I hear frequently. We say something like, “if only God would show me what he wants me to do specifically I would do it.” I must confess I’ve prayed this prayer many times. Fortunately, Jesus tells us his plans and his will in Matthew 6:10. But often we miss Jesus’ intent here, maybe because of its simplicity.

When Jesus teaches us to pray “your kingdom come” what is he saying about his highest priority? To ask it another way, which kingdom is temporary and which kingdom is eternal? On which should we focus our time, treasure and talent? How does Matthew 6:33 confirm this plan?

Jesus also teaches us to ask that his will be done here on Earth, as it is in heaven. Who is given the spiritual power to carry out Jesus’ will here on Earth? How will the news of his eternal kingdom become known?

Why should we ask for just one day’s provision?

If it were up to me, I’d prefer to have a huge supply of just about everything, just in case. This is especially true after the Covid-19 epidemic. Why do we think this way?

Read John 6:35 and Matthew 6:11. According to John 6:35, what is the most important thing we need every day? What is Jesus really telling us in Matthew 6:11? How often should we be seeking out Jesus for his provision for our spiritual and physical needs? Asked another way, how often does Jesus want to have a presence in our lives as our provider of everything? What is our human tendency regarding storing up for our needs and security?

What debt does sin create for us?

When we go before Jesus in prayer, we must seek his forgiveness. Fortunately, Jesus is a just God. That means he’s already paid the penalty for your and my sins. He will not require us to pay it again through punishment, as that would be unjust. However, we must humble ourselves and admit our sins to him and honestly seek his forgiveness.

Read Matthew 6:12 and 1 John 1:9 and discuss the cleansing that is always available to us? Once truly confessing and repenting of our sins, should we be carrying around guilt?

Also, in Matthew 6:12 notice something critical. Jesus assumes that we have forgiven anyone that has sinned against us before we ask him for forgiveness.

Read Hebrews 10:30 and Matthew 6:15. How important is it that disciples show the love of Jesus and forgive others? How does this testify to Jesus’ love in us when we do this?

*Give us
today our
daily
bread.*

Matthew 6:11

What kind of protection does Jesus offer us from evil?

Matthew 6:13 and 1 Corinthians 10:13 are good companions in that they teach God's protection.

What is God doing to protect us from all kinds of evil? What are we doing to remove any temptation from our lives so we do not damage our relationship with Jesus?

How persistent should we be in our prayers?

When Luke recorded Jesus' teaching of this prayer (known as the Lord's prayer), he added a wonderful encouragement.

Read Luke 11:5-13. Notice in Luke 11:8 we are to have "shameless persistence" in our prayers. What does this mean regarding our consistent attitude toward prayer?

Notice the escalation of actions in Luke 11:9. What does this say about our prayers and our actions?

*I don't want the world to define God for me.
I want the Holy Spirit to reveal God to me.
- Aiden Wilson Tozer*

The Gift of the **HOLY SPIRIT** LESSON 13



What exactly is the gift of the Holy Spirit?

The person and work of Holy Spirit is undertaught in most churches, in my humble opinion. Therefore, disciples have a lot of misconceptions about the Spirit that has been given to them.

But Jesus teaches us extensively that he himself is the giver of his Spirit.

Read John 14:16-17. Does Jesus discriminate among disciples on who receives the Holy Spirit? Why does Jesus characterize the Spirit as our Advocate? What is the purpose of the Advocate?

John 14:17 tells us the Spirit is Truth. Does this help explain how disciples can discern the Truth of God, while the world cannot? Also, notice the Spirit is in us, literally taking up residence. Discuss the fact that you have the presence of Jesus himself in Spirit living in you. How does this change your viewpoint of God?

Why has Jesus given us his Holy Spirit?

John 14:17 also tells us that we will know who Jesus is because he lives within us. In other words, Jesus takes up residence in us so that we can become more like him in every way.

Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 3:17-18. What confidence should this give us as a believer that Jesus is with us and working on us to transform us into his image?

In Acts Chapter 4, the church was being persecuted for speaking and teaching about the recent resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Read Acts 4:29-31 and notice in this prayer that the church asked for the ability to speak the word with great boldness. How did God enable them to do that?

Also, read 1 Peter 2:9. This is one of the great declarations in the bible regarding our new identity in Christ. What specifically does the confidence of this new identity enable all his disciples to do? Finally, Read Acts 1:8. What does the power of the Holy Spirit enable us to do?

What does it mean to live by the Spirit?

The bible tells us that our old, sinful self was crucified with Christ. Now, sin does not control our lives, but Jesus does through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

What does Galatians 5:16-18 tell us about the power of the Spirit working in us to keep us from sin? If we are led by the Spirit, what must we do to our fleshly desires?

In contrast to disciples who walk in the Spirit, what is the fruit of those that do not live by the Spirit? Read Galatians 5:19-21. What is their eternal fate?

Galatians 5:22-25 tells of a much different type of life than those who live by the flesh. Have someone give an account of the transformation they have experienced from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in their life. How are you progressing toward producing this type of fruit consistently in your life?

*Peter replied,
“Repent and be
baptized, every one
of you, in the name
of Jesus Christ for
the forgiveness
of your sins.
And you will receive
the gift of the
Holy Spirit.
Acts 2:38*



WALKING with the Spirit, Not the Flesh

The Holy Spirit's main ministry is not to give thrills but to create in us Christlike character.
- J. I. Packer

LESSON 14

What does it mean to walk with the Spirit?

All disciples have been given the priceless gift of the Holy Spirit. Now, how do we honor Jesus with this gift?

The bible uses the metaphor of walking for a person's way of life, their beliefs, attitudes, desires and actions. Jesus' desire is that we live in such a way that we bring witness and honor to him. Psalm 119:3 says this: "They do not compromise with evil, and they walk only in his paths."

In the New Testament, we find this example of walking with God in Romans 6:4: "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

How do we honor this command to walk in the Spirit?

The focus of the disciple should be on loving Jesus with all our heart. Of course, we base this on Luke 10:27 which instructs us make Jesus our primary love. To walk with the Spirit means loving Jesus such that we reorient our thinking in order to live for him.

Read Romans 8:5-8. What does this say about the necessity of walking by the Spirit? What is the outcome of walking by the Spirit? What is the outcome of walking by the flesh?

Read Galatians 5:24-25. What do you think it means when it says that we are to "crucify" the flesh with "its passions and desires." Why is such strong language used to emphasize the requirement to "keep in step with the Spirit?"

What should be the outcome of walking by the Spirit?

Living by the Spirit is a matter of prioritizing our love for Jesus over everything else. Discuss how our putting your earthly priorities above Jesus' spiritual priorities will negatively affect your walk with him.

Read Galatians 5:22-23. Do you consistently see the fruit of walking by the Spirit in your life? If not, what does this tell you about your focus?



FAITH vs. Fear

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.
Hebrews 11:6

LESSON 15

How can fear make us stronger?

There's no question our world today is less stable than in previous times. Pandemics, wars, mass shootings, political corruption and much more has us all concerned and sometimes fearful. During the Covid-19 pandemic, I personally knew many families that would not go out in public for months because they had children at home and were afraid of them becoming infected. My own parents even cancelled major holiday celebrations like Thanksgiving and Christmas, all out of fear of the pandemic.

Fear can paralyze us, or it can help us. An article in Psychology Today mentions how we are hard-wired to feel fear. And, how we interpret those feelings makes all the difference. Our task is to face our fears and interpret them in ways that develop us and make us stronger.⁵ So how do we take our fears and use them to make us stronger?

What fear we must resolve first?

Do you believe there is life after death? We all know death is coming, but what happens immediately after you die? If you're unsure of the answer and fearful of what happens, then use that fear to motivate you to find the answer. And there's only one reliable source to get the answer to this question.

Read John 11:25. When Jesus uses the "I am" statement, what is he saying about his nature? Who is promised resurrection and eternal life in this powerful statement?

When Jesus was crucified, two criminals were also crucified with him. Read Luke 23:40-43. For the dying man who sought Jesus, when would he enter heaven? What does this mean for our own death as a disciple?

Since Jesus is in my life, why do I still have fears?

Being a disciple of Jesus means that decisive, transformational acts have happened in our life. We have been justified before God (found not guilty) and received a full pardon from our sins (read Romans 5:1). Now we are full members of his family and will inherit his eternal kingdom (read Colossians 1:12-13). We have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit

to guide us at all times (1 Corinthians 3:16). But we are not yet perfected as we will be in heaven (read 1 John 3:2).

In this life we all experience the tension of being a loving disciple of Jesus, but we live in a fallen, sinful world full of challenges. This is all God's design. His goal for each of us is to mature and grow stronger in our faith by developing a deep relationship in which we glorify him and him alone. Fear, anxiety and worry do exist. But the great news is they can motivate us to strengthen our relationship with our Lord so our faith reaches new heights of confidence and joy.

Read the story of Jesus and his twelve disciples in a boat, crossing the Sea of Galilee in Luke 8:22-25. In his sovereign will Jesus allowed these dangerous conditions to happen. What was the ultimate lesson Jesus was teaching them? What power did Jesus demonstrate that we can be confident in? Should our faith in Jesus alone give us total confidence over our fears?

Read Matthew 21:21-22. What is Jesus teaching each of us about the power of faith in him? How does the wisdom and will of Jesus effect this teaching?

What are God's promises regarding the power to overcome our fears?

Read Philippians 4:6-7. Notice God does not want us to be fearful or anxious, even though we know overcoming fear is difficult and complex. But based on this instruction, what is the only means to achieve peace of mind? Can we solve our fears on our own?

Read 1 Peter 5:6-7. What does Peter tell us we must first do before God to relieve our fears? What is Peter telling us about the motivation of God to overcome our fears? Does God possess the power and wisdom to truly overcome all our fears?

*I sought the LORD,
and he answered
me; he delivered
me from all my fears.
Psalm 34:4*

How does the bible define faith?

Read Hebrews 11:6. How do we please God? What will be the result of our sincere faith?

Read Romans 1:17. What does Jesus ask us to base our entire relationship on? If Jesus values faith this highly, how certain is he as the object of our faith?

Read James 2:17. With the conviction of the Holy Spirit in our hearts that Jesus is Lord, what should that motivate us to do? Can we confess faith in the Truth of Jesus without taking consistent action in our lives?

⁵Elizabeth Segal, PhD., "Conquering Fear", Psychologytoday.com, Dec. 26, 2020

Trials & **TEMPTATIONS**

She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness.

Genesis 3:6-7



LESSON 16

What's the difference between trials and temptations?

Almost every Christian I know has endured serious, life changing trials. After a period of reflection, they all say the same thing: God showed up and changed me in a big way. And, without that trial, they would not have the faith they have today in the goodness of God. Through seeing God work so amazingly in their lives, their joy was overflowing – they had experienced the love of Jesus personally and they had faith in abundance.

The bible is clear that both temptations and trials are a fact of life. For a good definition of trials, read James 1:2-3.

What does James say is being tested through our trials in life? What will be the results of enduring and growing through our trials? Why will this be such a source of joy?

In this same chapter of James, he defines temptation. Read James 1:13-15. What is the source of our temptations? If we give in to temptation, what will be the result?

How can we defend against temptation?

James tells us that temptation starts in our hearts. So the question is, are our hearts fully surrendered to Jesus? Or are we continuing in some sinful pattern that is contrary to his will? Temptation is an indicator of the surrendered nature of our heart. In other words, are our hearts in the right place?

What areas of weakness and temptation are you dealing with right now? Can you confess that weakness to the Lord, and ask him to give you a desire for him so strong and compelling that you wouldn't think of offending him?

The consequences of sin are devastating, as we all know. But the worst consequence is the damage to our relationship with our Lord, because Jesus takes our sin personally. When Saul was arresting and persecuting Christians, what did Jesus say to him?

Read Acts 9:4-5. What does Jesus' statement say about the effect of our sins?

Read Matthew 5:27-30. Why is Jesus using such dramatic language to warn us about sin? Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. What does this promise say about God's oversight of his children? Is there any excuse for sin whatsoever?

What is Jesus' purpose in trials of our faith?

The bible is clear that discipleship is a process of maturing in our faith. And our personal experiences with the risen Lord Jesus will move us from head knowledge "about" Jesus to a personal, trusting relationship with our Creator who loves us.

Some disciples have asked me, "is God punishing me?" If you're experiencing a trial and you haven't committed a sin, then God is working to bring you closer to him and demonstrate his power in your life. If you're experiencing the consequences of sin, then he wants you to confess and repent from that sin so he may forgive you.

Ask yourself what Jesus is trying to teach you. Are you humbled before him every day in prayer? Have you surrendered your will to him and are you seeking his guidance every day?

Read 1 Peter 1:6-7. How highly does Jesus value our complete faith in him? What does our faith say about the genuineness of our discipleship?



God's Plan for **FINANCIAL** Management

LESSON 17

*Money can buy medicine, but not health.
Money can buy a house, but not a home.
Money can buy companionship, but not friends.
Money can buy entertainment, but not happiness.
Money can buy food, but not an appetite.
Money can buy a bed, but not sleep.
Money can buy a crucifix, but not a Savior.
Money can buy the good life, but not eternal life.
-Chuck Swindoll*

Is there anything God doesn't own?

In Exodus 19:5, God says, "all the earth belongs to me." Let's think about that concept for a minute, that God really does own everything. For example, what will we take with us when we die? Absolutely nothing. So why the race to accumulate so much before we leave this earth? Are we approaching the entire subject of money and earning it all wrong?

Read Hebrews 13:5 and Matthew 6:31-33. As Jesus disciples, why should we be content with what we have on this earth? What is our future inheritance? Do thoughts of your daily needs cause you to worry?

In Matthew 6:33, what is Jesus saying about his provision for those that seek him first? Do you believe this such that you have no fear of your needs being supplied?

What is stewardship?

Since we're here on earth only a short time and we can take nothing with us, I suggest we need a radical new approach to dealing with money that will free us from worry, the need to accumulate and the constant need for pleasure and convenience.

The concept God teaches is that of stewardship. As a steward, you essentially are a manager, not an owner. If you were to watch my house for the weekend, you would be the steward over the house, but not the owner. God applies this stewardship concept to everything, including our lives.

Read Matthew 25:14-30. In Jesus' teaching on stewardship, what is the moral of the story in verse 29? When we are good stewards of God's possessions, what more will he give us (see verses 21 and 23)? Who provided and owned the money in this story? What is Jesus teaching us about ownership, stewardship and our responsibilities?

Who supplies everything we need?

Since money is tangible, it's easy to place our hope in it sometimes. But Jesus teaches that he is clearly the supply of everything we need. Read Matthew 7:8-11. When we seek Jesus earnestly, what does he promise us if we ask him for everything we need?

Read Psalm 34:10. What does this tell us about those that continually humble themselves before God as their provider?

As disciples, are we content with what God has given us?

Read Philippians 4:11-13. Why did Paul say he had no needs? If we adjusted our thinking to be content in every situation, how would that change our lives? Would we pursue the accumulation of material things and success so vigorously?

*For the love of
money is a root
of all kinds of evil.
1 Timothy 6:10*

Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10. Paul tells us in these verses that godliness, with contentment, is great wealth. What is he saying about the level of trust we should have in our relationship with Jesus? If we don't love Jesus as our source of everything, what source will we love? Who are we worshipping when we do that?

*"If we really want to love,
we must learn how to forgive."
- Mother Teresa*

How to **FORGIVE** LESSON 18



Am I really forgiven of all my sins?

A question that comes up frequently from new disciples is this: am I really forgiven of ALL my sins? The short, but correct answer is a resounding yes! Please read Colossians 1:21-22. There are three blessings that allow us into Jesus' presence when we are born again, which we see in verse 22. First, we are now holy in his sight. The cleansing of the Holy Spirit in us is the proof that we are forgiven forever. Then, it says we are without blemish. Jesus sees no fault or sin in us whatsoever. Finally, we are without accusation from the great Judge, the Lord Jesus. We have been found not guilty in his court and our record has been wiped clean. We are now free to love and serve him with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength.

What does forgiveness involve?

I think it's important to understand what the word forgiveness actually means. The root of this word in Greek means the act of letting go without reservation or condition. So, forgiveness literally means "to let go." The motivation for us as disciples to forgive is the complete forgiveness we have received from our Lord. We all know that none of us is immune from either causing an offense or being offended and carrying a grudge. And we know that the root cause of this condition is sin, and we all have the ability to sin. So how is the disciple instructed to live in peace when others sin against us?

Read Matthew 6:14. Can Jesus be any clearer about his desires regarding forgiveness? When we forgive others, what are we demonstrating about our own transformed nature?

Why is forgiveness so critical to being a loving disciple?

When we don't unconditionally forgive others, there are many damaging effects to our soul. Negative emotions, resentment, bitterness, thoughts of revenge and anger are just a few. This baggage we carry around is extremely detrimental to us in many ways. But most of all, it blocks our fellowship with Jesus.

Read Hebrews 12:15. What is the grace (undeserved favor) that each of us has received from Jesus? Do you have any poisonous bitterness growing in you? Do you need to show undeserved favor, like you were shown, by forgiving someone?

Read Matthew 18:21-35. Identify the characters in Jesus' story. Who is the king? Who is the servant that owed 10,000 talents (a massive amount that can never be repaid)? Who is the other servant that owed a small amount? What is Jesus' point about us forgiving others since each of us has been forgiven a debt we could never repay?

How often should we forgive someone?

In the story above in Matthew 18:21, the Apostle Peter asks, "how often should I forgive someone who sins against me, seven times?" Jesus' answer to Peter was astounding in verse 22.

What is Jesus really saying about our attitude toward continual forgiveness? Should there be any limits to our forgiveness?

Could you forgive someone of murder?

Several years ago, here in Dallas, we had a very unfortunate incident where an off-duty police officer named Amber Guyger shot and killed a young man named Botham Jean. Ms. Guyger thought that Botham Jean had broken into her apartment. Tragically, she had walked into the wrong apartment in her building. She made a poor decision to pull her firearm and she shot and killed Botham Jean.

Ms. Guyger was tried and convicted of her crime and sentenced to ten years in prison. At the hearing to pronounce her sentence, family members were allowed to address the convicted young woman. The dead man's brother, Brandt, walked to the front of the court room and took a seat in the witness stand. Amber Guyger was just across the courtroom from him sitting quietly.

Please watch the video for this lesson to see the end of the story. And bring some Kleenex.

Godly MARRIAGE

“Staying married, therefore, is not mainly about staying in love. It is about keeping covenant. “Till death do us part” or “As long as we both shall live” is a sacred covenant promise—the same kind Jesus made with His bride, the church, when He died for her.”
-John Piper

LESSON 19



What should I expect from marriage?

My wife and I have had the opportunity to do a lot of pre-marital counseling. When we ask couples “what do you expect from your future spouse” we get a lot of different answers. If I summed up some of the more common responses, couples generally have unrealistic expectations of their spouse and marriage in general. For example, the idea of meeting the perfect soul mate that “completes” them is a frequent answer. They believe they have met the ideal person, and they have blissful expectations of the years of harmony ahead.

Gary Thomas, author of a best-selling book on godly marriage called Sacred Marriage, says this: “The problem with looking to another human to complete us is that, spiritually speaking, it’s idolatry. We are to find our fulfillment and purpose in God. ... If we expect our spouse to be ‘God’ to us, he or she will fail every day. No person can live up to such expectations.”⁶

Read Colossians 2:9-10. What does verse 9 say about the essential nature of Jesus? Verse 10 says that since we are “in Christ”, what has happened in us spiritually? Since we are made complete only in Jesus, what relationship is always primary for finding our value, purpose and source of unconditional love?

What is the foundation of a godly marriage?

Read Ephesians 5:31-32. In verse 31, Paul is quoting Genesis 2:24. God has instituted marriage from the very beginning of creation because he designed one man and one woman to be united together to become one flesh. So, at its core, marriage is designed and blessed by God. But for marriage to be successful, something must happen first that’s critical. Both husband and wife must first be married or joined with Jesus in a faith-based, permanent relationship. As a disciple of Jesus, each of you is now whole, complete and holy due to your relationship with the Lord.

Now that each person understands what spiritual marriage is, the husband and wife are now prepared to submit to each other in earthly marriage, as they already submit to Christ. Notice that verse 32 confirms the spiritual marriage of Jesus to his church. In fact, Paul says marriage is the perfect description of our relationship with Jesus.

Then, as married disciples, our earthly marriages are a testimony of our spiritual marriage with Jesus. Our earthly marriages are to be honored as holy (set apart) to give the world witness of our relationship with him. This is the essence of a godly marriage.

Why does Jesus call the church his bride?

Read Matthew 9:14-15. Jesus refers to himself as the bridegroom in this passage. Why does he do that? Read Revelation 19:7-10. Who are the Lamb and bride in this description of the joyous feast in heaven? How is this feast described?

We've discussed the New Covenant relationship Jesus has with us in chapter 4 of this guide. How is the New Covenant relationship Jesus has with us just like a marriage? What does this say about the depth of our relationship with him?

Is your marriage pointing the world toward Jesus?

Gary Thomas says this about our marriage to Jesus being primary: "God did not create marriage just to give us a pleasant means of repopulating the world and providing a steady societal institution to raise children. Further, He planted marriage among humans as yet another signpost pointing to His own eternal, spiritual existence."

Read Matthew 5:13-16. Discuss how a Christ honoring marriage can be a light to the world around you. How do our earthly marriages take on spiritual significance?

⁶Gary Thomas, *Sacred Marriage*, Zondervan Press, 2015

*"The godly walk with integrity; blessed are their children who follow them."
Proverbs 20:7*

Being Godly PARENTS LESSON 20



What should I do to prepare to be a good parent?

When you get to the end of your life, what will bless you the most about how you spent your life? Will it be success, or a great career, or a healthy net worth? As a father and grandfather, I can promise you that no earthly blessing will even compare to the value of having children and grandchildren who know and love Jesus. If you're a younger parent, or are thinking about starting a family, I want to highly encourage you to be the Christlike example they can follow. And to be this example, it will require that your personal relationship with Jesus is rock solid and authentic.

When you have the daily overflow of the Holy Spirit in your life, you will have what you need to spiritually lead them well. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Have you committed to a lifestyle of living out your faith before your family? Do you speak of the goodness of God with ease and frequency?

Read Proverbs 22:6. What is the great promise for parents in this proverb? When should we start making disciples?

What's the most important thing I can teach my children?

What I find among many parents is the constant need for their children to perform well all the time. Yes, children should learn to do their best. The challenge is the basic premise for their performance. Whether it's academics, or sports or music or anything else, the need to constantly excel is a theme.

If I had to describe it another way, it would look like this: if I DO this (fill in the blank), then I will HAVE this (fill in the blank), then I will BECOME this (fill in the blank).

How we fill in those blanks above indicates where we find our value, worth and identity. It also indicates where our security is found, which is typically in our personal performance. How would you fill in those blanks?

For the disciple of Jesus, raising future disciples, our value, worth and identity are already eternally established in Christ. Here's how the formula above aligns with biblical principles: I AM (a child of God), I HAVE (a relationship with Jesus forever), therefore I DO (the will of the Father).

If you've been studying the Walking With Jesus guide, you know that your value and identity is already established as part of Jesus' family. Your security is not in self, but in the Creator who loves you. Given this spiritual truth, how should you raise your children to live out this truth?

What is the end goal of parenting?

Jesus left us with one key command before he ascended into heaven: Go and make disciples across the whole earth.

Read Matthew 28:18-20. For a parent, where should making disciples start?

Again, one of the biggest challenges I see is this: are we raising our children to be competent professionals or devoted disciples? Do we want their lives to be a reflection of the life of their Savior that is in them?

Read Psalm 127:3-4. I love the visual of a child being like an arrow stretched in a bow held by the hands of a Godly parent. For the arrow to be effective, it needs to be sharpened to a fine point. Use the Word of God as the daily wisdom they will need to be effective. Do your children have a life built on the living Word?

*Start children
off on the way
they should go,
and even when
they are old,
they **will not**
turn from it.
Proverbs 22:6*

Next, help your children find their target, or purpose, for which they were created. Are they excited about serving the Lord Jesus in whatever they do? Are they seeking first his kingdom and his righteousness?

Last, over time they will be released into the world. Will they be the salt and the light of Jesus to a world that has forgotten God?



Do You Have a **MINISTRY?**

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
Mark 10:45

LESSON 21

Should I really have “a ministry”?

When I speak to pastors, I’ll frequently ask this question: “what’s the biggest challenge with the American church?” Almost universally, the answer I get is this: the lack of involved disciples. There are an enormous number of dedicated Christians in America. But a trend that has risen over past few decades is that Jesus’ disciples are feeling unqualified or inadequate to do much more than attend church. Consequently, the number of people not reaching spiritual maturity as disciples is alarming.

But please don’t let the word “ministry” intimidate you. What I’m referring to is simply finding a group of people you can serve consistently so that you are part of the disciple making process that Jesus requires.

In the Book of James, written by the brother of Jesus, he speaks to us extensively about a faith that is so strong, that we are motivated to consistent action. Read James 2:14-26. What consistent service can you provide to serve the Lord as an outpouring of your faith?

Should disciples who are not pastors or teachers have a “ministry”? Read Ephesians 4:11-13. Who are the leaders of the church appointed to equip for works of service? What is their purpose for being equipped?

If the church won’t step up, how will Jesus accomplish his mission?

In chapter eight of this guide, I used a quote from Chuck Colson, founder of a ministry called Prison Fellowship, to describe the church of Jesus. Chuck said that the church is “the invisible made visible.” I love this description as it perfectly describes how our invisible God works through his children to accomplish his will on earth. We are his appointed representatives to continue the mission he started.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. Paul was writing this letter to the entire church, not the pastors and teachers. To whom has Jesus given the responsibility of sharing the message of the good news?

Read Acts 1:8. What power has God given each of us in order to consistently and effectively be a witness for him?

Read Matthew 28:18-20. What authority does Jesus possess to send us out on his behalf? What activities does Jesus want us to focus on as we “make disciples?”

Can Jesus really use me?

To make disciples, it takes people fully surrendered to Jesus. You will be able to reach and relate to people that no one else can. Your unique abilities are desperately needed by Jesus so the world will know his name. I found by taking one small step at a time, I personally found where Jesus would have me serve. And he kept challenging me to grow in my service to take more responsibility.

But a key reason Jesus wants to use you and me as his witnesses is this: by obeying Jesus we will experience the full joy he planned for us as his children. Read John 15:10-11. Are you experiencing this full joy of Jesus?



How To Change the WORLD

"It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness."

– Eleanor Roosevelt

LESSON 22

How can Jesus' disciples participate in the building of his church?

In a world dominated by hateful partisan politics, biased mass media and constant messages contrary to our faith, it can be challenging to be optimistic about the future. It's easy to criticize and complain, but what will really make an eternal difference in our world?

Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5. Should we be surprised at the sad state of our world today? What does this say about Jesus' knowledge of the future? Do you think he put you and I here in this generation for a reason?

But there's one message that rises above all other messages. It's the only message in which we can trust. Jesus said, "...I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." (Matthew 16:18)

Jesus will ultimately be successful at building his church in every generation, regardless of the environment. Shouldn't we excitedly support his efforts with our committed witness?

Read Matthew 5:13-16. Why are Jesus' disciples described as "the salt" and "the light" of the world? Is there any greater influence on the world than Jesus' disciples?

Should we wait for the lost to figure out they are lost?

The sense of urgency to save the lost has never been greater. How do we do this practically? A wonderful model to follow is that of our Lord, who also had to deal with a lost and evil society. How did he do it?

Read Matthew 11:19. What reputation did Jesus have by socializing with the lost? Being called a glutton and drunkard means he did what frequently with the lost? So, are we to avoid the lost, or engage with the lost?

Read Mark 1:38-39. Did Jesus wait for people to find him by being stationary? What commands did Jesus give us about taking the message to the people? See Acts 1:8 and Matthew 28:19. How far are we to go with sharing the good news of Jesus?

What will really change the world?

I love the topic of discipleship. Because once someone realizes the power of the message of hope they carry and share it consistently, they are reaching spiritual maturity. Jesus said our joy would be full once we reach this level of discipleship. Joyful, confident disciples are literally the only agents of eternal change in the world.

Discuss in your home group different ways to serve your neighborhoods and community. What gifts and talents are in your group that those around you need? How can you serve those folks practically? Once you have begun to serve others, can you share the gospel with them to effect real change?

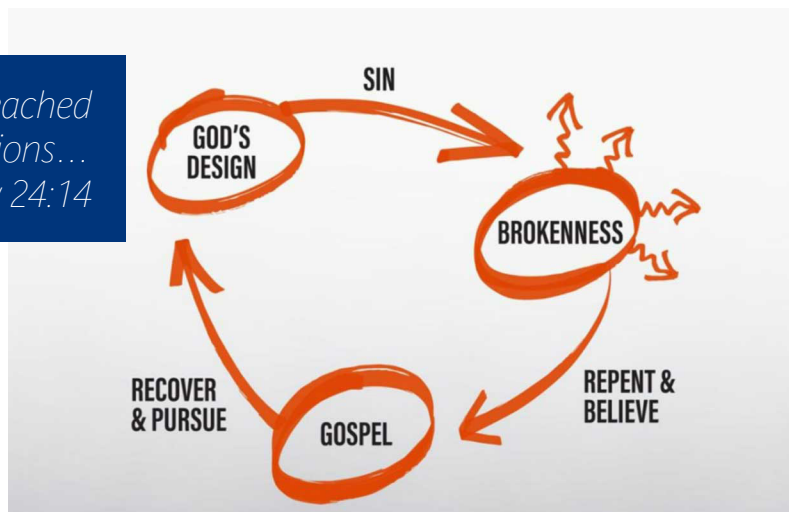
*I will build my
church and
the gates of
Hades will not
overcome it.”
Matthew 16:18*

I would challenge you to not wait on your church leaders to guide you on your community outreach and involvement. Just go. You are authorized by Jesus to serve others and share the good news, that's all the permission you need. Just look around you and ask questions:

Who's hurting? Who has a broken marriage? What group needs more volunteers? Where is the Spirit of God moving? Please just start somewhere and see where the Holy Spirit leads you.

*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations...
Matthew 24:14*

The Three Circles EVANGELISM TOOL



LESSON 23

What is the Three Circles method of sharing the gospel?

The three circles method is a very simple but effective tool for sharing the good news of Jesus. It is used and taught extensively by multiple mission groups and churches around the world, such as the North American Mission Board. The advantages are many. First, it's really just a conversation guide to visually show someone the truth of the gospel.

My personal preference is to share the gospel in a one-on-one setting, not in a group. This way, we are able to have a heartfelt spiritual conversation with someone and we can discuss their concerns and answer their questions. Anyone can have a personal conversation and be a witness for Jesus and this method helps you do just that.

Do I need a lot of training or bible knowledge to use the Three Circles?

If you have the love of Jesus in your heart, you are totally prepared to use this tool. In fact, you'll notice in the three circles conversation that we don't quote any bible verses. That's because those bible references would mean nothing to our audience, because we have to assume they do not know the bible. We also intentionally avoid any language that Christians use frequently, as we want to relate to our audience, not impress or alienate them. The Holy Spirit will actually be the one speaking to their hearts, convicting them of their sin, not us. See John 16:7-9.

We want everyone to react to the good news of Jesus like the Samaritan woman in John chapter four. Once she had the love of Jesus in her heart, she ran to her village to tell them! Did she have training, good theology or deep understanding? Nope, she just had Jesus. Honestly, we need to simplify our message and relate to everyone we can, so that by all possible means we might save some. See 1 Corinthians 9:21-23.

What's the ultimate purpose of the Three Circles conversation?

The real purpose of the three circles is to spark an authentic spiritual conversation. That's it. We're not trying to convince anyone, because the Holy Spirit will do that. We just need to share the truth with all our heart. Some people you speak with will be skeptical, or hesitant. Some will be prepared to explore Jesus more. You never really know what response you'll get, but what's key is that you follow up according to the needs of the person you're speaking with. You've made a new friend, so take every opportunity to serve them.

Follow up can take several forms. For example, do they have a bible or a bible app? Can someone else help answer their questions? Do they want to attend a small group meeting? The three circles were just the start of the process – so never give up!

How can I prepare myself to share the Three Circles?

If you're doing this study with a small group, please review the video. Then, pair up with someone you don't know and practice sharing the Three Circles. With a little repetition, you'll see how straightforward it is.

Without exaggeration, I want to remind you that you are God's spokesperson. Amazingly, he wants to involve us in his kingdom building process of making disciples. And your conversation is more than just words. Your quiet confidence that he has sent you to share the most important Truth in the universe will speak volumes. Plus, Jesus will be doing his part through the work of the Holy Spirit to prepare those hearts he has selected to understand his Truth. He won't lose a single person he has elected for salvation. See John 6:38-40.

*And this is the
will of him
who sent me,
that I shall lose
none of all
those he has
given me...
John 6:39*

We cannot free ourselves from pride and selfish ambition; a divine rescue is absolutely necessary.
- C. J. Mahaney

Selfish **AMBITION** LESSON 24



Is there anything wrong with being ambitious?

For the disciple of Jesus, being ambitious requires some deep insight. Being ambitious is the desire to do something meaningful or worthwhile. But what makes something meaningful or worthwhile? This question leads us to discover the difference between Godly ambition and selfish ambition. Godly ambition is doing God's will and fulfilling his purpose for your life. Selfish ambition is doing something to fulfill your dreams and desires apart from God. Ambition isn't wrong, but what counts is your intent. It's a heart issue at its core.

Read Philippians 2:3-4. What does conceit mean? If we're selfishly ambitious, who are we valuing more, others, or ourselves? Are we loving our neighbor as ourselves when we're selfishly ambitious?

Read James 3:13-16. When we become selfishly ambitious, who are we relying on? How does this conflict with our purpose as disciples of Jesus? What does James say is the source of selfish ambition?

Read Matthew 6:20-21. If you're naturally ambitious and goal oriented, are you more passionate for the growth of the kingdom of God, or your own kingdom? (I wish someone had asked me this question sooner.) Which ambition owns your heart?

How do we focus on Godly ambition as a disciple?

Read Galatians 5:16-17. Would you agree that selfish ambition and Godly ambition are in conflict with each other in our hearts?

Here's a very important question: what is your definition of success? Does success for you involve reaching goals constantly, achieving some measure of wealth and generally feeling self-assured that you're making it?

For the disciple of Jesus, we have a new measure of success. It's NOT the American Dream. Or feeling good about yourself. And it's rarely taught. Success starts with loving Jesus with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and loving your neighbor as yourself. Success is letting Jesus define your purpose and providing the blessings on your efforts. Jesus' success will always focus on eternal things, like building his church and his eternal kingdom.

I'll go back to my earlier question: are you as excited to let the infinite King lead you for his glory as you are achieving your own glory?

How can I compare selfish ambition to Godly ambition?

Finally, I thought the list below would be helpful to understand the contrast between selfish and Godly ambition. It comes from Pastor Carey Nieuwhof and he first makes an observation from worldly ambition perspective, and he contrasts it with a Godly ambition perspective.⁷ Here's the entire list:

1. **Your personal sense of worth goes up and down with the opportunities ahead of you.**
But, when you're motivated by God, your value is solidly found in Christ every day.
2. **Failure is terrifying.**
When you're motivated by God, failure becomes an opportunity for grace and growth.
3. **You think you're the deal.**
When you're motivated by God, you know that He's the deal.
4. **You use people to get you where you want to go.**
When you're motivated by God, you value people as you go.
5. **You take the credit.**
When you're motivated by God, you realize how much God and the people around you deserve the credit.
6. **You strive for lots of exposure.**
When you're motivated by God, you focus on depth in your walk with Jesus and let Him determine the amount of exposure he wants you to have.
7. **You are always thinking about the next thing.**
When you're motivated by God, you're always thinking about what God wants to accomplish in your life today.
8. **You're always comparing yourself to others.**
When you're motivated by God, you begin to celebrate what God is doing through others.
9. **It's hard to say no to any opportunity.**
When you're motivated by God, you can say yes to balance in your life and His priorities.
10. **The need to win is greater than the need to love.**
When you're motivated by God, the need to love is greater than the need to win.

⁷Carey Nieuwhof, "Selfish Ambition", careynieuwhof.com

The RENEWAL of Your Mind



"We are perfectly useless as Christ-exalting Christians if all we do is conform to the world around us. And the key to not wasting our lives with this kind of success and prosperity, Paul says, is being transformed."

- John Piper

LESSON 25

What is transformation?

In Romans 12:2, the word transform is the same word as metamorphosis, which is defined as a complete and total change of form, structure or substance by supernatural means. This same word in Romans 12:2 is used to describe Jesus' transformation on the mountain in Matthew 17:1-3.

In that revelation of his glory, his appearance was transformed so that his face shined as bright as the sun and his clothes became bright as light. Peter, James and John witnessed Jesus in his true heavenly essence that day. His human form was no longer recognizable. For those moments, they saw Jesus in his heavenly glory, as we will when he appears to us in his kingdom.

What is preventing us from renewing our minds?

For example, some people think all we need is more education to become enlightened people. If we had more education, people wouldn't invent elaborate scams and terrorist plots and cybercrimes..

Read Ephesians 4:21-23. What does verse 23 say must be made new? What is our motivation to have completely new thoughts and attitudes? How will Jesus help us think in completely new ways?

The problem with our minds is that we are fallen creatures, that is, corrupted by sin. The mind corrupted by sin is hostile to God. Our minds are not focused on seeing God and his purposes that are infinitely more worthy, but on our own desires.

What does Romans 12:1-2 say we must give as a living sacrifice to our Lord? Is our thinking included in that sacrifice?

Dr. Piper, who I quoted above, makes the point in his article that a disciple's alternative to sinful, immoral behavior (the behavior and customs of this world) is not simply living by a new list of moral behaviors. What Jesus offers is the complete transformation of our way of thinking by the power of the Holy Spirit that lives in us.

To do this, we first must be totally submitted, or surrendered, to Jesus. Read Romans 8:5-8. Are there any areas of your thinking where you feel in conflict with God's will? What is preventing you from surrendering to his will?

How do we see and reflect the glory of the Lord?

Read 2 Corinthians 3:18. Paul is referring to Moses in this verse who used to put a mask over his face to hide the glory of God that he reflected. This happened because he was the only person in his day with access to God. That reflection was so strong, it frightened the people of Israel, so he hid it. Paul is saying, those days of hiding are over. We are to let the glory of our new nature shine brightly in our lives because we have been completely transformed into this image.

Paul uses the same word for transformation here in Corinthians that we saw in Romans 12:2. The essence of this verse says that we, as his disciples, now can see the glory, or magnificence, of the Lord. Please understand that your metamorphosis is radical and supernatural in nature. You are not the same person! Share with your group ways in which the Lord has changed your thoughts, desires and attitudes.

*...let God
transform
you into a new
person by
changing the
way you think.
Romans 12:2*

Should seeing and knowing the glory of the Lord change our thinking completely? How does this challenge you to know the will and mind of our Lord? And because of our transformation, shouldn't we reflect him to the world according to 2 Corinthians 3:18?

Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 5:18-21. Who was given the ministry of reconciliation (restoring relationships between God and man)? Does this show Jesus' confidence that we are, in fact, transformed?

What is your highest priority?

Read Matthew 6:33. What desires, dreams or ambitions do you have that Jesus could not supply? Is anything in your life superior to knowing and following the will of Jesus, regardless of the cost? What does Jesus promise (guarantee) us if we make him our highest priority and submit our will to him?

About the **AUTHOR**

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Rob and his wife Janet reside in Frisco, Texas and have been married for over 40 years. They have two awesome children, Matt and Allison, both of whom are married. They also have three wonderful granddaughters. Rob had a wonderful career in the business world until founding Outreach Community Church.

Rob's passion is for saving the lost with the hope of the Gospel, training disciples to reach maturity, and raising up leaders who plant new churches. He holds a master's degree from Dallas Baptist University in Missions & Evangelism.

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