**RECEIVE**

Decisions that Encourage Discipleship

Choosing to intentionally grow into Christlikeness.

*“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” Hosea 4:6*

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**Unit 101 Choosing to leave the place where Jesus finds me.**

*(Luke 9:23a) “if anyone will come after me…”*

**Unit 102 Choosing to Serve Jesus where He Leads me.**

*(Luke 9:23b) “…let him deny himself…”*

**102-6 Life Groups/Disciples of Jesus**

Fellowship is an essential part of the body of Christ. But it is not always easy to be in friendship and love with some who are following Christ. Our personalities often rub each other the wrong way! But it is in working on those persons who we find difficult, that not only can we influence them toward a better life in Christ, but we find that we ourselves become more like the Master. As one wrote many years ago, “To live with saints above, O, that will be glory, but to live with saints below, now that’s a different story!!!”

**Power of Three**

**Matthew 18:18-20 *"Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. Again, I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where 2 or 3 have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."***

\*\* The Power Jesus has given to His Disciples!!!

\*\* The Strength of Jesus that is magnified in groups of three that agree!!!

\*\* The Presence that is eternal when the gathering is in His name (authority)

It should be evident in this verse that Jesus gave his disciples authority and that authority is magnified in groups of three—and even further increased as others join the group. What is necessary is that the group be of one mind as the disciples were on Pentecost. To ask in His name and be gathered in His name is to be under His authority. We dare not substitute our understanding of what should happen for God’s omniscience in what is best to happen.

For me, Jesus illustrates this at the end of the sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7. He promises that if we ask, it will be given; if we seek, we will find; if we knock, it will be opened for us. And then He continues:

**Matthew 7:9-11** ***“Or what person is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf of bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? So if you, despite being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!***

Could it be that sometimes we think we are asking for bread, when God knows that we are asking for a stone? Or that we think we are asking for a fish, but it we are really asking for what God sees is a snake? Do we dare substitute our meager ask in what we think is good, for what God knows is good, and wants to give us what He sees is good for time and eternity?

**John 15:8 *"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.***

What God is constantly doing and achieving is that we would bear fruit in our lives and that He and all those around us would see that we are His disciples. Therefore, it is about Him, and not us. Often the most glorifying thing we can do as followers of Christ is to keep on believing and asking when we do not understand.

**John 15:7 *"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.***

This preceding verse to John 15:8 sheds light on the way Jesus said for us to bear fruit. Here is my verse that I claim most often when I am praying. “Lord, you said these words, and I don’t fully understand them, but please show me now if there is in any way I am not abiding in your, or your words are not abiding in me. Let me be pleasing in your sight so that not only my prayer can be heard and answered, but that you would be glorified, and that my life would bear much fruit for you.”

Fruit is often considered the reproduction of people in the kingdom. An apple tree has sees that can grow a new tree—and so does most other fruit. But it is not wrong to also think of the fruit of the Spirit…

**Galatians 5:22-24 *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”*** These nine qualities not only glorify the Father and prove to others that we are the disciples of Jesus Christ, but also they are use to reproduce new followers for the Kingdom through our witness.

**Life Groups**

**Matthew 28:18-20 *“And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, ‘All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.  Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.’ Amen.”***

\*\* Jesus’ final words to His Disciples according to Matthew

\*\* All Power given from the Father; to the Son; to the Disciples!

\*\* Go to all nations and teach all nations **(Disciples/ vs Decisions)**

\*\* Baptize in the name of the Trinity, observe all things commanded!!!

Notice that this command was given to “them.” The plural use of this word shows clearly that this was not to be just an individual effort, but a group effort working together. Acts 13 has the church at Antioch hearing the words of the Holy Spirit that they were to set aside their leaders, Paul and Barnabas, for missionary work. They joined around them, laid hands on them, and in that sense went with them in their spirits. They no doubt prayed often for them, and probably sent financial support to help them in the ministry.

When I was lead pastor at Whittier, we had a rule that no one could go on one of our Work and Witness teams to do temporary mission work unless they were able to find ten people who would pray for them each day while they were away. Some also who could not go helped to finance the trip for those who could go but did not have the finances required to be a part of the team. In that sense, we may have had 15 people on the team, but we usually had more than 200 that were praying and in a spiritual sense going with us in the ministry.

**\*\*\*\*\*325 Commands & 52 Commands\*\*\*\*\***

I have included two pdf files that have been developed—one for what might be called the “General Commands” Christ gave us that we should teach, the other one a more exhaustive list of “Specific Commands”, many of which are combined and included in the general commands. The 52 General Commands would be a great study for a Sunday School class for a year, and the 335 Specific Commands would be a great consideration each day in your prayer life.

Because so many of us who are viewing this video, reading this material, or in the Wednesday night class are in the Church of the Nazarene, I thought it would be useful for us to carefully review our Church’s doctrine of Entire Sanctification found in the Manual of the Church.

**Church of the Nazarene Church Constitution (2017-21):** Article Ten (partial) :

“We believe that entire sanctification is that act of God, sub­sequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of en­tire devotement to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect.”

Since this discipleship series is sponsored by the Discipleship Board of the Anaheim, California, District of the Church of the Nazarene, I thought it would be useful to specifically look at the church’s definition of Entire Sanctification. When I was in Nazarene Theological Seminary, these words were cited as the “cardinal” doctrine of the church, the reason the church existed. Throughout my 50+ years of ministry in the church, these words have remained in the constitution of the church.

Notice that in this definition, there is not a statement of what we do not do, but rather what we do! We **receive** through an act of God after regeneration (being born again), a grace from God that delivers us from the “pollution” of sin; that original influence and depravity to wander from Him, and instead are brought into a state of **entire devotement to God**, a love that is made perfect through a holy obedience. It is this cleansing of self will and determination that is replaced by a holy love for God and His presence.

In essence, we are saying that we do not “clean the glass” to have a clean, empty glass to show everyone, but it is cleaned so that the Holy Spirit can live in us, and we can show the world that which lives in us, ***“…love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”***  **Galatians 5:22-24.**

Unfortunately, too often we are known for “the rules” of what we do not do, rather than pursuit of the presence of God that we are supposed to do! It is not that I am trying to speak against our church rules but I am afraid that we have failed to teach our people, even our own children, why we separate ourselves and do not do what the world encourages us to do. The fruit of the Spirit is attractive to almost all we meet, but the rules for “rules sake” is not attractive. I fear that this substitution of intent is at the heart of some of the decline of our denomination. The first and the second commandments tell us **what we are to do**: love God, and love others.

**John 14:12-14 *"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.”***

Truly, truly is a rabbi’s way of saying that every part of this that I am saying is absolutely true! We should have the faith to do what Jesus did in His earthly life. And to think of greater works could mean greater quantity or perhaps even in some way a greater quality too! In any way, the whole purpose is not for us to be the one who is glorified, and to start a ministry with our name on it calling attention to ourselves, but just to humble follow the leadership of the Spirit and give God the chance to flow through us, make a change in this world and to glorify the Son.

**Disciples of Jesus**

**Matthew 10:24-24a *“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he may become like his teacher, and the slave like his master….”***

How often have we seen Christians who needed to be reminded of these verses!

To hear some Christians talk, it is almost as if they are telling Jesus what He is to do, rather than the humble outlook of a servant doing what the Master says to do. To be a disciple means to be a learner, and as long as we are alive, at whatever achievement in the kingdom we might have, we still have so much to learn. Let’s keep our eye on the Master and what He wants to teach us. Becoming like Him is a lifetime journey. Just because it is hard and we often find ourselves lacking, does not mean that we should abandon the goal.

**John 15:1-10 *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.”***

\*\* Everything depends on being constantly attached to the source of life.

\*\* The purpose of the vine and the vinedresser is so that there is **FRUIT!!!**

\*\* Our requests should be for the glory and life of God to produce fruit.

\*\* It is clear that abiding and fruit-bearing is in keeping the commandments.

\*\* Our love for God and our love for our neighbor is the main command.

This is an expansion of seventh and eighth verse we addressed above. John 15:1 is the seventh “I AM” saying in the Gospels of John. I think we should remember the parable in Luke 13:6-9 which is probably in the minds of Jesus disciples as they hear these words…

***“And He began telling this parable: ‘A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any. And he said to the vineyard-keeper, ‘Look! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?’ But he answered and said to him, ‘Sir, leave it alone for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down.’”***

\*\* How does this parable inform our understanding of the need for fruit?

\*\* Are you aware of the Father digging around your roots and fertilizing?

\*\* How close are all of us in facing the wrath of the Father finding no fruit?

We ought to ask ourselves, how long as Jesus been digging around our vine and bringing resources to us so that we would bear fruit? What does this parable have to say about those who think all that Christ requires is a one-time commitment?

**Isaiah 50:4-5 *“The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning. He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. The Lord GOD has opened My ear; and I was not disobedient, nor did I turn back.”***

HAVE YOU INVITED THE SPIRIT OF GOD INTO YOUR LIFE?

**GO FOLLOW JESUS THESE WEEKS!!!**