**RECEIVE: Text**

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…”*

**Unit 103 Choosing to Learn from Jesus as He guides me.**

*(Luke 9:23c) “…take up his cross daily…”*

**103.2 The Mind-Set of “Cross-bearing”**

**Galatians 2:20-21** *“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”*

Very few of us can understand the personal sacrifice and struggle that it was for Paul to “die to the law” so that he could live for Christ. Just think of all that Paul had invested in becoming a rabbi and becoming a “*Hebrew of the Hebrews*” (Philippians 3:5.) His sacrifice may not seem that painful to us—but our own sacrifice in following Christ may not seem very painful to the Apostle Paul! The truth is each of us suffers at different points to follow Christ, and what is a real struggle for one person may seem easy for another.

The Galatians, and the whole Roman world, were very familiar with what a cross was. You and I have likely not ever seen a person hung on a cross and left there to die with no hope. But it was a common sight in the first century Roman world, and it was a greatly feared instrument of torture. This is the path Paul presents to us to embrace mentally as we follow Jesus. His concept of “*I die daily*” (I Corinthians 15:31) is surely the amplification of this concept. You and I as we live our daily lives are not always able to anticipate what will be require of us—even death!

**Notice the passive verb, *“have been.”***It is not that we go seeking as to how we can torture ourselves or must give up things we love—even our life itself. But the path of being a “Christ-follower” leads us into conflict with the world…and even occasionally to have to struggle with other Christians and the Church to follow Jesus. Martin Luther and John Wesley and others have had to face opposition from the world and the church, and though we do not seek it, we must follow regardless.

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Some of our opposition from others will come from what is Biblically called “Spiritual Gifts.” I Corinthians 12-14 is a major presentation of this teaching, but spiritual gifts is also found in other places throughout the Bible (Ephesians 4:11-13 and Romans 12:6-8, and others.) **I have included a file on Spiritual Gifts in this lesson with descriptions and Scriptures.** While there are many sources you may want to explore, I have used two: Spiritual Gifts Workshop developed by the Church of the Nazarene (1968), and Fuller Evangelistic Association (1981). The first source is the last time I am aware that my denomination tried to present a Biblical exegesis of this topic, and the latter source is from Fuller Seminary when John Wimber, founder of the Vineyard ministries, taught there.

The point of spiritual gifts is, in my opinion, illustrative of how God deals with each of us differently and equips us differently for the tasks He sees we need to attempt as we follow Him. The Nazarene material presents twenty gifts with reference to the Greek word in the title of the gift, and then Scriptures where it is found or referenced, and a brief explanation of the gift. All of this I have typed in normal type. I have put the Fuller material alongside the Nazarene material for comparison purposes, and it is in **bold type.** The Fuller material can be matched with the twenty Nazarene gifts, and have additional Scriptures, but have their own definition or presentation of the twenty gifts. The Fuller presentation has five additional gifts listed: Martyrdom, celibacy, Administration, Hospitality, and intercession…listing Scriptures and explanations with each of the five.

**For me, a Spiritual gift is anything God enables you to do where His power flows through you and He receives the credit or glory from the result.** It usually requires you to “deny yourself”, often doing what is not your first choice and seeing God accomplish more than you expected. I challenge you to try to remember if you can think of a time when someone said to you, “God spoke to me while you were doing \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. If you have such a memory, then let God guide you to discover what Gift He has given you to use for His Glory. The fact that it may seem like “climbing on a cross” may be further evidence for you!

**The mind-set of “Cross-bearing”** is that the goal of God’s redemption in this world is more important than my pride, my pleasure, my safety, my friends, my success, or any other consideration. God is at work redeeming the world—and that is what put Jesus on the cross. And that is what will require the things of sacrifice from each of us. I can only hope and pray that we will not shrink from the leadership of the Spirit for our lives but have the mind-set of Jesus. (Philippians 2)

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1. **The Witness of Weakness**

Human nature wants to stand up for our rights, assert our strength for what we think is right, and protect the God’s Kingdom with human means. This is not the way of the cross. This is not the path our leader, Jesus, walked. He understood that His goal could not be reached by human methods, but by divine intervention. And that could only be accomplished by following the will of the father…even to the death of the cross (Philippians 2). We must understand the same. Yelling our sure answers, even if they are right, will not win hearts and minds of others to Jesus.

**Matt. 13:31-32** *“He presented another parable to them, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."*

What a contrary verse to the mindset of most people—do we want to do the hard work of sowing and tending so that our work can give shade to others . We want to “do our thing”…and in the process show that we are “right.” But the way of the cross, the mindset of the cross, is one of laying down our rights voluntarily. The world will always view that as weakness—just as it did when they put Jesus on the cross. We must work for something besides what we can see will succeed.

**Zechariah 4:10** *“For who has shown contempt for the day of small things? But these seven will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel—they are the eyes of the Lord roaming throughout the earth.”*

The world, and often even the church, often looks down on small churches, on small “results,” on things and people that are not admired by the world. Jesus was not admired by Rome, and not admired by those that wanted the admiration of Rome. Too often those who follow Christ want to impress the world with their possessions, their earthly success. But that is not the way of the cross. Remember that Jesus only had one robe, no home, no equity of this world.

**Luke 12:28** *“Now if God so clothes the grass in the field, which****is****alive today and tomorrow****is****thrown into the furnace, how****much****more will He clothe you? You of****little****faith!*

There is a helplessness, a weakness if you please, by waiting in faith, living in faith, being guided by faith regardless of the situation. But the providence of God is so rich for those who walk the way of the cross and have that mindset.

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**Luke 16:10** *“The one who****is****faithful in a very****little****thing****is****also faithful in****much****; and the one who****is****unrighteous in a very****little****thing****is****also unrighteous in****much****.”*

The mindset of the cross is one that believes attention to details is not busy work but is a search for the righteous God at work in this world—one who sees all and is concerned about detail and reflecting His Glory.

**Job 8:7** *"Though your beginning was insignificant, yet your end will increase greatly.”*

The mindset of the cross is not one on instant gratification, or an evaluation of life on a transactional basis. The mindset of the cross believes that even the smallest beginning can become a huge increase and significance. Abraham started with only one son but had the promise of as many as the stars of the sky….

**II Corinthians 12:9-10** *“And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, delight in weaknesses, in insults, in distresses, in persecutions, in difficulties, on behalf of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*

Paul was not rebuked for praying that the thorn in his life would be removed. But God did not spare him either—for reasons known only to God. **Paul did believe** that strength came from that unpleasant weakness, and often the saint of God is able to look back on their life and see how their weakness was for God’s glory.

1. **The Witness of Brokenness**

With weakness comes different kinds of brokenness. Some of it can be physical, but it can also be emotional—and even spiritual. Lament is a vital part of the Word of God. The spirit of grieving over a lack of spiritual focus of people in and out of the church is heart-rendering at times. The reader might want to consider when in their life they felt that they were “broken” in their attempt to take up their cross and do God’s will. It is especially painful when other Christians, and even the church rejects us, and either causes brokenness in our lives, or fails to minister to us in healing and comfort. Unfortunately, the very ones that we expect to be kind and gracious to us are not always what we have needed. Brokenness brings us to utter dependence upon God’s leadership and presence in our living. Try to recall times when brokenness in your life prepared you for God’s future for you.

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Here are some significant Scriptures that should inform us about brokenness:

**Psalms 51:17** *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.”*

**Psalm 34:18**  *“The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”*

**James 4:6** *“But He gives a greater grace. Therefore, it says, ‘GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."*

**I Peter 5-7** *“…because God is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time, having cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares about you.”*

**Isaiah 57:15** *“For thus says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.”*

**Matthew 18:1-4** *“At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, ‘Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, and said, ‘Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”*

**Genesis 32:22-25** *“Now he arose that same night and took his two wives and his two maids and his eleven children and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. And he took them and sent them across the stream. And he sent across whatever he had. Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. And when he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so, the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him.*

What a picture of the human nature…struggling with God himself and bearing in his body the pain and discomfort of that struggle. We will never know all that is involved in this story, but I do believe that I have met Christians who endured pain in their life because they struggled with God and would not yield.

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The following portion of Scripture shows the relationship of Jesus with the Father in what is called the “High Priestly Prayer.” Notice that Jesus is asking in faith, not demanding. His goal is what He knows is the goal of the Father. As you read this Scripture, ask yourself how you pray for those around you, for your family…and perhaps even for your own life.

**John 17:14-23a** *"I have given them Thy word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask Thee to take them out of*  *the world, but to keep them from the evil one.* ***They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.****Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.**Just as You sent Me into the world, I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, so that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. I am not asking on behalf of these alone,* ***but also for those who believe in Me through their word,****that they may all be one; just as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I also have given to them, so that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me….”*

**Closing Remarks:** Earl Lee, when he was pastor of Pasadena First Church of the Nazarene many years ago would often use the phrase:

**OPENNESS, BROKENNESS, ONENESS**

…to describe the spirit of revival in that church.

Also, at a Pastor’s conference he led, he commented on Elijah’s prayer on Mount Carmel…saying what he had heard from his forefathers:

**WE BUILD THE ALTAR, GOD SENDS THE FIRE**

What I remember of his comments are that each time God commanded his servant to build something for His glory, He would give the plan and instructions (Noah and the ark, Solomon and the temple, etc.). If we are going to build a life or a ministry for Him as His temple, can we not believe he will give us the plans and the resource for His glory?