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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…”*

**Unit 104 Choosing to Work with Jesus as He Enables Me.**

We come now to the final unit. I hope you will take the time to think again about the path we have been on….**first,** choosing to come after Jesus and in that decision and process finding salvation and the born-again life. **Second,** choosing to move away from self-focus and embracing self-denial as we are drawn to the Lordship of Jesus in our lives through the filling of the Holy Spirit and Entire Sanctification.

**Third,** realizing that Jesus has a place designed just for us—“our cross” which we need to pick up daily as He guides us, **And fourth,** the emphasis of this lesson that we do not choose the path to do that by ourselves, but with His help as He enables us to follow Him and be used by Him for His glory.

**104.1 “Counting the cost to Follow Jesus.”**

***Matthew 28:18-20*** *“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

\*\*The Overwhelming Task Jesus gave to us.

\*\*The Overwhelming Authority Jesus has to help us.

\*\*The Overwhelming Presence Jesus promises us for this assignment.

As you think of this assignment given by Jesus to His disciples, It seems almost impossible for us to consider. Yet when you consider the authority that is given along with the task, it gives us some hope. And then as you find that you are not to do this on your own, but that He is with us every moment and step of the way, we find new confidence. We start with the outlook of Thomas in John 14:5-6 as He thought of how the Master was going away:

*“Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going; how do we know the way?’ Jesus said to him,* *I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.”* While the context of the passage is that Jesus is going away to prepare a place for us, yet the principle is one that we find as we try to follow Jesus. We do not know where we are going, or what will be required, or what result to expect…but He is the way, truth, and life. Hebrews 11:8 tells us that Abraham had the same problem, and so it is in following Christ.

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**“Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” I Corinthians 11:1**

**“Be imitators of me” I Corinthians 4:16**

**“Join in following my example” Philippians 3:17**

**“You also became imitators of us and the Lord” I Thessalonians 1:6**

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Scripture tells us that this imitation of Christ through His leadership from the Holy Spirit and is also from the example of Godly followers of Christ who are ahead of us on the path and this witness is intentional on God’s part. He wants that active relationship with us that keeps us dependent on His voice and leadership.

**John 14:1-6** *“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many rooms; if that were not so, I would have told you, because I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will take you to Myself, so that where I am, there you also will be. And you know the way where I am going.’**Thomas said to Him, ‘****Lord, we do not know where You are going; how do we know the way****?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.”*

Here is an excellent example of what it means to follow Jesus!!! These disciples had walked with the Lord, and actually lived with Him for the three years of His ministry. He said to them that they knew the way—that they were prepared for what lay ahead…**Just as He so often tells us!!!** But they wanted answers, they thought they needed to know what was going to be expected of them and how they were going to be faithful to what Jesus wanted for their lives; and He responded as He so often responds to us—you don’t need answers, you just need Me. I will guide you. I am the way you should walk and talk and follow!

Jesus did not expect that our life in Christ would be operated by our knowledge or our wisdom, but by total dependence on Him. And the only problem with that, is that **He so often takes us beyond our limits**…but never beyond His!!!

**I Timothy 4:11-16 *“Prescribe and teach these things….***

*“Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. Until I come, give your attention to the public reading, to exhortation, and teaching. Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was granted to you through words of prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to the teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”*

One of the best examples of this “passing of the baton” in the Christian faith is in this passage of Paul to his “son in the Lord,” Timothy. While we must use extreme caution in our choices of whom we allow to have this type of influence over us, I think it is the Holy Spirit which makes it plain to us. And often we do not even realize it is happening. I was surprised and encouraged by hearing a young minister preach recently who had been under my leadership as His pastor. We had never had private sessions of training, but he stated publicly how he watched me as a leader and that things he learned from watching guided him through what is now more than 25 years of successful ministry! That is what happened with Jesus and those that He discipled—the 12, the seventy, etc.

**Acts 19:5-7** *“When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus…Paul had laid hands upon them…there were about twelve men in all.”*

Here is another example: Paul and the believers around Ephesus, who had not yet heard about the Holy Spirit. He was not the one who had led them to salvation, but He was able to help lead them into the deeper things of the Holy Spirit.

***John 12:24*** *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit****.****”*

So much of this ministry is giving of our lives almost like a seed that falls into the ground and eventually bears much fruit. **Howard Hendrix once wrote, “We are not in the land of the living headed toward dying, but we are in the land of the dying, headed toward living.”** Since that is the case, what are we saving our lives for? The only good use of our time, talent and treasure is in following Jesus!!!But there is just something about this life on earth that makes us want to hold on to what we have. Much like the game of “musical chairs.” We go around the circle until the music stops, and we don’t want to let go of the chair we have until we have a grasp of the next chair. Jesus doesn’t allow that, He says “trust in Me.”

**I Timothy 4:7-8** *“But stay away from worthless stories that are typical of old women. Rather, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness;**for bodily training is just slightly beneficial, but godliness is beneficial for all things since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.”*

One of the things we need to do is filter teaching through the guidance of discipline in the spiritual life, discerning the reality of what others tell us is the path of following Jesus. They may or may not be well-intentioned, but our witness and development is far too precious to take every suggestion from others as “gospel.” Does it coincide with what we know Jesus taught is a good place to start. Advice from other mature followers is another place to check the validity of “stories”.

**I John 2:3-6** *“By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever follows His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says that he remains in Him ought, himself also, walk just as He walked.”*

Usually, we can discern who we should imitate by how well they keep and hold precious the commandments of Jesus. Be sure not to be imitating there ideocracies, but the part of their lives that is truly imitating Jesus. Walking the way Jesus walked is the cardinal rule. While it is true that we need to be up to date in this life and culture, the essential things of eternity do not change over time.

**II Chronicles 16:9a** *“For the eyes of the Lord roam throughout the earth, so that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.”*

Count on the Lord who “sees” in secret to strongly support you if He finds that you are completely His. There are times when we may think we are completely His, and He may need to convict us of areas that are not as we may have thought.

**I Kings 20:39-40** *“And as the king passed by, he cried to the king and said, ‘Your servant went out into the midst of the battle; and behold, a man turned aside and brought a man to me and said, 'Guard this man; if for any reason he is missing, then your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.' And while your servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel said to him, "So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided it."*

Does this seem an unfair judgment on God’s part? Not if understand Jesus!!!

The one who died on the cross is not happy when we do not treat our assignments seriously, instead focusing our attention on this life at His expense of His kingdom.

**Luke 10:38-42** *“Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. And she had a sister called Mary, who was also seated at the Lord’s feet, and was listening to His word. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, ‘Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do the serving by myself? Then tell her to help me.’ But the Lord answered and said to her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; but only one thing is necessary; for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”*

This story clearly tells us that Jesus is more concerned about our spiritual growth and the spiritual growth of others than he is about the comforts and obligations of this world. Dr. W. T. Purkiser was asked a question about the second coming in a service at my church in Camarillo. He responded, “Jesus taught in parables, and in Matthew 25 he gives two parables about the second coming. The first parable we call the parable of the ten virgins, five wise, and five foolish. The focus of this parable was “watch and be ready.” The second parable we call the parable of the ten talents, the three servants that were given talents, one given five, the second given two and the last given one. The five-talent servant gave back ten talents, the two-talent servant gave back four, and the one-talent servant hid the talent and gave back just the one talent. The focus of this parable was “occupy ‘til I come or do business until I come.” He went on to say that He believed Jesus was saying we should be in worship like Mary at the feet of Jesus and be busy like Martha at our tasks until Jesus comes.

**John 11:17-27** “*So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days…. So, then Martha, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed in the house. Martha then said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise from the dead.’ Martha said to Him, ‘I know that he will rise in the resurrection on the last day.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life; the one who believes in Me will live, even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?’ She said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord;* ***I have come to believe*** *that You are the Christ, the Son of God, and He who comes into the world.”*

Here is the faith that allowed Jesus to raise Lazarus from the dead. I am convinced that if Martha had remained in just a faith in the resurrection “someday”, it would not have happened that day. But her faith that came to believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, the one who came into the world from heaven—that is the faith that was resurrection faith.

**And so, have you counted the cost of following Jesus? It may not be an easy, inexpensive trip, but it is the best use of your life it could possibly be!!!**