**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…”*

We begin with the witness of prevenient Grace…the grace that goes before while God is working to draw people to Himself. Hopefully, we are drawn to Him and experience the grace that brings us into Salvation and begin a “born again” life.

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

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

As a born-again believer, we begin to experience Jesus drawing us into self-denial and the sanctified life. We have an initial sanctification when we accepted Jesus as our Savior, but we soon realize that the pull of the world is contrary to the pull of Jesus in our life. Entire Sanctification is when we choose to accept that grace of His complete presence in our life that crowds our own self-centered ways.

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

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

As an entirely committed Christian follower of Jesus, we begin to realize that God not only required Jesus to commit His life “unto death, even the death of the cross” but that He requires us to lose our life so that we might save it. Every day we need to choose to follow, regardless of the cost He requires us to invest in Him.

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

*(Luke 9:23d) “and follow Me.”*

When Jesus first called us, He told us that he would make us *“fishers of people.”* (Matthew 4:19.) He may have told us in ways different than He told others, and we may not have understood what He had planned for us, but His goal for our lives was not for us to be “pictures of His grace hanging in the library”, but tools of His workmanship to accomplish what He knows is needed in redemption’s plan.

In our first lesson of this unit (104.1), we considered what it means to count the cost of following Jesus. In the second lesson of this unit (104.2), we have seen some of the changes in our life that are needed to be useful followers of Him. The week after that (104.3) we saw how important others were to our walk.

Last week (104.4), we were considered how we can conserve our strength and resources to marshal them and be effective under His leadership and guidance. In this final lesson of Unit 104 (104.5), we are considering how we can focus that energy, strength, and ability for maximum use in Christ’s kingdom. The answer is to be a follower, paying attention and, in faith, responding to Christ’s leadership.

**104.5 “ ‘All In’ to Follow”**

**John 14:15** *"If you love Me, you will keep My. commandments.”*

The first time I remember seeing the phrase, “All in” was in a USC Trojan locker room. I had signed up for “flashback football” and we were starting the 3-day time on the campus. I either wasn’t told or didn’t pay attention that this program event involved four times of practice on Howard Jones football field for two hours each! This old man wasn’t in shape for such a thing, but I said to myself… “this is the only time I will ever play football at USC, so here goes.” As we left the locker room, on the wall above the doors was this phrase. Every person was required to jump up and hit the phrase signifying that they were going to give it their all!!!

Well, I survived the practices, did a lot better than I thought I could, and even ended up on the winning 10-man football team when we played each other in the Memorial Colosseum. I have a white leather football with Pete Caroll’s signature on it to prove it! **But how much more important is it for us to be ‘all in’ for Christ and His kingdom.** Good things happen when we are “all in.”

**Mark 10:28-30** *“Peter began to say to Him, ‘Behold, we have left everything and followed You.’ Jesus said, ‘Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.”*

I don’t think any Scripture illustrates the intensity Christ expects from us than this Scripture portrays. Some say that leaving the family is not really required, but it is certainly required to let go of the family’s control over our thinking which is necessary. You cannot serve two masters—and even though a family may not think that they are that controlling, just try to miss a family celebration when God gives you an assignment to do! I do not think that this should be done at a whim, but the approval of family members cannot be the final decision-making issue. To love our family is good, to worship them and let them control us is not very good at all.

**Psalm 51:16-17** *“For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it;  
You do not take pleasure in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, God, You will not despise.”*

There may not be a Scripture that is more pertinent to the American church today than these verses. God is not impressed by our church attendance, our hands raised in the air in praise, our tithes in the offering plate. He longs to see that we have remorse for how far we fall short of His perfect love. It is just far too easy to set aside our love for the things of this world for an hour on Sunday morning, and then think we have done our duty to satisfy God. A heart that is broken for the needs of the world, and even for our own need of improvement, is what God wants.

**John 15:5** *"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.”*

Why is it that too often the church thinks that if we organize ourselves like a very successful business, we will be successful as a church. We may improve our view of how the world sees us, but God longs for us to let Him have control over us and be happy to settle for what He sees and provides. To follow Him as our Shepherd is to ignore what the world thinks is success, and to only be pleasing to Him. Apart from Him, any success will only be temporary at best. We need to live for that which will stand when we appear before God.

**Galatians 5:22-23** *“…the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”*

Here are the verses I prayed over my two daughters almost every night when they were living in our home. I could think of no higher goal that the fruit of the Spirit would be shown in their lives—and am happy to report that I believe God has answered that prayer of a concerned father. These nine qualities are what the world seeks without recognizing it as what they need. The operation of the Spirit in our lives is not in emotionalism, or self-denial. It is in the character of God in us. I am so happy that I continue to see these qualities in both of my daughters.

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Aimee

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**James 5:19-20** *“My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins.”*

Here is another verse to show that if one strays or even sins, all is not lost. If we turn back or have someone help us turn back; if we sin and acknowledge our error and wrongdoing; we do not have to throw in the towel. **The only sin God cannot forgive is the one that we are not willing to bring to Him in repentance.**

**Philippians 1:6** *“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”*

We should never forget or underestimate God’s power and intent to see the good work that has been started in us be perfected and His plan completed in us and through us for His glory.

**Proverbs 4:23** *“Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.”*

Everything hinges on our desires and our loves. We must be radically honest about those loves and assure ourselves that we are not being pulled in opposite directions or that a love for one thing isn’t frustrating a love for another thing. Our love for God must supersede all other loves. Out manual statement for entire sanctification is “to become entirely devoted to God, the holy obedience of love made perfect.” May it not just be a doctrine, but a reality in our lives.

**Proverbs 3:5-6** *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”*

These four statements or wise sayings correspond with the four units of our discipleship from Luke 9:23. Trusting in the Lord with all your heart is what is needed in the process of coming into saving grace. We cannot serve God and mammon…either we will love God and hate that which opposes Him, or we will find that our love for the world will negate, and perhaps even move us to hate in our view of God. Our own understanding is usually the problem. As long as it has to make sense to us, we will not move very far in our progress toward God. To acknowledge Him in every aspect of our life is essential, He will not allow us to compartmentalize Him. As we take these three steps, it will be amazing to us as He makes order out of our chaos, clarity out of the directions of our life.

**Romans 12:1-8** *“Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.**For just as we have many parts in one body and all the body’s parts do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually parts of one another. However, since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to use them properly: if prophecy, in proportion to one’s faith;**if service, in the act of serving; or the one who teaches, in the act of teaching; or the one who exhorts, in the work of exhortation; the one who gives, with generosity; the one who is in leadership, with diligence; the one who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”*

These verses in Romans are foundational to mature Christian living, to the life that is set apart for Jesus. We will not make many disciples for Jesus if we have not followed this pathway. And it is not in our presenting or in our proving what is good and acceptable and perfect, but it is in His grace working in us and through us. As we become convinced that the good that is done is not from our ability but from Him working through us and gifts He has given us, that we are free to glorify Him fully and to see our potential realized for His Name’s sake. In this way of living, it is easy not to be jealous of others, but only thankful for our place. Mercy and cheerfulness at the end of the list is not meant to diminish their importance!

**Romans 12:9-21** *“Love must be free of hypocrisy. Detest what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor, not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. Never repay evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all people. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all people. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written: ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.”*

Why is it that the world often calls us hypocrites? Is it because our love is not free from hypocrisy? Do they see a lack of devotion to each other, a brotherly love that is as shallow as a mudpuddle? Can they easily determine that there is a lot of strife among us as to who is going to get the honor? Go through this entire list and ask yourself what is in these passages with which the Lord needs to help me?

Most of all, revenge and vengeance is too often found in a believer’s life. It was the evangelist, Stephen Manley, who said in a service at Whittier, he had a dream of a front lawn at the church which had axe handles sticking up all over it. He said, “We bury the hatchet, but we know right where to go when we need it again!

How much better to live a life depending on God to repay, to forgive others as God has forgiven us…to not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good. Matthew 5:16 says*, “**Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”* Why is it that too often even our good works point to ourselves, rather than give glory to God?

**Hebrews 13:20-21** *“Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, that is, Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”*

Here is the prayer that I prayed almost every Sunday at Whittier College Avenue when I was the lead pastor. Our highest goal ought to be equipped to do His will, doing that which is pleasing in His sight. **I can only hope that this series of lessons on discipleship has help you to that end**.

**II Corinthians 13:14** *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.”*

Here is another benediction that “says it all.” May God’s **grace, love** and the **fellowship** of His Spirit be found in you as you go and make disciples.

**Numbers 6:24-26*****“The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord cause His face to shine on you and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His face to you and give you peace.”***

This is the benediction that Craig Rench prayed over His children and churches.