**RECEIVE**

Decisions that Encourage Discipleship

**Class 101-3: Deciding to Risk & Receive: Going Further.**

**Receive: (John 1:12)** *“****But as many as received Him****, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name….”*

We start again with our “key” verse from which these classes get their title. Today we look at that part of the verse that says **receiving Him gives us the right to become.** I fear that too many Christians today look at their salvation/discipleship in a transactional way—they pray the prayer, they raise their hand, they tear off the corner of a card, they cry a tear at the altar, they come forward in a crusade—and then believe they have their ticket to go to heaven no matter what!

**I hope and pray that it is true! …but I fear that it is not!** Notice that in this key verse the promise which is given to those who receive Christ is **the power to become,** not the final result of a life of faith in Christ. I am not saying that we must have perfect faith and perfect following in order to live with Christ forever in His presence, but that the omniscient God knows what we are doing with that power—either to allow it to help us walk with Jesus, or to only have an appearance of our walking with Him. We look at ourselves and others through our human wisdom, but God sees all—and He will be the final arbitrator. **The good news is that He wants us to be with Him more than we ever will**, and He will do everything that is possible to help us not fail, but to in fact succeed in becoming His follower.

**John 8:31-32** says, ***“So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly My disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”***  One of the most important ideas of Scripture is that we need to continue…even when we might fall short of what we wanted to do—and what God wanted us to do! When you fall down, don’t think that you have start all over again at the beginning. Get up and keep on going!

**John 6:66-68** says, **“*As a result of this many of His disciples left and would no longer walk with Him. So, Jesus said to the twelve, ‘You do not want to leave also, do you?’ Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. And we have already believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”*** Jesus had done many miracles and had just fed the five thousand—but he said something they did not understand—that people must eat his flesh to live forever, and that caused followers to give up. The twelve didn’t understand either, but they chose to not lean on their understanding.

And so, we look today at how our faith will be tested—even from our early days of walking with Jesus. If we can’t answer the question that comes to us—“why?”—then we have a choice either to live by faith or to live by “sight.” We will never be able to see in this life all that God is doing, and why He is doing it. But to succeed in testing and temptation, we are required to believe and continue; even if our own performance is less than we would have hoped. **And so, we have decided to trust and believe, to begin communicating by hearing and praying (talking) and now we are soon brought to times of decision in temptation and testing.**

On your class handout, you see the scripture, ***James 1:12 “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”*** This was the verse that I memorized and lived in my first few months after I decided to follow Jesus. Whenever I talked with someone about my new life, when I signed my picture at youth camp—it was always James 1:12. And notice the word, **persevere**. It is not the word “perfect”—but it is more like the word “continue.” We may not be able to instantaneously live up to some other people’s standards, or even our own hopes, but continuing to keep on “keeping on” enables that power we have to receive to develop us and helps us to learn to do better.

Another verse of my early years was, ***I Corinthians 10:13 “No temptation has overtaken you except something common to mankind; and God is faithful, so He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”*** How many of us have relied upon this verse as we grew in our faith in the Lord? And many of us have argued with God about whether or not we were tempted above that which we were able. The way of escape is often hidden from our eyes at first, and we need the direction of the Shepherd in order to find it.

**Deciding to Risk**

***Matthew 4:3-4*** *“And the tempter came and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’ But He answered and said, ‘It is written: Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes out of the mouth of God.’* Who invited the tempter to come? If he is so bold as to come and tempt Jesus Himself, do we think that he will not come to us also? The question “if” is often his tool in one way or another. We need to know what we must do to be victorious. And in these times, it always requires more of us than we are comfortable doing at the time—we must risk going God’s way no matter what!

**Deuteronomy 8:1-3** contains the words that Jesus used to rebuke the evil one, but the full context is very insightful: ***“All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, so that you may live and increase, and go in and take possession of the land which the Lord swore to give to your forefathers. And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, in order to humble you, putting you to the test, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. And He humbled you and let you go hungry, and fed you with the manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, in order to make you understand that man shall not live on bread alone, but man shall live on everything that comes out of the mouth of the Lord.”***

…all the commandments are to be carefully done to live and increase.

…remembering how God has helped us in the past is always good for us.

…some of the testing is for us and God to know what is in our heart.

…God wants us to know that He sustains us—not we ourselves.

…and especially to learn that real sustenance doesn’t come from this world,

but comes out of everything that has come from the mouth of the Lord.

\*\*Even Jesus needed to live by the Word of God! (Deuteronomy 8:3)

\*\*Even Jesus was tempted by the evil one to doubt the Word of God!

\*\*In this time of temptation, Jesus was weak physically and emotionally.

\*\*Jesus overcomes **all three temptations** by God’s Word (4:4; 4:7; 4:10.)

\*\*Others have risked their lives because of God’s Word (Joshua 1:8, etc.)

***I Peter 2:1-3 “Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, and like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.”*** I am convinced that not only “newborn babies” need to long for the pure milk of the word, and desire to grow in respect to the “salvation” that is in Christ, but we all need to do the same even if we are a mature follower of Christ. Not to do so, exposes us to malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, slander and all the designs of the evil one to hinder our witness and walk. Tasting of the kindness of the Lord should not only develop a hunger in our lives for a greater measure, but also a hunger for it to be passed on to others around us. Notice that it is our part to decide to rid ourselves. You may want to practice saying the word, “No” outloud, just to prove to yourself that you really can say it. How much better to prove to yourself that you can not only say it, but mean it too!

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\*\*Following after Christ requires us to empty ourselves of a former life.

\*\*Following after Christ requires honesty and transparency.

\*\*Following after Christ requires nurture through the “milk of the Word.”

\*\*Following after Christ requires growth, learning, and “tasting.!!!”

…anyone want to testify that it is true?

***Hebrews 4:12-13 “For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, even penetrating as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom we must answer*.*”***

And it is the word of God that keeps on challenging us, enabling us, revealing us, and penetrating us. You may want to read the file I provided, “The testimony of Scripture” to meditate on the Word of God helping us at every stage of our walk.

**Deciding to Commit to Receive**

***John 16:13-14 “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take from Mine and will disclose it to you.”***

Why is it that way too often we allow others to guide us rather than the “Spirit of Truth? Is it because of a damaged self-image where we do not think that we are good enough to let Him alone guide us? Is it because we just want to go along with the crowd—even the Christian crowd? How does the evil one damage us until we find it too hard to wait for His instructions, too demanding to receive what He is disclosing, too self-denying to live for glorifying Jesus rather than trying to receive benefit and accolades for what we have done? **Part of the risk that we have just studied is in resting our lives in His hands and His instructions rather than what others may be saying or what may make sense to us.** The test of listening to His Spirit is a prerequisite to being filled with His Spirit in the days to come. We risk becoming stagnated when we decide not to commit to what the Holy Spirit wants us to receive.

\*\*Jesus has invited us to “Come after Him” (Luke 9:23a)

\*\*We have begun to understand that this is no simple task

\*\*We need to understand that **He wants us to receive His help!!!**

…His Spirit enables us to be born again (**John 3:4-8**…the story of Nicodemus)

**“Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a person be born when he is old? He cannot enter his mother’s womb a second time and be born, can he?’ Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born of water and *the* Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which has been born of the flesh is flesh, and that which has been born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it is coming from and where it is going; so is everyone who has been born of the Spirit.”**

…His Spirit wants to live with us and in us (**John 14:16-17**)

**“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, so that He may be with you forever; *the Helper is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know *Him; but* you know Him because He remains with you and will be in you.**

…His Spirit will pour God’s love into our hearts (**Romans 5:3-5**)

**“And not only *this*, but we also celebrate in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”**

…His Spirit will teach and remind you of everything (**John 14:26**)

***“These things I have spoken to you while remaining with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and remind you of all that I said to you.”***

…His Spirit will help you to continue and be set free (**Romans 8:31-35**)

***“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things-Who will bring charges against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, but rather, was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, trouble, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger or sword?”***

…His Spirit will help you with your weaknesses and pray for you (**Romans 8:26**)

***“Now in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words…”***

…His Spirit will bear witness with you that you are a child of God (**Romans 8:16**)

***“The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”***

***Acts 1:4-5 “Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, ‘Which,’ He said, ‘you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”***

…have you waited for the promise of the Father?

***Psalm 1:6 “For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”***

…are you living in a way that recognizes God knows the way you take?

HAVE YOU INVITED THE SPIRIT OF GOD INTO YOUR LIFE?

**GO FOLLOW JESUS THIS WEEK!!!**