**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…”*

Class 101-1: Deciding to Believe & Trust

Class 101-2: Deciding to Hear & Pray

Class 101-3: Deciding to Risk & Receive

**Class 101-4: Deciding to Continue, & Listen & Wait**

We continue with prevenient grace—and our need to decide to continue, to decide to listen and wait. In the previous three sessions we have looked at 1) believing and trusting, 2) hearing and praying, and 3) risking and receiving. Last week we asked the question, when is a person in this process born again? And the answer, I believe, is that whenever that person **allows the Holy Spirit to begin to be active in His life.** We call that initial Sanctification. In my mind, that may happen when we first choose to begin to follow, or a person may be on a long path of “look and see” before they receive that life changing experience in Christ**.**

***I Corinthians 5:16-17 “Therefore from now on we recognize no one by the flesh; even though we have known Christ by the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, this person is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.***

It is a mistake to think that because a person starts attending church, prays a prayer, studies Scripture, does “good works,” or any other human activity, that this change has occurred. As John 3 tells us, the Spirit needs to blow—to motivate—to enliven this soul. Religious activity is like trying to row a boat across a sea, but the new life of Christ is like hoisting the sail, catching the wind. Yes, there is effort, but it is the power of God that enlivens us, that makes new a way that we cannot make by our own strength or by the world’s wisdom, or by the church’s instructions.

The evil one will work tirelessly to try to get us to settle for something less than a divine change in our lives because of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. He does not mind if we sing in the choir, or give money, or go on mission trips, but he wants to do whatever he can to keep us from that new creation through Christ. He does not want the new things of Christ’s kingdom to come into our life.

**Hebrews 4:15 *“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.”***

…read with me Hebrews 4:15

…what does this verse tell you about your weakness?

\*\*A Personal Story

I believe the Lord wants me as a part of this class to tell my personal story, to be vulnerable about my life and my early days as I walked with Jesus. I have included this story in the email and handout material for you to read. You may agree or may disagree with my perspective, but this initial victory in my life as a new believer has become invaluable in my walk with Christ even to this day.

**Hebrews 2:18 *“For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.”***

…I hope that you have memories of how Christ has come to your aid!!!

The Conference in Discipleship at Denver First several years ago asked the question, “If a young boy who hasn’t eaten for two days goes into a grocery store and desires a loaf of bread, starts to think about how he could hide the bread under his coat and walk out the door, decides to do that, and walks out the door—when did he sin? **Surely it was not that he was hungry and wanted food**. But when he began to think about stealing the bread—sin was at least at the door. And surely when he walked out the door with bread that he did not pay for, we certainly call that stealing.” Psalm 19:14 “**May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, Lord, my rock and my Redeemer.”**

\*\* Uncle Buddy Robinson is reported to have said, “You can’t stop the birds from flying over your head, but you can stop them from making a nest in your hair!”

**Deciding to Continue**

…We continue to study temptation because the evil one does not stop tempting!!!

**I John 2:12-14 *“I**am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you on account of His name. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning, I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one, I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning, I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.”***

Notice in this verse that the Fathers and the young men both overcome the evil one, but the children “know the Father.” The children have their sins forgiven because of His name, but the young men and the fathers have overcome the evil one. Is it possible that the reason that some people never mature in the Christian faith is because they just want to be forgiven over and over, and not mature to be young strong men that overcome—and eventually fathers who also overcome?

The evil one wins a big victory when he can keep people living a life of constant failure. We all hope that God will be gracious and their eternity will be secure, but we also know that immature lives will not influence many around them to believe.

I recently was able to be with a person who more than thirty years ago I helped find Christ. She was an alcoholic, with many other problems too! What joy she had on her face as she gave me a big hug and told me that she just recently celebrated her 31st year of sobriety. She goes to AA meetings five times a week, to Bible studies too, and is rejoicing in her life in Christ. Again, I played a small part, and there were others who helped her sustain her faith. Praise God for how we can be an influence on those around us. Romans 1:16-17 says,

***“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written: ‘But the righteous one will live by faith.”***

The righteousness of God is revealed by one person’s faith to another person’s faith! It is by a contagious faith that the kingdom of God is spread!!!

…We continue to study temptation because we can’t succeed without the Spirit!!!

**Romans 8:12-13 *“… brothers and sisters, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— for if you are living in accord with the flesh, you are going to die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.***

Too many Christians try to overcome temptation by their willpower, by their own intelligence, by being around the church or Christian people, or some other way. But there is no substitute for allowing the Spirit to put to death evil in us. Living the way everybody else lives—in accordance with the flesh—is the way of death, even if it is done with a cross around your neck or with a bumper sticker on your car. The Spirit wants to help us be a victorious witness of Christ’s life in us.

\*\*As we mature in Christ, we do not have to give in to sin. (I Jn. 2:1)

\*\*It is through the Spirit of God in us that we succeed in temptation

\*\*We do not have to sin, and Jesus is our advocate when we do (I Jn. 2:2)

\*\*The Armor of God is available for success (Ephesians 6:10-18)

\*\*There is a blessing for those who persevere (James 1:12-15)

…We continue to study temptation because victory is essential to our maturity!!!

**Deciding to Listen & Wait.**

…often, we need a desire to hear before we recognize God’s voice: Let’s read:

**John 5:30 *“I can do nothing on My own initiative As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”***

Were you aware that Jesus needed to listen during His earthly life? How different this verse is from some Christians I have known that have “plunged ahead” giving no heed to how their actions might affect the kingdom of God and others around them. We need to learn to listen and wait!

Here is another great verse of Scripture to consider:

**Isaiah 30:21 *“Your ears will hear a word behind you, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right or to the left.”***

\*\* The Example of Jesus is one of waiting and listening for God’s voice

\*\* The Promise of Scripture is that God will speak to us

\*\* God is not limited to any specific way in which He speaks:

**(dreams, visions, angels, teaching, miracles, signs/wonders, God’s Word, etc.)**

Take a moment, and try to recall how God may have spoken or led you in the past:

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\*\*Often, we often need to relax and wait for God’s timing to hear God’s voice: if it is not important enough for God to speak to us immediately about an issue or a decision in our life, is it really that critical that we decide and act immediately?

**Psalm 46:10a *“Stop striving and know that I am God…”***

…when has your focus been more on “making things happen”, than to know that “He is God?” How might your life have been better if you’d waited?

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***I Thessalonians 5:16-18 “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.”***

…how realistic is it to always be rejoicing? …to always be praying? …to give thanks for everything…

…how might the will of God for your life and for the lives of others around you have been better if you had been better in these areas. Don’t think of how you can immediately try to reach absolute perfection in these areas, but allow the Holy Spirit to suggest ways that you could gradually improve and become!

**James 1:5-8** *“****But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”***

In what level of faith do you ask without doubting. We are all human, and doubts come to us naturally. But do we quickly dismiss them, or do we entertain thoughts and rationalizations of how a life of faith might not be dependable? That is often the risk we need to take to become victorious.

\*\*Often, we need to prepare ourselves to hear from the Lord:

\*\*Is there sin or self-centeredness that would prohibit me from hearing?

**I Corinthians 11:28 *“But a person must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”***

\*\*Are there tools that could help us hear such as paper, pen, Bible, etc.?

\*\*Do I have an expectation that I will hear?

\*\*Do I believe that God rewards those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6)

\*\*Often, we need to find something productive to do as an alternative to sin!!!

…a good offense is always better than a good defense!

(illustration of how a snake captures a bird from the sky)

…focusing on your temptation is a sure way to struggle in life!

HAVE YOU INVITED THE SPIRIT OF GOD INTO YOUR LIFE?

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