**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… 101-5 Deciding to Evaluate and Share… 101-6: Deciding to Strategize & Belong.

Above are the titles for the six lessons of unit 101, emphasizing the beginnings of our walk with Christ as prevenient grace went before us, and the Spirit of God drew us to want to be with Christ , and to begin to walk with Christ. **Hopefully, after a few weeks, we have decided to walk with Christ for the rest of our lives.** Some made that decision when the first started to follow, others gradually came to that decision, and a few continued with a “look-see” attitude holding close to their vest whether they actually wanted to be a follower.

Walking with Christ is so much easier when we have His Spirit and strength to help us on our journey. That is why I have named these six units, “Receive” which is taken from 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…”*** Notice that receiving Him does not give you a “finished product,” but the power to or the right to become! It is in these first days of following that we begin to find that power and employ it—some better than others! Some misunderstand the life-long journey …that it is to walk with Christ and are frustrated that the beginning steps don’t give the strength that those who are mature in Christ have discovered.

Also notice that the issue is **believing in His name….** The New Testament tells us of different levels of faith. Mathew 8:26 tells us Jesus said “little faith” to his disciples in the boat when He was sleeping, and they were fearful of the wind and the waves. How many of us, as His followers, are fearful in the circumstances of life—when His Spirit is actually inside us? Matthew 8:10 & Luke 7:9 tells us Jesus said, “great faith” to the Roman centurion who didn’t need Jesus to physically come to heal his son, but only to speak the word. Mathew 18:28 tells us the woman with the issue of blood had great faith to touch His garment in the midst of a crowd that was not pleased with her interruption of Jesus’ journey.

Hebrews 12:2 tells us that Jesus is ***“the originator and perfecter of the faith….”*** James 2:22 tells us that Abraham perfected his faith by offering his son Isaac on the altar in obedience to God’s command. Many of us believe that the only one who had perfect faith throughout His life was Jesus—and what a goal for all of us to attempt to emulate. **Mark 9:24** , ***“I do believe; help my unbelief!”***

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

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

We now embark on the second part of “coming after Jesus”—denying ourselves! If there was any one word that is counterculture to the United States of America where I live, it is self-denial!!! No, I did not time this series to start during Lent, but it just conveniently did so. Jesus emptied himself (self-denial), **Philippians 2:5-10,** to come to earth. Some theologians have commented that the emotional and spiritual path from heaven to earth was far more demanding and sacrificial than the path from Bethlehem to Calvary.

Jesus sets the stage of what it means to be a disciple—a learner—a follower of Him by introducing us to this word. Notice that we are to “let him…” and the soul is to let himself too! How much does the American church try to insulate those who follow Christ from real self-denial. Yet if we are to really accomplish what God has in mind for us, this is what needs to happen. As long as we are serving Jesus for what we can get for ourselves, it will be an unsatisfactory arrangement.

**102-1: Deciding to Explore Regeneration & Abide in the Word:**

I Corinthians 3:11 *“For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”*

We have started our building by preparing the foundation of following Christ, and have examined what Jesus Christ has called us to do—to come after Him. Yes, there will be conflicts between what He wants us to do and to go. Without an understanding of continually saying “no” to self, we will be constantly frustrated.

**Exploring Regeneration**

This next section of Scriptures is the best passage I know to describe the state of humans—the descendants of Adam and Eve. It is hinted at, and referred to in many places in Scripture, but none more adequately than in Romans 8:18-25. I hope you will pay attention to each of the sentences that are presented.

**Romans 8:18-25 *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”***

If we suffer with him in order that we might be glorified together is the sentence right before these words. Suffering is assumed to be path of those who follow Him.

\*\*The suffering…the glory… the revelation.

***“For the eagerly awaiting creation waits for the revealing of the sons and daughters of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.”***

\*\*The awaiting creation…the futility…the freedom!

It is here that pain in childbirth, weeds in the ground, the distortion of nature itself is presented because of the sin of Adam and Eve. The creation did not sin, but it awaits eagerly the day that this penalty will be removed, and that creation will again experience the freedom from the corruption it has endured and enter into the glory that awaits the children of God in the new heaven and earth.

\*\*The groaning…the hope…the perseverance…the hope!!!

***“And not only that, but also, we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons and daughters, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, through perseverance we wait eagerly for it.”***

And we as Christians are not exempt from the sin in this world and the results of that sin in our culture, in our environments, and in spiritual forces around us. We groan, eagerly awaiting the fulness of the promises of God for us. It is that hope that is wrapped up in the second coming of Christ, and the final judgment of God. We with perseverance wait to see and possess it. Most of you know that the final paragraph of this section is Romans 8:28,***“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*** That is what God is doing while we wait in hope!!!

**Abiding in the Word**

The only productive thing we can do while we wait in hope is to abide in God’s Word. It is there that the Spirit can make some sense to us about the craziness of this world—and sometimes even the craziness of the church itself!

**John 8:31** *“****Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine….”***

…there is no substitute for living in the Word in your thoughts, choices, and actions if you truly want to be the disciple of Christ.

…treasuring the word in your heart:

**Psalm 119:9-11 *“How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. I have treasured Your word in my heart,  
so that I may not sin against You.”***

…by allowing the convicting and cleansing work of God’s Word in our life:

**John 17:17** *“****Sanctify them in the truth; Thy 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.”***

…by our heart delighting in His Word:

**Psalm 1:1-3 *“Blessed is the person who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law, he meditates day and night. And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.”***

…by allowing God’s life to flow through us to bless our world: (I AM THE VINE)

**John 15:7-8** ***"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”***

*…by allowing God’s word to help grow our faith:*

**Romans 10:17** *“****So faith comes from hearing, and hearing…***

***by the word of Christ.”***

There is nothing that will increase your faith more than for God to speak to you through His word, and for you to act on what He has said to you—and for you to see the results of your obedience in acting on faith in His Word.

**See: Faith to be led by the Spirit**

*…by knowing God’s Word is eternal and will never change:*

***Isaiah 40:7-8 “ The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; the people are indeed grass! The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever*.”**

HAVE YOU INVITED THE SPIRIT OF GOD INTO YOUR LIFE?

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