**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…”*

**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…”*

As we begin Unit 103 and look together at learning from Jesus as He guides us, I think it is crucial that we understand that taking up the “cross of Christ daily…” is the window through which the guidance of our Lord arrives. As you look back over the titles of Units 101 and 102, hopefully those lessons were not so far in the distance of your memory, that you do not recall the idea of choosing to come after Jesus and choosing to deny yourself…leading, hopefully, by this time in your walk of following Christ, into a reality of ‘being born again’ and also entire sanctification as illustrated by our “Grace Diagram” as circles 1 and 2.

On Monday, July 4th, I sent those of you on either fstone7777 @aol.com account

or fstone7777@ gmail.com account or in the private Facebook account a sermon I preached entitled “Receive.” This sermon summarizes what we have covered until now and if you have not read it, I encourage you to do so. I also sent on that date several illustration files which I don’t believe I had used before. Along with the sermon, I sent six illustration files which would also be helpful. **I have had to revise** the dates the class will meet and that the emails or Facebook postings would follow on the next Monday. The dates of the video classes for 103 at CAC are:

103-1 The Heart of “Cross-bearing.” 9/13/23

103-2 The Mind-set of “Cross-bearing.” 9/20/23

103-3 The Joy of “Cross-bearing.” 10/25/23

103-4 The Nurture of “Cross-bearing.” 11/1 /23

103-5 The Battle of “Cross-bearing.” 11/8 /23

I will leave on September 26th for a family vacation and will return on October 13th. Unit 104 will begin immediately after 103-5 on 11/1/23.

**We will attempt to finish the video of unit 104 January 3-31. The emails and the private face-book posting will be sent the following Mondays.**

**Page Two**

In this next unit we will look at God’s continual “upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14.) That call was first intimated in his original call for us to follow Him, *“And He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of people.”* (Matthew 4:19). We may not have known what He was saying then, but we start to find out as He leads us into a life of usefulness for His kingdom—and that usually means sacrifice and a cross for our lives. But it is a mistake to think that it is a dull, dreary life of emptiness and pain. It is actually the most fulfilling life we could imagine as we begin to see ourselves as a benefit to God and His Glory. Paul describes this in Philippians 3:12, *“Not that I have already grasped it all or have already become perfect, but I press on if I may also take hold of that for which I was even taken hold of by Christ Jesus.*

**103.1 “The Heart of Cross-bearing”**

[**Matthew 20:25-28**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?book_id=47&chapter=20&verse=25&end_verse=27&version=49&context=context)“*But Jesus called them to Himself and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

This unit will follow the phrases in this Scripture:

\*\*Becoming a servant (the illustration of Jesus’ life)

\*\*Becoming a slave (The pathway toward being a slave)

\*\*Giving your life as a ransom (becoming a bondservant)

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**Illustration of My Call to Preach**

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“Jesus is calling all of us to follow Him and to live like He lived. Jesus is the all-time Greatest Servant that ever lived. Over and over our Lord taught His Disciples that in His Kingdom the way to true greatness, ultimate fulfillment and maximum joy was to ‘descend into greatness’ all the way down to the exalted role of a Servant. That is exactly what Jesus did and before we can become Disciple Makers, we will need to cultivate the heart of a Servant as our Lord demonstrated." Craig Rench

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**Page Three** I had no idea when I went forward at the Arlington Avenue revival service and gave all of my life to Jesus (the rest I knew at that time), that there would be such radical changes in my future. But as I look back on it now as a retired person near the end of my life, I see what a great benefit it was for Jesus to direct my life rather than for me to pursue the plans I had at that time. As God showed me new directions for my life, each of the changes seemed like “dying” in some sense, but because I had made the ultimate decision, the smaller decisions were easier. I could not see it at the time, but sanctification made my life more useful for the Master.

**Matthew 10:37-39** *“The one who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and the one who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.**And the one who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. The one who has found his life will lose it, and the one who has lost his life on My account will find it.****”***

\*\*Loving this life more…

\*\*Taking the cross to follow

\*\*Losing life and finding it

**Luke 14:33** *“So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.”*

**I Corinthians 1:14**  *“For the word of the****cross****is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”*

**There is something so challenging about giving up our life—or at least what we think is our life—and trusting Jesus even unto death.** (Revelation 12:11)

For me, the most extreme example in Scripture is Mary, the virgin girl, the mother of Jesus.” *“…Mary said, “Behold, the Lord’s bond-servant; may it be done to me according to your word.”* (Luke 1:23). Mary risked the only thing of value that she had as a young woman—her virginity and ability to marry. It should have been death according to the law of the day for her to become pregnant without the protection of marriage. But she took the step of being a bond-servant. She entered into a covenant with God through the visit of that angel.

Zacharias, her relative and the father of John the Baptist, just argued with God. He risked nothing to obey except possible ridicule. He was in the temple, the place where you would expect God to speak—not Nazareth where no one thought God would do something significant. Unfortunately, his response is too typical.

**Page Four**

1. **Jesus: the Servant/the Slave/the Ransom**

**Philippians 2:3-8** *“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men.  Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”*

The pathway of becoming a servant cannot be described better than it is in this portion of Scripture. We are to have the same attitude and mind-set as He did. Emptying himself (unit 102) precedes becoming a bond-servant **and carrying our cross.** The temptation is to try to sacrifice our lives on our own terms, rather than in obedience to what God says and where He leads.

1. **Disciples: the Servant/ the Slave/ the Ransoming One**

**Colossians 3:22-24** *“Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.”*

**Ephesians 6:7-8** *“With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.”*

There is a singleness to the aspect of carrying our cross that Jesus gives us. It is too easy to look around and assume that others have not had to make the same intense sacrifice that we are called to make. But God does not err in His assignments. It is “**our** cross” that we are to take up—not someone else’s. The heart of the person bearing the cross that Jesus gives is one whose desire is to please their Master, no matter what the cost may be. We make our sacrifice and our service to the Lord, not to any church or any substitute.

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**My call to Wilmington**

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**Page Five**

1. **Bondservants: The Servants/ the Slaves/ the Ransoming Ones**

**II Timothy 2:24-26** *“The Lord's bondservant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.”*

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This verse shows that for a bondservant, there is a complete lack of “self-protection” and “self-preservation.” This person has surrendered all of their “rights” for the purpose of pleasing their Master and trusting Him with their lives. This quote for Craig Rench may further help you understand what God is asking of us and all who completely follow Him.

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**“The concept of a Love-Slave** comes to us from the Old Testament. **Exodus 21:5-6** and **Deuteronomy 15:16-17** tell us about an ancient custom. When a Hebrew slave had served his time (no more than 6 years – for God mandated that on the 7th year they were to be freed) and was about to be set free, if the slave had been treated so well by his or her master that he or she had grown to love their master… they could do something very special and unusual. They could **bond themselves** together to their master **for life** by declaring that they wanted to be their master’s **Love-Slave forever**. To signify this, there would be a public ceremony when the Love-Slave would have their ear pierced with an awl and they would voluntarily declare their life-long commitment to be the Love-Slave of their master for the rest of their days.” Craig Rench

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Finally, the Scripture below ought to be useful for all of us to understand that in the life of the Christ-follower there will be suffering. It would seem from a simple reading of these verses that this life of suffering is necessary in order to be found in glory with Him. Surely there is no sacrifice or suffering that can compare to an eternity in the presence of God with all His Glory. Our suffering as followers of Christ seems to be related to the effects of the fall in the garden, and the intent of God to turn back the curse that occurred there. As we experience the normal pains of this life in our body and soul and add to them the misunderstandings of others and the accusations of the evil one, look forward to your life for eternity in glory.

**Page Six**

**Romans 8:16-25** *“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.* *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. 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. 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.”*