

Wayne Rickerson

# ANCHORING

LIVING BY THE 7 GREAT  
ANCHORS OF GOD

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## THE DISCIPLE'S JOURNEY

**STAGE 3: THE CHOOSING** *"Jesus...chose twelve of them..." Luke 6:13*

**STAGE 4: THE SENDING** *"And He sent them out..." Luke 9:2*

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# ANCHORING



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*Acts 4:32, 34*

*All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. There were no needy persons among them...*

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# **ANCHORING**

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# **SECTION 1**

# **THE CHOOSING**

# **PART 1: PREPARING TO ANCHOR**

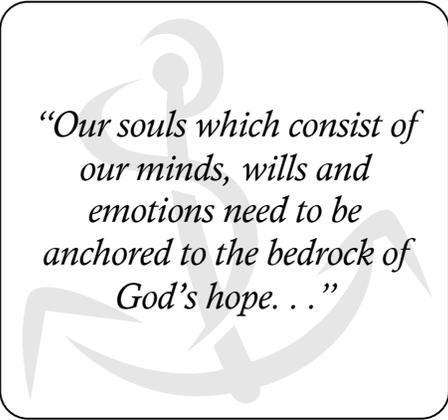
1. INTRODUCTION TO ANCHORING

2. TRAINING IN GODLINESS

3. PREPARING TO DROP ANCHOR

# SESSION 1

## INTRODUCTION TO ANCHORING



*“Our souls which consist of our minds, wills and emotions need to be anchored to the bedrock of God’s hope. . .”*

Congratulations to you who have made the cut and have been chosen to participate in the most challenging of *The Disciple’s Journey* courses. *Anchoring* is the pivotal course of the third and fourth stages of discipleship.

You have demonstrated that you are among the “few”. You have been faithful, available and teachable.

There are some of you who have decided to do this study who are not participated in the first two stages of *The Disciple’s Journey*. We welcome you. Here is brief overview of the five stages of the journey.

### STAGE 1: THE INVITATION

*“The Starting Five” (John 1:35-51)*

Jesus developed His disciples in stages. He did not immediately call these men to become fully devoted followers. He brought them along, step by step, until they were ready to fully commit to following Him. The Apostle John gives us the earliest account of Jesus’ interaction with His future disciples some time in A.D. 26. “The Starting Five”, as we will call them, first were introduced to Jesus by John the Baptist. When they met Jesus they had not yet come to faith in Him. Here is how John describes that first meeting:

*John 1:35-39 (NIV)*

*<sup>35</sup> The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup> When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” <sup>37</sup> When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup> Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?” They said, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” <sup>39</sup> “Come,” he replied, “and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour.*

Here we have the first example of new believer follow up. Jesus immediately met with these men, brought them to true faith in Him and began the process of giving them a firm foundation in the basics of becoming a disciple. A.B. Bruce in his classic, *The Training of the Twelve*, referring to this stage says,

*“The twelve arrived at their final, intimate relation to Jesus only by degrees...In the first stage they were simply believers in Him as the Christ, and His occasional companions at convenient, particularly festive, seasons.”*

*Spiritual Boot Camp* is the resource that is used for this first stage of *The Disciple’s Journey*. Everyone is invited to participate in this first nine week course which is designed to teach the basics of the Christian faith.

### STAGE 2: THE CALLING

*“The Fab Five” (Matthew 4:19-20; 9:9; Mark 1:17)*

In the second stage of discipleship Jesus called some of the disciples who were His occasional followers, to be His permanent companions. Jesus had been able to observe their level of commitment for approximately a year. This is Mark's account of, "The Calling":

Mark 1:17-18 (NIV)

<sup>17</sup> "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." <sup>18</sup> At once they left their nets and followed him.

He called those who showed that they were ready for the challenge of the next stage. Jesus was not ready to "choose" the final twelve. He would spend about another year with them before "The Choosing stage." Jesus called His disciples at this time so they would be with Him on a more regular basis and He could train them to become fishers of men. This training began immediately as they followed Him on His first Galilean tour starting in the summer of A.D. 27.

Because of your faithfulness in the first two stages of *The Disciple's Journey* you will now continue the journey through the third and fourth stages. It was at these stages that Jesus began spending an increasing amount of time with a select group of His disciples. The challenges became greater as He began to send them out to practice what they were learning.

*7 Great Doctrines of the Bible* is the resource that you will go through in this second stage of *The Disciple's Journey*. The focus is on becoming firmly grounded in sound doctrine and to become "fishers of men".

### STAGE 3: THE CHOOSING

"The Dirty Dozen" (*Luke 6:12-13; Mark 3:14-15*)

The larger group of disciples followed Jesus from the summer of A.D. 27 until the winter of A.D. 28. During this nearly 1 ½ year of being with Jesus on His second Galilean tour they had learned much and were now ready for more intensive training to prepare them to be sent out on their own.

During this stage Jesus makes the final cut and chooses from among His followers twelve men whom He designated Apostles. From this point on His main focus would be training the twelve. He did this while still including other disciples and teaching the crowds. The following were the twelve disciples who made the cut. We will call them "The Dirty Dozen." Those first disciples were just ordinary largely unschooled men that God choose to lead in extraordinary ways. (*Acts 4:13*)

Luke 6:12-16 (NIV)

<sup>12</sup> One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. <sup>13</sup> When morning came, he called his disciples to him and **chose twelve of them**, whom he also designated apostles: <sup>14</sup> Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, <sup>15</sup> Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, <sup>16</sup> Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. (Bold added)

The first thing we see is that Jesus spent the night in prayer before He chose twelve disciples from the many who followed Him. Jesus knew that the future of Christianity depended on faithful disciples who would become reproducers. From this point on He would concentrate on the "Dirty Dozen." This select group of

disciples would be “with him” in continuous association and intimate fellowship. The hardcore training would now occur. They would soon be ready for “The Sending Stage” and then “Commissioned” to go and make disciples.

Jesus’ plan from the beginning was that He would invest His life in a few. Robert E. Coleman in his excellent book on discipleship, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, says,

*“Hence, as the company of followers around Jesus increased, it became necessary by the middle of his second year of ministry to narrow the select company to a more manageable number. Accordingly, Jesus “Called his disciples, and he chose from them twelve, whom also he named apostles.” (p. 2)*

Following is Mark’s account of the choosing:

Mark 3:13-14

<sup>13</sup> Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. <sup>14</sup> He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—**that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach** <sup>15</sup> and to have authority to drive out demons. (Bold added)

We know from later accounts in the gospels that Jesus’ decision to focus on twelve men did not mean he excluded others from following Him. There were also the seventy-two who were appointed by Jesus and sent out (*Luke 10:1*). In addition there were hundreds of others who followed Jesus at various times. He did not include them all in the select circle of twelve. Jesus’ principle of discipleship was very clear: *The smaller the group, the more concentrated the training and the greater the potential for effective reproduction*. The small group was the primary method Jesus used for training disciples

Because you have proven faithful during the previous stages of *The Disciple’s Journey* and shown a high level of commitment, you have been chosen to enter “The Choosing Stage”. This stage is only for those who are willing to pay the price for further intentional and intense discipleship training. It is for those who are willing to reproduce themselves in others.

This book has three sections. The first Section of *Anchoring* is twelve weeks and takes you through “The Choosing Stage.” The focus on this stage will be combined group study time and group ministry and outreach time. You will do ministry together. The focus is not just on knowing more but using what you know in hands on ministry. Each month you will participate in some kind of outreach together. You will dig deeper into the Scriptures and walk further in the footsteps of Jesus.

## STAGE 4: THE SENDING

The “Dirty Dozen” and “Band of Brothers” (*Luke 9:1-4; Luke 10:1,17; Mark 6:6-7,30; Matthew 10:1,5*)

“The Choosing Stage” prepared the disciples for “The Sending Stage”. These two stages seem to merge together. Jesus now sent His disciples out to practice what He had taught them. The disciples were sent out on their mission in the fall of AD 29. This stage lasted approximately one year until they were commissioned to go into the whole world and make disciples of all the nations. (*Matt. 28: 18-20*)

During the sending stage Jesus sent out two groups of disciples to practice what they had learned. The first group was the “Dirty Dozen.”

Luke 9:1-4

*<sup>1</sup> When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, <sup>2</sup> and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. <sup>3</sup> He told them: “Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic. <sup>4</sup> Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town.*

The second group we have referred to as the “The Band of Brothers.” There were 72 of them that were sent out two by two ahead of Jesus.

Luke 10:1

*<sup>1</sup> After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.*

Section two of *Anchoring* is “The Sending Stage”. In addition to your group study time during these next twelve weeks you will be “sent out” for specific ministry projects. What these are will depend on the unique situation of your group and your church. The goal will be to gain practical experience by using what you have been learning.

## **STAGE 5: THE COMMISSIONING**

“All the Others” (*Matthew 28: 18-20*)

Matthew 28:18-20

*<sup>18</sup> Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

The disciples were commissioned by God to make other disciples. They were to reproduce what Jesus had produced in them. It was a mandate, not an option. Jesus had spent three plus years with them for this very moment. They were to pass the baton to others. That was Jesus’ plan for producing mature Christians and developing leaders for the church.

## **ANCHORING - LIVING BY THE 7 GREAT ANCHORS OF GOD**

Now a few words about how to use this resource. Anchoring is not a new concept for those of you have gone through “The Invitation Stage” and “The Calling Stage of *The Disciple’s Journey*. Starting with *Spiritual Boot*

*Camp* you have been asked to memorize and review key scriptures. While this was not called anchoring, that is exactly what it was. The challenge now is to raise the bar as you learn more scripture, dig deeper into its meaning and make a commitment to follow this exercise of strict spiritual discipline for the rest of your life.

Anchoring is a strategy for living by the 7 great anchors of God and dropping these anchors in the bedrock of hope. The word “anchor” is found only once in the Bible. The term is used to describe the rock solid foundation we possess as we put our hope in Christ. The writer of Hebrews says,

Hebrews 6:19

<sup>19</sup> *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain,*

Whereas a ship’s anchor is anchored in the ocean bed, we drop our anchors into the bedrock of hope in God who is “...*the rock eternal...*” (Isaiah 26:4) We are moored in Christ and therefore our souls are firm and secure in His perfect character. The great old hymn “*We Have an Anchor*” paints a vivid word picture of how our souls are anchored. The refrain says,

*“We have an anchor that keeps the soul  
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll,  
Fastened to the rock which cannot move  
Grounded firm and deep in the Savior’s love.”*

Our souls which consist of our minds, wills and emotions need to be anchored to the bedrock of God’s hope. Everyone has some kind of anchors. The real question is, “What is the source of those anchors? What are they made of? What do they produce?” The goal of this book is to help you develop a set of foundational and strategic anchors from God’s Word that become authoritative reference points to guide your life. Anchors are like the North Star that for centuries navigators used to set the course of their ships. The North Star could always be counted on to guide them in the right direction. The anchors of God are our North Star. They are the only authoritative reference points that are perfectly true and never change. Following are the definitions we will use in this course.

### Anchors



*An anchor is a core doctrine or biblical principle that we choose to be an authoritative standard for everything we think and do. It includes truth and action.*

**Foundational anchors** are general in nature and cover the great themes of the Bible. The 7 foundational anchors in this course are: the sovereignty of God; the fatherhood of God, the servanthood of Jesus, the holiness of God, the Word of God, the faithfulness of God and the love of God. You will see that they represent seven great themes of the Bible. From Genesis to Revelation these themes or anchors as we call them, provide a firm foundation for living a godly life. These anchors keep us safe from the storms of life that we all experience. When trials come we know how to “drop anchor”.

**Anchor points** are derivatives of our foundational anchors and provide a practical way to apply them to our lives. Anchor points give us a strategy for renewing our minds and transforming our actions. In this course each foundational anchor consists of three strategic anchor points.

### Anchoring



*Anchoring involves memorizing and meditating on the truth and action of a core group of anchors and related scriptures, reviewing them five days a week and using them as an authoritative standard for every thought and action.*

The goal of anchoring is for the great anchors of God to renew your mind and transform your actions. Over a period of time these anchors will become automatic. You will develop a kind of “biblical critical mass” that will be a permanent, pervasive part of the structure of your soul—mind, will and emotions. These anchors will determine everything you think and do. They will shape your character and form your worldview. Anchors determine how well we will accomplish the plans and purposes God has prepared for us. We are the sum total of our anchors.

### **Dropping anchor**



*Anchoring includes dropping anchor when we face an issue or trial by recalling a specific anchor truth and action and applying it to the issue or trial.*

There are storms in life. Sometimes we face perfect storms where a combination of trials or losses can cause us to lose our spiritual and emotional equilibrium. At other times we face temptations. And there are always the normal issues of life that require wisdom. When anchoring is a permanent part of our lives we will be able to “drop anchor” at these critical times. Anchors will be part of the structure of our minds to such an extent that we will recall them and apply them to whatever situation we are facing. Dropping an anchor which consists of truth and action enables us to weather the storm. Our “ship” will not be blown off course or sink as did the ships in one of the most prestigious yacht races in the world.

The Fastnet Race is the final event in a series of five races that make up the Admiral’s Cup. In the summer of 1979, 303 yachts started this famous race from the Isle of Wight in the English Channel with their goal being first to finish the 608 mile distance.

The race started on Saturday in perfect weather. However, by noon on Monday gale force winds created swells up to 40 feet high. The 2500 people who made up the crews of these yachts fought the raging winds and sea while being tossed about like toy boats in the ocean. The boats sent out mayday calls and British, Irish and Dutch teams in boats and helicopters came to the rescue. Despite the heroic efforts of these people, fifteen of the sailors died and only eighty-five of the 303 yachts reached the finish line. The race turned into the worst disaster in yachting history.

There were two major mistakes that precipitated this tragedy. The first mistake was that the crews were not prepared for this kind of a storm. There are two basic rules of the sea that were not observed. First, every boat except one did not use a device that could well have saved them. All boats were equipped with a sea anchor or set of drogues. These sea anchors were drag devices that could be used to steady a boat in high seas. They enabled the helmsman to maintain control. Only one boat used the sea anchors and that boat survived. Boats were abandoned and crews lost when a sea anchor could have kept the yachts afloat and the crews alive.

A second major mistake was made when some of the crews decided they would have a better chance if they jumped ship. Bad mistake! Many of those who exchanged their yachts for lifeboats and rafts died while those who stayed with the ships lived. Lifeboats should have been used as an absolute last resort. There are major lessons we can learn from these mistakes:

**The first lesson is that anchors are essential.** From ancient times, anchors have been a symbol of hope and stability. Everyone needs the rock solid foundation of Biblical anchors. We should know exactly what

these anchors are and consistently live by them. If someone asks us “What anchors you?” we should be able to describe our anchors, how they ground us and why they are important.

**The second lesson is that we must be prepared to drop anchor.** The fatal mistake was that the crews on these state of the art yachts were not prepared to drop anchor. They had failed at the preparation stage. They had meticulously prepared every way except the one way that would have saved their lives. In many ways this course is about preparation. The following passage sums up what this book is all about:

1 Peter 1:13-15

*<sup>13</sup> Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. <sup>15</sup> But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;*

**Preparing to drop anchor**

The process of anchoring in this book is quite simple. Each of the 7 foundational anchors has three strategic anchor points that consists of a **truth** and an **action**. The truth is the anchoring Scripture you will memorize. The anchor action is a prayer of commitment to faithfully live by that anchor. In this course you will memorize and review these foundational anchors five days a week. The goal is to continue to do this for the rest of your life.

By following the strict training regimen the 7 great anchors of God will become a permanent part of your life. Through the repetition of memorization and meditation these anchors will become automatic. They will be engrafted into your thinking. When you make this practice a regular part of your life you will eventually reach biblical critical mass.

**ANCHORING IN ACTION**

I started anchoring over twenty years ago although it has only been in the last ten years that I have referred to this practice as anchoring. This resource is in many ways the story of how anchoring has impacted my journey of spiritual growth. Therefore, you will see the bad with the good, some ups and downs, failures and successes. I never want to imply that I have discovered the perfect strategy for the perfect life. I still believe life is messy. But I also believe that despite the messes we make, or the messes that other people make that affect us, or the messy circumstances that are just a result of living in an imperfect world, we can still be anchored in peace, love and joy.

Anchoring represents how I want to live my life. I review my anchors most days of the week. My goal is to review them at least five days each week. There are times I fall short of this goal but overall I try to be consistent. The 7 great anchors of God that you will learn in this book have become a blessing to me. They help me “drop anchor” in times of stress, temptation or weakness. For example I have made a commitment to be morally pure so I go through my anchors on moral maturity just about every day.

One **Anchor Truth** I review is:

Ephesians 5:3

*<sup>3</sup> But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.*

**My Anchor Action** (prayer of commitment) is:

*Lord I am resolved, like Daniel to be morally pure by not defiling myself with any inappropriate thoughts or actions. I will honor You, marriage, and Janet by keeping the marriage bed pure. (Hebrews 13:4)*

Probably the anchors I drop most often are the anchors of the sovereignty of God. For example, when I start having doubts about how I am going to finish and distribute this discipleship series or worrying about whether anyone will actually use it, I drop the anchors of His sovereignty.

One **Anchor Truth** I review is:

Isaiah 46:9-11

*<sup>9</sup>Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. <sup>10</sup>I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. <sup>11</sup>From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do.*

My **Anchor Action** (prayer of commitment) is:

*Lord, you are the all-powerful, sovereign creator and sustainer of the universe. I acknowledge your absolute rule over everything that exists. I know that nothing happens in heaven and on earth without your initiative or permission. Therefore I will trust you for your purposes and plans for the world and for my life.*

When I start reviewing these anchoring Scriptures on the sovereign power of God my doubts are erased and my faith restored as God faithfully renews my mind. This will happen to you as well—God guarantees it (*Rom. 12: 1-2*). I hope these examples give you a sense of how anchoring works in real life. You may even think, “I already do this. I just haven’t called it anchoring”. This course will give you some tools to help you be more intentional.

In many ways this training manual is a story of my spiritual pilgrimage. In the “Exploring the Anchor” sections I will share with you some of the things God has done in my life to shape me into His image. But the most important thing I can do in this book is to invite you into the presence of God through Scripture and try to stay out of the way so He can work in your life.

*My goal is to bring you into the presence of God so that you can experience the Father in intimate fellowship and be transformed into the image of His Son through the Word by the power of the Holy Spirit so that you will become a reproducing disciple, glorifying Him forever.*

I realize that sentence is one you could choke on, but it does capture my goal for this resource. My words cannot transform you. What I have to say is relatively unimportant. Only God and His Word can transform us. The Apostle Paul affirmed this. He said,

1 Corinthians 3:7

*<sup>7</sup> So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.*

## PREPARING FOR GROUP TIME

Following is an outline of how each group session is structured and how to prepare for these sessions. Unlike the first two courses this book is not structured for five days of study. It will be up to you to decide how much

material you will study each day in order to complete the assignments for group time. As you will see there are five parts to each week's assignment. Not all take the same amount of time. I still recommend that you spend at least five days a week doing this study. This will help you overcome the temptation to procrastinate and try to do too much at one time. Spending some time each day for five days a week will keep you in the habit of daily appointments with God plus spreading out the work so that you do not rush through it. It is especially important to spend some time each day on the memory work. Anchoring depends on the consistent review of anchor truths and actions. Following are the five parts of each week's study.

### **1. Anchor point truth and anchor point action**

Each anchor point you study will have two or more verses of Scripture to mediate on, memorize and study. Spend some time each day memorizing the anchor point truths for the week and review Scripture you have already memorized. This should include memory assignments from previous *Disciple's Journey* courses. Also spend time memorizing the anchor point action. You will review memory projects in your group sessions.

### **2. Explore the anchor**

The "Exploring the Anchor" section is teaching that explores various aspects of the Anchor. Read this section carefully and think deeply about the Scriptures cited and the thoughts presented.

### **3. Dig deeper**

You will dig deeper into the anchor point by studying some of the passages of Scripture in your own Bible and answering key study and application questions. Be sure to write out all of your answers in the space that is provided. You will share some of your answers in group sessions.

### **4. Search the Word Study Guide**

In each session there is a "Search the Word Study Guide". Here you will study a major passage of Scripture using the tools of observation, interpretation and application. Be sure to set aside quality time for this project so you can, "*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth*" ( 2 Timothy 2:15). You will share your insights from this study during group time. If you are new to *The Disciple's Journey* and are not familiar with Bible study tools you will find a section on Bible study in *Spiritual Boot Camp*. You can download this from the *Anchors of God* website ([www.anchorsofgod.com](http://www.anchorsofgod.com))

### **5. Drop Anchor**

The "Drop Anchor" application section will help you take all you have learned and apply it to your life in a practical way. There will be four suggestions for application. These are just suggestions and we do not expect you to answer each one. People often have difficulty applying truth to their lives so this is one way to help you in this area. Decide on one way you will apply the anchor point during the week.

### **6. Accountability**

Accountability is being willing to be accountable to others for certain critical areas of your life. Accountability involves confession, prayer and encouragement. We see the importance of confession and accountability in James:

*James 5:16*

*<sup>16</sup> Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*

- **Confession** - We are to confess our sins to one another. This is simply being honest about our strengths and weaknesses. It involves an open and honest sharing of our sins, struggles and victories. Those of you who have been on *The Disciple's Journey* are accustomed to participating in this aspect of discipleship and know the value of it.
- **Prayer** - We are to pray for one another so we will be healed. While James is referring primarily to physical healing it certainly can be applied to spiritual and emotional healing as well. Body, soul and spirit are intimately connected.
- **Encouragement** - We are told in Scripture that encouragement is a critical part of overcoming temptation. The writer of the book of Hebrews says:

Hebrews 3:12-13

*<sup>12</sup> See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. <sup>13</sup> But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.*

We all do better with accountability. Most of us have good intentions but fail to live up to all of our commitments.

*Accountability turns good intentions into godly disciplines.*

### Accountability Questions

Following are some areas for which you will be accountable during weekly group session:

1. Have you been faithful this week to your *Disciple's Journey* Covenant?
2. Do you have any sins or shortcomings to confess?
3. Have you been a humble servant to your spouse and children?
4. Have you been a godly example to non-believers and looked for opportunities to share your faith?
5. Have you been pure and holy in all your relationships?
6. Is there a specific area in which you would like prayer and encouragement?
7. Is there an area of your life for which you would like specific accountability for next week's session?

### Prepare 4"x6" Memory Review Cards

If you have been traveling on *The Disciple's Journey* you are already in the habit of using your 4x6 spiral or ring bound memory review cards. These cards will be a tool to help you retain the Anchors that you have learned during *The Disciple's Journey*. On one side write the anchor truths. On the flip side write the anchor action, other memory assignments and key insights, Scripture references, and information you want to remember. Keep these cards with you so you can study them at various times during the day. Be sure to have these cards with you for review in group sessions.

### Preparation Time

Preparation time will be approximately 2 ½ to 3 ½ hours a week. This works out to 30-40 minutes a day five days a week. Some weeks will take more time, some less. I suggest you have a specific time each day for an appointment with God. Schedule that time and write it on your calendar. If you have a regularly scheduled time each week for study you will be more consistent. Remember that you will never "find" time you must continue to "make" time.

It is a myth to say we do not have time for regular appointments with God. World-class servants have always set aside substantial amounts of time to spend with God no matter how difficult the situation. Hudson Taylor, the great pioneer missionary who founded China Inland Mission, had almost no time for himself. He constantly faced the pressure of people, illness, and administrative duties. When on his many trips to visit villages in China, he would finally get to bed about midnight. At three in the morning his co-workers could set their clock by the scratch of a match and lighting of a candle. Hudson Taylor would then spend the next two hours in the Word and prayer before catching a couple more hours of sleep. It is obvious that Hudson Taylor believed that **nothing was more important** than his appointment with God. He could not exist without it.

Jesus constantly carved out time from His demanding schedule to spend time with His Father. This did not go unnoticed by the gospel writers who observed His resolve.

Mark 1:35

<sup>35</sup> *Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.*

### **Shared Leadership**

In Section II of this Anchoring course everyone will take turns leading a group session. This will continue throughout the duration of the course and help prepare you for leading your own group.

### **Serving Together**

During *The Calling Stage* the focus was on outreach, learning to effectively present *The Bridge*, praying for the lost, building relationships with non-believers and sharing your faith when given an opportunity. During the “Choosing” and “Sending” stages you will continue this emphasis plus other kinds of servant outreach projects. You will decide as a group how you will serve together. In some service projects you will be sent out two by two.

### **The Disciple’s Covenant**

You signed a *Disciple’s Journey Covenant* when you entered “The Calling Stage”, so this is more like a covenant renewal. This covenant is a reminder of your commitment to faithfully complete all assignments and other related commitments so you will continue to grow in the character of Christ. First read the covenant and Scriptures. Pray and sign the covenant.

1. I will faithfully complete all assignments each week and be ready to participate fully in my group (2 *Timothy 4:2*).
2. I will deny myself, taking up my cross daily and following in the footsteps of Jesus (*Luke 9:23*).
3. I will make becoming a fully devoted disciple of Jesus a priority and not allow distractions of this world to keep me from time in the Word, prayer, and my group. (*Mark 1:35; Luke 9:57-62*).
4. I will be accountable to others in the group, always being completely honest and open about my weaknesses as well as my strengths (*James 5:16-20; Hebrews 3:13*).

5. I am willing to pass on the discipleship baton and reproduce myself in others by leading them through the five stages of discipleship (*Matthew 28:28-30; 2 Timothy 2:1-2*).

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Anchored Forever**

Shortly after New Year's Day, while working out at LA Fitness, I mentioned to a friend that the gym always fills up after the holidays. We exchanged some sarcastic remarks about how the gym would be back to normal in a few months. Over the years we had seen so many people with good intentions soon revert back to old behaviors. Many of the new members would vanish, with some reappearing next year at about the same time. Then my friend reminded me of an old Nike ad that claimed, "There is no finish line."

Nike, in an attempt to inspire continued effort (and of course to sell the latest shoes), did touch on an important principle. While there might be a finish line for a particular event, there is no finish line when it comes to training. Only consistently sticking to a schedule of training produces world-class athletes. This is also true of the Christian life. There is no finish line in that we will never reach the goal of measuring up to the fullness of Christ. There is no off season! To be all that God wants us to be in this life, and to prepare for eternal life we are to continually train for godliness. Paul told Timothy,

*1 Timothy 4:7-8*

*<sup>7</sup> Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, **train yourself to be godly.** <sup>8</sup> For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, **holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.** (Bold added)*

Since there is no finish line, Anchoring is not merely a course to be completed or spiritual disciplines to be learned, but a commitment to a lifetime of training. Training in godliness not only prepares us for this life but also prepares us for the life to come. I pray that after completing *The Disciple's Journey* you will set your life on a course of anchoring forever.

## **PART 1: PREPARING TO DROP ANCHOR**

Part one is designed to prepare you to live by the 7 great anchors of God. The structure of the sessions in Part 1 is different from Part 2. You will prepare for group time by completing the following assignments:

### **Reading**

First you will read the material in the session as you have just done.

### **Study questions**

Next you will answer the study and application questions at the end of the reading.

### **Memory project**

There will be a scripture and other related principles to study, memorize and write on your index cards.

### **Accountability questions**

Review the accountability questions in Session I and be prepared to share your answers with the group.





## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR SESSION 1

Answer the following questions about what you have read. Look up the Scriptures in your own Bible.

1. Review the five stages of *The Disciple's Journey*. You are entering stages three and four. What has your experience been like so far? What have been your struggles and victories?
2. As you enter the "Choosing" and "Sending" stages what do you want to see God do in your life? What are you excited about? What are you concerned about?
3. Look up *1 Peter 1:13-15* in your own Bible. Review the definitions of "anchor", "anchoring" and "drop anchor". In what specific ways does this passage apply to the principles of anchoring?
4. Look up *1 Timothy 4:7-8* in your own Bible. How is it possible to train ourselves to be Godly? What is our part and what is God's part?
5. When you think about "anchoring forever" what thoughts and feelings do you have?
6. As you begin the most challenging stages of *The Disciple's Journey*, what commitments are you willing to make that will enable you to finish strong?

### ACCOUNTABILITY

Review the accountability questions on page 17 and be prepared to share your answers with the group.



## MEMORIZATION AND MEDITATION PROJECT

Memorize and meditate on *Matthew 7: 24-25* and answer the questions that follow: Write the Scripture on the front side of your index card for this session.

*Matthew 7:24-25 - <sup>24</sup>“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup>The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. (Write this Scripture on the front side of your index card for this session).*

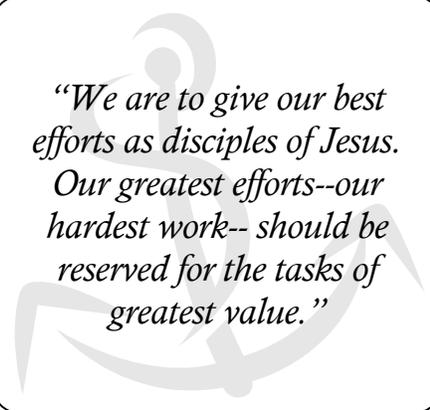
1. Read verses 24-29. What is the main point that Jesus is making in this passage?
2. What does this passage say about the importance of building our lives on solid foundations?
3. What is the “rock” on which we are to build our lives?
4. In what ways does this passage apply to the principle of anchoring described by the author?
5. What does this passage say to you?

**Memorize the following definition of anchoring and write it on the back side of your index card for this session.**

*Anchoring involves memorizing and meditating on the truth and action of a core group of anchors and related Scriptures, reviewing them regularly and using them as an authoritative standard for every thought and action.*

# SESSION 2

## TRAINING IN GODLINESS



*“We are to give our best efforts as disciples of Jesus. Our greatest efforts--our hardest work-- should be reserved for the tasks of greatest value.”*

### ANCHORING

*Anchoring involves memorizing and meditating on the truth and action of a core group of anchors and related Scriptures, reviewing them five days a week and using them as an authoritative standard for every thought and action.*

First he was a legend in his own back yard. As a toddler Phil Mickelson, for a long time known as the best golfer never to win a major tournament, dragged around a golf club that his father had cut down to his size. Phil would hit balls in the 35-yard hole that his father had made for him in his back yard. From morning till night, almost every day, Phil junior would try to make a hole in one on every shot.

Standing at the 18<sup>th</sup> hole at the prestigious PGA tournament, years of preparation paid off in a dramatic way. Having fallen into a three way tie with Steve Elkington and Thomas Bjorn, Phil stood on the 18<sup>th</sup> fairway with 247 yards to the flag. He cut lose with one of his famous drives only to see the ball disappear in the thick rough of the green. The ball was so deeply imbedded in the thick Kentucky bluegrass that when it was found it was lost again. Before hitting the ball Phil said he flashed back to making the same shot in his backyard thousands of times. It was so ingrained in his memory that he could have done it blindfolded. Phil hit the ball perfectly, birdieing the 18<sup>th</sup> hole and winning his second major tournament.

### TRAINING IN GODLINESS

Phil Mickelson’s dramatic story of the importance of preparation is not unique to him. This story has been repeated in all sports countless times throughout history. Over two thousand years ago when the Apostle Paul wanted to emphasize the importance of preparation and training for spiritual growth he chose athletics to make his point. To his disciple Timothy he wrote,

1 Timothy 4:7-8

*<sup>7</sup> Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. <sup>8</sup> For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.*

Timothy was to “train yourself to be godly.” Paul put a high value on a disciplined approach to spiritual growth. He emphasized training as a way to achieve the ultimate goal of glorifying God by being godly. His way of describing what this training involved was to compare it to the discipline and hard work involved in athletics.

What is godliness? Godliness is simply being like Jesus by reflecting His character and mission. It is being holy as God is holy (1 Peter 1:13-16). It is to “...become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ”. (Ephesians 4:13) The ultimate goal is to glorify God. It is this goal that will motivate us to persevere in the discipline of spiritual training.

## **World-class servants**

What Paul was stressing is this: If you want to be your best for God, preparation and training is not optional, it is essential. Paul exhorts believers to be what I call in this book, “world-class servants”. *A world-class servant’s goal is to be godly, glorifying God in all he or she says and does.* It involves becoming great by becoming a humble, selfless, obedient servant. Jesus told His disciples what it meant to be great:

### Matthew 20:25-28

*<sup>25</sup> Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>24</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be your slave — <sup>28</sup> just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

## **Cross training**

Cross-training is a term used in training that refers to the combining of exercises in order to work various parts of the body. Training in godliness involves a different kind of cross-training. The cross training Jesus called disciples to was one of denial and sacrifice. It is a training of the soul—mind, will and emotions. Jesus said if anyone wanted to be His disciple he must be willing to first deny himself by being willing to “take up his cross daily”.

### Luke 9:23

*<sup>23</sup> Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.*

The road to greatness that Jesus required His disciples to take was not an easy one. The preparation required self denial and sacrifice. The training Jesus offered involved a total commitment to become a fully devoted follower. Jesus set the bar high for the training. Only those who would fully commit to His training regimen were allowed to be in His inner circle.

## **PREPARATION**

During this session we will look at some important lessons of spiritual growth by comparing training in godliness to training in athletics. We will see that significant spiritual growth takes the same dedication and strict training that it takes to become a world-class athlete. Athletes go through rigorous training to get a reward that will not last, but we do it to get a reward that will last forever. We should be even more eager to go into strict training to become world-class servants!

The overriding theme of being successful in any sport is preparation. Coaches and athletes constantly stress the importance of preparation. I recently saw an interview of Mike Krzyzewski who has coached the Duke basketball for thirty-six years. When asked how long he would coach, Coach “K”, the winningest coach in the history of basketball replied, “Until I stop wanting to prepare. When you lose your motivation to prepare you cheat the game. I still love to prepare.”

## **The importance of preparation**

The Bible stresses the importance of preparation for godliness. The Apostle Peter said,

### 1 Peter 1:13-16

<sup>13</sup> Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. <sup>15</sup> But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; <sup>16</sup> for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

Peter called for Christians to be prepared in two basic areas.

- ❖ Be prepared by training your mind. *"Therefore prepare your minds for action". (v.13)*

The phrase, *"Prepare...for action"* in the original language, referred to a man gathering up his long flowing robe to be ready for action. This preparation involved two essential disciplines: Believers' **minds** were to be prepared in advance with the **truth** of God's Word so they would know what to say and do in all situations.

- ❖ Prepared by training of actions *"Be self controlled; obedient..." (v.14)*

Believers were to decide in advance what **actions** they would take based on their **beliefs**. This is the essence of anchoring. Each anchor that you learn will prepare your mind and actions. These are the core disciplines of training in godliness.

Peter went on to tell believers to *"Set your hope fully on... grace". (v.13)* Only the hope of God's grace is sufficient motivation to have the discipline to be prepared in mind and action to be holy. It is obvious that Peter and Paul saw no conflict between grace and strict training and discipline. Grace is God's unfailing love demonstrated by the gift of His Son dying on the cross for our sins.

*"But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;" (v. 15-16).*

The ultimate goal of preparation is to enable the believer to be holy in every thought and action just as God is holy: *"But just as he who called you is holy in all you do;" (v. 15-16).* This means that each person is set apart **to** God to serve and glorify Him, and to be set apart **from** sin and every kind of impurity. Therefore the ultimate goal of anchoring is for us to be holy, glorifying God by reflecting His character. This is only possible by the renewing power of God's Word (*Rom. 12: 1-2*).

Peyton Manning, the only player in NFL history to pass for 4,000 plus yards in six consecutive seasons, is famous for his meticulous preparation. This future Hall of Fame quarterback of the Indianapolis Colts focuses on the basics. When questioned by reporters whether he was still doing the basic things that made him great he answered, *"I try to wear out the basics."* Manning meets with his quarterback coach and offensive coordinator during the off-season at 7:15 a.m. He then devotes a workout to one specific area. This pays off on game day. Manning reports, *"You do that work in April, May and June, then you get to third and five in November with a defensive lineman in your face, it's like reset drill. You have to trust that mechanics and fundamentals will be there, and count on experience."* (LA Times, 9/11/05; Ken Murray, Baltimore Sun, pp 12)

### **The importance of the plan**

Training camps that occur before each season are carefully planned and orchestrated. Detailed plans are drawn up. Nothing is left to chance. Strength training, cardio and basic skills are rigorously honed during the few weeks before the first game is played. Effective plans include the routine—exactly what is going to

be done, when and where the plan will be implemented.

Athletes go through all this to play in a game or complete in an event! How much more should we plan for our spiritual development. Think of the difference it would make if all believers would make only a fraction of the commitment that athletes and sports teams make to preparation. Nothing should be more important to us than planning for spiritual development. God's Word says,

Isaiah 32:8

<sup>8</sup> *But the noble man makes noble plans, and by noble deeds he stands. ..*

We need to make noble plans for spiritual growth and stand by the plans. If we prayerfully commit these plans to the Lord we will succeed carrying them out. A wise proverb promises,

Proverbs 16:3

<sup>3</sup> *Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.*

Plans are useless unless they are implemented. Once our plans have been committed to the Lord we must follow through and go into, "strict training". (1 Cor. 9:25)

## STRICT TRAINING

When Paul wanted to stress this important spiritual principle to the believers in Corinth, he turned to the most important sporting events of his day. He chose to illustrate his point by comparing training for godliness to the strict training of athletes preparing for the races of the Olympic and Isthmian games. Paul says,

1 Corinthians 9:24-25

<sup>24</sup> *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. <sup>25</sup> Everyone who competes in the games goes into **strict training**. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever*

Paul knew that people in Corinth would understand that world class-athletes who competed in the games had strict training schedules. Believers were familiar with the foot races in their own Isthmian games. These were second in importance only to the Olympic Games. Paul exhorts the Christians to put that same discipline and hard work into spiritual training. Following are the six principles of strict training in godliness:

### 1. Commitment

Paul begins his emphasis on training by stressing the essential nature of commitment. We are to "run in such a way as to get the prize". To do so means we must commit to a plan of "strict training". Paul was a model of commitment to strict training. To the believers in Philippi he wrote,

Philippians 3:7-8

<sup>7</sup> *But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.*

Knowing Jesus was everything to Paul. Nothing in his life, past or present even remotely compared to his goal of gaining Christ. He said,

Philippians 3:14

<sup>14</sup> *I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

The recipients of Paul's letter would have been familiar with "the prize" to which he was referring. The winner of the Greek races received a wreath and sometimes cash as a prize for winning. This was one of the ultimate prizes and one of the highest honors that people could achieve in that culture. But for Paul it was no contest. For him the ultimate prize of knowing Jesus was the greatest of all prizes. Everything Paul did showed his commitment to reaching this goal.

## 2. Discipline

The next thing we see in Paul's training principles is discipline. Paul gave a personal example of how he exercised discipline in training to be godly.

1 Corinthians 9:26-27

<sup>26</sup> *Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. <sup>27</sup> No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*

There can be no doubt that Paul believed that strict training required discipline or self-control. He had a clear focus and a total commitment to train. He was willing to "train through the pain" as one of my tee shirts says. Discipline requires regulating ourselves for the sake of improvement. Discipline involves training that corrects, molds our thinking, behavior and therefore our moral character. Self-discipline requires us to delay gratification and choose the hard work and routine of training to reach our goal of godliness. For the athlete this means sticking to a schedule when he doesn't feel like it. It requires practicing routines and repetitions that sometimes get old and boring. It involves being on the practice field when you would really like to take the day off and just relax.

I have an exercise routine that is comprised of two areas. I play racquetball and do strength and cardio training. I love playing racquetball so that requires little self-discipline on my part. Strength and cardio training however, is another matter. I don't particularly like working out with weights and doing other kinds of body strength training. Cardio is painful. There are times I dread it. I don't look forward to the hard work and pain.

A couple of years ago I added kettlebell workouts to my training routine. A kettlebell is Russian in origin. It looks like a cannon ball with a handle on it. They come in a variety of weights from five pounds to over a hundred pounds. There are about seven basic exercises in a kettlebell routine. The most basic is the swing as shown in the following example.



You start with the kettlebell about a foot in front of you, bend over and grasp the handle with one or two hands. Then keeping your back straight you swing the kettlebell back through your legs like you are hiking a football and swing it up to slightly above waist high. Kettlebell routines work on the core, use all your muscles and are excellent for cardio. But they are also brutal. No one I know of really likes kettlebells. What they like are the benefits.

I can think of a thousand excuses not to go to my kettlebell workouts each week. I know that I will face 45 minutes of pure agony. I go because I have made a commitment to go. I go because I believe the benefits outweigh all the disadvantages. The goal of keeping physically fit motivates me each week to be faithful to my commitment.

I do this for physical fitness! But think of the surpassing value of spiritual exercise. For us to commit to strict training for godliness we must embrace this value and learn to have a passion for being spiritually fit. We must see the surpassing value of being world-class servants who glorify God in all we do and say. It is only then that we will have the self-discipline that is required for strict training.

I find that my spiritual exercise involves a combination of pleasure and discipline. I love my times with God and I have learned to love memorizing and meditating on Scripture. However to commit to a plan and be consistent requires discipline. To persevere in the strict training of anchoring requires discipline. It requires me to keep my appointment with God whether or not I feel like it. It means memorizing and reviewing Scripture when it is inconvenient and I would really like to be doing something else. I have a tee shirt that I like to wear that reminds me of my commitment to physical and spiritual disciplines. It says "Every Day is Training Day." There are times I simply have to force myself to stick to the training plan I have set up. Of course there are times when I fail to measure up to my own standards. Success in anchoring does require discipline but discipline by itself does not produce godliness. Only God can produce godliness in us. Discipline is first a fruit of our relationship with God, but it requires our participation in training (*Galatians 5:22-23; John 15:1-5*).

### 3. Fundamentals

John Wooden, legendary basketball coach of the UCLA Bruins, was noted for his focus on basics. One of the basic principles in his Pyramid of Success is **skill**. His definition of skill shows his commitment to basic fundamentals. Wooden defines skill as:

*“A knowledge of and the ability to properly execute the fundamentals. Be prepared. Cover every detail.”* (John Wooden, *My Personal Best*, McGraw Hill, 2004, pp 89)

Every sport has certain fundamentals that must be learned. These form the foundation of the sport. Everything flows from those fundamentals. I have observed that there are between four and seven fundamentals that must be learned to master any skill. For example in basketball there are the fundamentals of shooting, dribbling, passing, defending, and rebounding. In kettlebells it is the swing, the clean, the snatch and the press. Other variations stem from these basic exercises. I sometimes ask people in a profession or discipline if success in that area can be reduced to a handful of basics. They invariably say yes. Often they say these basics can be reduced to two essentials.

In the bestselling book *Blink*, author Malcolm Gladwell makes a compelling case for the power of what he calls “thin-slicing”, filtering the very few factors from the many variables to come to effective decisions. One of the examples that Gladwell uses to substantiate his thesis is John Gottman, University of Washington psychologist. Gottman has proved successfully that you don’t have to know everything about a couple to predict with a high degree of accuracy who will stay married and who will eventually divorce. Since the 1980’s Gottman has brought more than three thousand couples into a small room he calls his “love lab” to have couples discuss for one hour any area of contention they may have in their marriage. He videotapes the couple and analyzes the interaction based on twenty separate categories of communication. Based on these calculations Gottman is able to predict with 95 percent accuracy which couples will still be married fifteen years later. If he reduces his analysis to fifteen minutes his accuracy is still ninety percent.

As remarkable as this is, it gets even better. Through many years of experience Gottman has found that by focusing on only four of the twenty elements he can discern most of what he needs to know. And out of those four categories there is one, “contempt”, that is by far the leading indicator of couples who will eventually divorce.

The essential nature of fundamentals is built into God’s design for the world. We can certainly see its importance in spiritual growth. Without the foundations people rarely grow into fully devoted followers of Jesus. That is why *The Disciple’s Journey* resources focus on basic fundamentals. In *Anchoring*, the fundamentals you will learn are the 7 great anchors of God. Each anchor has at its core truth and action.

### 4. Repetition

The most common thread that weaves itself through a plan for strict training is repetition of the basics. Strategies and skills are repeated thousands of times until they become instant and automatic. John Wooden in his autobiography, *They Call Me Coach*, says,

*“The best teacher is repetition, day after day, throughout the season I never gave my teams any kind of written test. After all they didn’t have time in a game to sit down and write something. It had to be instant recognition and instant reaction. ”*

It is interesting how God has designed the brain to fulfill this purpose of instant recognition and reaction. Repetition builds long-term memory and causes a structural change in the brain. That is in contrast to short-term memory that causes no such change. If the focus of repetition is on the truth of God, the structural change is a renewal of our minds. Renewal is a new or renewed way of thinking that results in a transformed life (*Romans 12:2*). However if that repetition is based on the lies of the evil one, the structural change will result in a lie-based life which will result in a failure to follow God's truth.

During this 24 week study I have asked you to commit to a training plan that involves repetition—lots of it. As you are well aware by now, it involves memorization and meditation. This strategy comes from Scripture and is essential if you are to learn to drop anchor. (*Psalm 1:1-3; Joshua 1:7-8*)

 Repeat, repeat, repeat— the key to memorization

Remember that the key to memorization is simply repetition. The more you repeat a verse the more it will become part of the structure of your mind. Use some time each day rather than trying to memorize the Scripture in one or two sittings. Consistent repetition during the week will help you be successful.

 Review, review, review—the key to retention

Once you have memorized the Scripture consistent review is essential. The mistake most people make is memorizing a Scripture and then failing to review it consistently for the rest of their life. Anchoring is about doing just that. Anchoring will only be effective if your training plan includes time to review the Scriptures you have memorized. I believe in the “Anytime/Anywhere” principle that God proposed to Joshua before he began the conquest for the Promised Land. God said,

*Joshua 1:7-8*

*<sup>7</sup> Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. <sup>8</sup> **Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.** (bold added)*

To be transformed by the renewing our minds so that we obey God's Word we must set aside time for review. Time is always a factor in the memorization and meditation of Scripture as you are well aware of if you have been through the first two stages of *The Disciple's Journey*. The more Scriptures you memorize, the longer it will take to review them. Because review is essential to consistently drop anchor, you may find it helpful to look for creative ways and places to review Scripture in addition to your planned appointments with God.

I use the half hour commute time to my health club five or six days a week to review anchoring Scriptures. That adds up to about two hours of review time. I also sometimes use the minute or so between exercise and weight repetitions to review Scripture. In addition to this I use my early morning routine of shaving and breakfast for reviewing some anchoring. I will review scriptures when waiting in line or for an appointment. Of course you will need to find your own unique places and times for review. Carry your index cards with you wherever you go until you no longer need them.

 Ruminare, ruminare, ruminare—the key to transformation

It is important to remember that the memorization and review of Scripture transforms us when it penetrates our souls, (our mind, will, and emotions). This is the function of meditation or rumination. Joshua was told to *meditate* on the law day and night. The book of Psalms begins by stressing the importance of meditation:

*Psalms 1:1-3*

*<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. <sup>2</sup> But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. <sup>3</sup> He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.*

Meditation is reflection on Scripture, pondering key word and phrases repeatedly while gleaning every ounce of spiritual nutrition from that Scripture. While the primary emphasis on memorizing Scripture is the ability to quote it from memory, the goal of meditation is to gain a deeper meaning and personal application of that Scripture.

Meditation goes a step beyond memorization because the energy does not have to go into remembering the verse or passage but into a prayerful consideration of what the Holy Spirit is saying to us. The best word to describe meditation is **ruminating**. This word is the synonym for meditation given most often in dictionaries. The story behind this rather obscure word may turn the stomach a bit, but it will add depth to our understanding of meditation.

There is a class of animals such as cattle, sheep and goats that have stomachs with four compartments. The first stomach is called the rumens. These animals have a very interesting digestive process. A cow for example, will start the day early in the morning with its head down devouring all the grass it can find. It rarely lifts its head as it concentrates on consuming as much food as is available. Then, about mid morning, the cow will bring up the food out of the first stomach and chew it again. Then when the food is thoroughly chewed, the cow will send it to the second stomach. This process is repeated until the food goes through each stomach and is thoroughly digested and absorbed into the animal's blood stream, becoming an empowering part of its life. This is referred to as the cow "chewing its cud". When the last bit of nutrition has been squeezed from this cud all that is left is the hard block of the cud.

When we meditate we follow a similar process. We could compare the first part of the process of devouring everything in sight as it is digested in the first stomach as memorization. The meditation begins when we start to "chew" on the meaning of each word and phrase. Just as a cow methodically grinds her teeth down on the cud time and time again, so we reflect deeply and repeatedly on each morsel of God's Word. Each time we meditate on a precept, promise, or attribute of God we receive a new flow of spiritual energy and insight into our spiritual bloodstream. It is through this process of digesting the Word of God that we stay intimately connected to the life of Christ, abiding in Him (*John 15:1-7*).

Dawson Trotman, founder of The Navigators, an organization long known for its commitment to memorizing the Word, had an interesting approach to meditating on Scripture at night. Betty Skinner, in her account of Trotman's life reports,

*Dawson's love of the unadorned Word also led him unwittingly to apply a principle of meditation that psychologists would later stress as an important influence on the mind--the purposeful use of the subconscious, the theory that the last dominant conscious thought will inevitably simmer in the unconscious mind during sleep. Dawson's habit, on a camping trip or even at home, was to say when conversation ended and lights were out, "All right, H.W.L.W.," after which a passage of Scripture would be quoted without comment as the last word spoken. The H.W.L.W. habit--His Word the Last Word--was popular on early Minute Men trips, but Daws and Lia continued the practice through the years as did others, as a way to end a day with thoughts fixed on the Lord. (Daws, Zondervan Corporation)*

There is an astounding promise about how the power of God's Word can influence our lives night and day.

Proverbs 6:22

*<sup>22</sup> When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you.*

The **Memorization and Meditation Project** that is part of each anchor point will give you the opportunity to meditate on the Anchor Truth. Be sure to take time for meditation as well as memorization.

## 5. Hard work

It is abundantly clear in Scripture that becoming a fully devoted disciple is hard work. From Jesus to Paul the journey of the disciple is portrayed as one of hardship, single focus, self denial, discipline and hard work. Paul reminded his disciple Timothy of these things.

2 Timothy 2:1-7

*<sup>1</sup> You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. <sup>3</sup> Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup> No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer. <sup>5</sup> Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules. <sup>6</sup> The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. <sup>7</sup> Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.*

Paul first reminds Timothy that it is grace that motivates a disciple to endure the hardships, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." (v. 1) It is out of a deep love and appreciation for what Jesus has done for us that we "endure hardship" and have the single focus of a soldier of Jesus Christ (v. 3-4). Paul mentions the discipline of discipleship (v. 5). He sums up this instruction on discipleship by stressing the value of hard work (v.6). A couple of paragraphs later in this letter Paul told Timothy,

2 Timothy 2:15

*<sup>15</sup> **Do your best** to present yourself to God as one approved, a **workman** who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (bold added)*

We are to give our best efforts as disciples of Jesus. Our greatest efforts--our hardest work-- should be reserved for the tasks of greatest value. We certainly see this played out in the world of sports. How often

do we hear coaches say of gifted athletes that they are also the hardest workers—the first to be on the practice field and the last to leave. Hard work is the difference on game day. Kobe Bryant, future Hall of Famer with the Los Angeles Lakers is noted for his work ethic. He is famous for his last minute game winning shots. I was watching a Lakers game one evening when he missed one of those shots at the buzzer. The next day I read in the paper that he stayed in the stadium after the game and shot that same shot for an hour. Personnel had to wait to turn the lights out! And again, this is for a game. How much more should we be willing to reserve our best and work our hardest for our Lord?

## 6. Training together

Discipleship is not something you do alone. Jesus involved twelve men in his training regimen. Neither was discipleship in the first century church something that was done alone. Paul said,

*1 Timothy 2:2*

*<sup>2</sup> And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.*

Timothy's training was done in the presence of many other people. His training included time with Paul, but also with other mature believers. Paul and Silas were trained together. If you have been involved in *The Disciple's Journey* then you already know the value of training together. Not only does "iron sharpen iron" when training together, but it also provides essential support and encouragement and accountability. I never miss kettlebell boot camp because I am committed to always being there. I have made myself accountable to my training partners. It is voluntary and informal but it helps me stay consistent. When I am there I train harder because a leader is pushing me and I have the support and encouragement of other people who are going through the same pain. I guess in this case misery loves company! The Russell Athletic Company, a leading marketer of sportswear recently ran this ad; "Training is not something you do alone. You do it with someone". What is true with physical training is true with spiritual training.

## BE YOUR BEST--DO YOUR BEST

The point of this session's study is simply this: Be your best. Our efforts to become world class-servants should surpass any other kind of training. This will help you "finish the race and complete the task" that God has give you. Paul, toward the end of his life left this example for us:

*Acts 20:22-24*

*<sup>22</sup> And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there.*

*<sup>23</sup> I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. <sup>24</sup> However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.*





## MEMORY AND MEDITATION PROJECT

Memorize and meditate on *1 Cor. 9: 24-25* and answer the questions that follow: Write the Scripture on the front side of your index card for this session.

### 1 Corinthians 9:24-25

*<sup>24</sup> Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. <sup>25</sup> Everyone who competes in the games goes into **strict training**. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever*

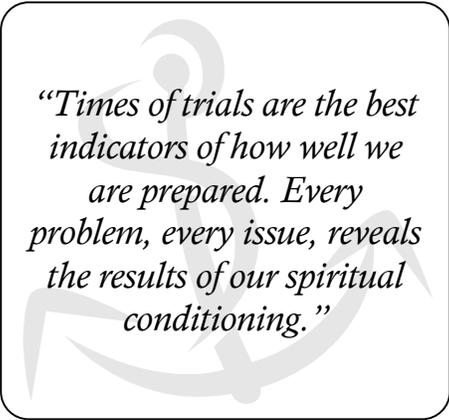
- As you memorize this Scripture imagine yourself training for the Olympics. What would you be thinking? What emotions would you be feeling?
- What was the prize to which Paul was referring?
- In what sense is Paul using the word “competes” in the context of this teaching?
- How should the “strict training” to which Paul refers affect our approach to spiritual growth? What might this strict training include? What does this passage say to you?

**Write the six principles of strict training in godliness on the back side of the index card. Memorize:**

1. Commitment, (2) Discipline, (3) Fundamentals, (4) Repetition, (5) Hard Work, (6) Training Together.

# SESSION 3

## DROPPING ANCHOR



*“Times of trials are the best indicators of how well we are prepared. Every problem, every issue, reveals the results of our spiritual conditioning.”*

### DROPPING ANCHOR

*Anchoring includes “dropping anchor” when we face an issue or trial by recalling a specific anchor truth and action and applying it to the issue or trial.*

There is “game day”. There is the great event. Let the games begin! Whether its football, basketball, track, gymnastics, soccer, or any other competitive event you can think of, there comes a time when you “play ball”. There is that day when strict training is put to the test. Will all the hard work and pain pay off? How will we do on game day when it really counts?

For me there are only two times of year. There is the “on season” which begins in September and ends in June. This is the season when football and basketball are played—often at the same time of year. There is March Madness, the Super Bowl and the NBA finals. This time of year is like heaven to me. However June through August is another matter. For me this is the “off season”. Since I’m not a great baseball fan I go into a deep depression during these months. It is my version of “June gloom.” During the off season I search frantically for some kind of worthwhile sporting event, but find few that I am remotely interested in. I simply must wait for the fall and spend my leisure time with mundane things such as reading, conversation, household tasks. But I always know better days are coming. The on season will arrive.

In years past my gloom would start to lift when I would hear the sweet sound of John Madden’s voice on Monday night football. My wife had a different reaction to this time of year. The moment she would hear John Madden’s voice she would invariably say, “Is it football season already? I can’t stand his voice, it’s so loud. Why does he have to scream?” I have never understood how anyone could not love the melodic sound of John Madden’s voice.

I especially like Duke basketball. Duke University under head coach Mike Krzyzewski is one of the premiere basketball programs in the nation. Year after year they are ranked as a first ten basketball team and often appear in the Final Four, winning the national championship twice. It was always my dream to attend a Duke basketball game at Cameron Indoor Stadium in Durham, North Carolina. A couple of years ago my dream came true. It was an experience of a lifetime as I sat in the legendary stadium and drank in the atmosphere. First, Mike Krzyzewski’s entourage of assistant coaches paraded out. Next, the team came out to warm up. Then the moment everyone had been waiting for arrives as Mike Krzyzewski himself appeared. I could actually feel the reverential awe of the fans as he walked across the basketball court to his “throne” on the bench. It was as if royalty had arrived.

The game was against a low level opponent so there wasn’t much competition but that didn’t deter the rabid fans. The “Cameron Crazyies”, as the student section is called, went wild with every basket that was scored. They did not disappoint. I got the full treatment and I will never forget the experience of attending a Duke University basketball game.

### GAME DAY

We all have our own “game days”. There are many occasions within our lifetimes when we are tested. There are family issues, work issues, financial issues, physical issues, national issues that test the quality of our anchors. It is during these times that we must be prepared to “drop anchor”. Times of trials are the best indicators of how well we are prepared. Every problem, every issue, reveals the results of our spiritual conditioning. We find out if our strict training has paid off. *On game day we will “play” like we practice!*

### **An audience of one**

Unlike in sporting events where athletes often perform in front of hordes of adoring fans we have an audience of one. It is only God we want to glorify with our lives. All the spiritual training we do is for one purpose. We were put on earth to glorify God and to declare His praises to the nations.

1 Peter 2:9

*<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

### **BIBLICAL CRITICAL MASS**

This season the Duke Basketball team has gotten off to a good start even though it lost three starting players including their point guard. Coach K faces the challenging task of building his present group of talented players into a cohesive team. In an interview on ESPN the coach was asked how he would evaluate his team at this point early in the season. He answered, *“They have a long way to go. They are still in the **think** mode. They are not in the **reaction** mode”.*

### **What is critical mass?**

What Coach Krzyzewski is talking about is a kind of critical mass that all teams or individuals must acquire to successfully master a skill and area of knowledge. A definition of critical mass is *“The minimum function or actions required to start or maintain a venture”*. Critical mass occurs in a team sport when a group of individuals play together long enough that their function is as a single unit in the **reaction** mode. There is only one way to reach the reaction mode of critical mass and that is by repetition. It is worth repeating the value John Wooden, legendary basketball coach of the UCLA Bruins, placed on this area of training.

*The best teacher is repetition, day after day, throughout the season I never gave my teams any kind of written test. After all they didn’t have time in a game to sit down and write something. It had to **be instant recognition and instant reaction.***

Critical mass on a team can only be achieved through hours of practice and testing in games. Here are some other examples of critical mass:

- ❖ Investments are said to have reached critical mass when a person’s investment portfolio can generate enough growth and income to meet his or her needs or lifestyle.
- ❖ Critical mass in a business is when it reaches a size, number and amount large enough to produce a particular result.
- ❖ There is a critical mass of activity needed for a retail store to be profitable

### **What is biblical critical mass?**

The best way I know to explain what I call biblical critical mass is to compare it to learning a language.

Critical mass occurs when one becomes fluent in a language. This happens when there is a large enough accumulation of vocabulary, grammar and contextual understanding to be able to communicate effectively. Biblical critical mass is similar to becoming fluent in a language. It is becoming fluent in “the language of God”.

A few years ago I began associating anchoring with the concept of critical mass. After years of memorizing Scripture and reviewing anchoring Scriptures a minimum of five times a week, I realized that these Scriptures were beginning to connect together. When I was doing a study, listening to someone teach or facing an issue I would think of related Scriptures. Often this would happen spontaneously. At other times I would consciously search my memory for Scriptures that applied to the topic or situation. It seemed to me that I had begun to reach a kind of biblical critical mass. I offer this definition of biblical critical mass:

 *Biblical/spiritual critical mass occurs when we memorize, review and understand enough Scripture to communicate effectively in “the language of God” and live by the Spirit.*

### **There are four important factors in reaching biblical critical mass:**

**1. Memorize:** Commit to memory a sufficient vocabulary.

Here is where it becomes subjective. What is a sufficient vocabulary of Scriptures? How many verses or passages of Scripture do you need to memorize/learn to reach biblical critical mass? In learning a language the figure that is most frequently cited is 3,000-3600 words. At this point a person has reached critical mass and should be fluent in a language. In my own experience it seems like I entered the beginning stages of biblical mass when I had memorized 300 verses of Scripture and had review them sufficiently that I could recall them without hesitation. At 500 Scriptures I believe I had definitely arrived at a kind of biblical critical mass.

There is a second way to reach biblical critical mass. There are people like my father who studied the Scriptures for years and had a comprehensive understanding of the Bible. He had some Scriptures memorized but mainly possessed a thorough understanding of Bible and doctrine. Whatever topic that was brought up he could refer to specific Scriptures with a firm grasp of their context and meaning. He had learned “the language of God” through reading the Bible and study. I know there are many mature Christians who have diligently read, studied and applied the Scriptures to their lives. Many of these people have achieved biblical critical mass. I see biblical critical mass involving three important areas:

**2. Understanding:** Comprehending the context and meaning of the Scriptures.

First a person must be able to comprehend the context and meaning of Scriptures. A person can memorize hundreds of verses of Scripture and still not achieve biblical critical mass because he does not have a clear understanding of what those Scriptures mean. To arrive at true biblical critical mass a person must be able to effectively interpret Scripture. He must know what it means in his heart as well as his head. For example, the religious leaders of Jesus’ day knew tons of Scripture but they didn’t know the true spiritual meaning of what they could quote. They had arrived at biblical critical **mess** rather than biblical critical mass!

**3. Connecting:** Become fluent by connecting the Scriptures together.

One of the things I have noticed about biblical critical mass is how the mind connects Scriptures together. For example when I think of the sovereignty of God many Scriptures from various parts of the bible converge in my mind. When faced with a crisis and I need to call on specific Scriptures I do not think of just one but many. It is like there are a series of anchors connected together. I believe this is a natural result of biblical critical mass. A key principle of interpretation is to let Scripture interpret Scripture. That occurs almost naturally when a person achieves biblical critical mass.

**4. Communicating:** Communicating effectively by thinking and responding biblically.

The fourth area of biblical critical mass is being able to effectively communicate what you know. My family spent many years as missionaries in the Ryukyu Islands. My mother tried diligently to become fluent in Japanese but to no avail. She studied the language. She learned hundreds of words but she never could connect those words together. For some reason she found it difficult to connect words into sentences. As a result she was never able to communicate effectively with the people. She always used an interpreter. To achieve true biblical critical mass a person must be able to communicate effectively. They must be fluent in “the language of God.” I don’t mean to imply that all people have to become great teachers but they should be able to be able to clearly communicate the hope that they have. (1 Peter 3:15-16)

**Three stages of biblical critical mass**

I have observed three stages of biblical critical mass. These stages do not come from any kind of scientific study. They come mostly from my experience and I offer them as one way to approach learning “the language of God” through the memorization and meditation of Scripture.

**1. The Functional Stage--100-150 verses:**

When you finish *The Disciple’s Journey* you will have memorized and reviewed over 100 verses of Scripture. This will put you at what I call the functional stage. When you are learning a language there comes a time when you have memorized enough vocabulary and learned enough grammar that you are able to function in a foreign country. You can do such basic things as order food, ask for directions, and have some simple conversations with people. You have a foundation for moving to the next stage.

At this level of learning “the language of God” you will have a firm foundation in the basics. You will be able to apply anchoring Scriptures to your life and also help others. You will be well prepared to move on to the “conversation stage”.

**2. The Conversation Stage-- 150-300 verses:**

If you are following *The Disciple’s Journey* and reproduce by leading a group of your own through the journey you will memorize over 100 additional verses of Scripture. This will be a total of close to 250 Scriptures and bring you to “the conversation stage”. The conversation stage in learning a language occurs when a person is about half way to critical mass. They know hundreds of words, can form sentences easily, and are able to listen and respond to others. They are still in the **think** mode to some degree and not entirely in the **reaction** mode. They are not able to have complicated conversations, but are able to communicate effectively.

In my experience it was when I had memorized approximately 250-300 verses and reviewed them five times a week that I noticed a definite improvement in my ability to connect verses and passages together and apply and communicate them effectively.

### 3. The Fluent Stage--300-500 verses:

It usually takes many years for a person to become fluent in a language. It takes a vocabulary of more than 3,000 words, a serious grasp of grammar and years of practice speaking the language. When they reach this stage what they know has reached critical mass. It is self sustaining. They are no longer in the **think** mode but in the **reaction** mode. They are able to speak spontaneously.

There are similarities when learning “the language of God”. When we reach the fluent stage of biblical critical mass we are able to think in the language. Often, Scriptures will come to us spontaneously. We can easily apply them to our lives and help others do the same. At this stage our ministry through the Word is greatly enhanced. The Word of God dwells in us richly so we are able to minister to one another effectively. Paul spoke of this stage when he said,

Colossians 3:16

*<sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

I now have a core of over 600 verses of Scriptures that I consider my anchoring Scriptures. While I have memorized many more than this, I have a goal of reviewing these five days a week. I have reviewed them thousands of times and will continue to do so until I die. Several days a week I review all of the Scriptures but there are some days I review less. There are certain Scriptures that I am committed to reviewing every day. My record is consistent but not perfect.

It has taken me many years to memorize this volume of Scriptures. On an average I have memorized one verse a week for the past 25 years. But remember, the goal is not memorization but retention and use. Retention can only happen with consistent review. I am not suggesting that everyone memorize and review the same number of Scriptures that I have. I am retired so I am able to spend more time than those who are still working and are raising a family. But I do want to suggest a plan that will move you through the stages toward biblical critical mass. In fact you are already participating in that plan. You just didn't realize it.

#### The biblical critical mass plan:

##### Year 1

When you have completed the three courses of *The Disciple's Journey* you will have memorized and consistently reviewed about 125 verses of Scripture. You will be one third of the way to biblical critical mass and will have entered the functional stage.

##### Year 2

When you reproduce and take your own group through *The Disciple's Journey* you will be given more than 100 more Scriptures to memorize. Your total will be between 225-250 verses. You will be two thirds of the way to biblical critical mass and in the fluent stage. You are almost there. Keep going! This is a marathon not a sprint.

This stage is difficult but doable. I have had discipleship groups that memorized and reviewed this number of Scriptures. The men in one of my groups had families and in some cases commuted long distances to work, but still managed to keep up.

### Year 3

During year three of *The Disciple's Journey* you will be overseeing those you have discipled. They will have their own groups and you will have the thrill of seeing them reproduce. As you encourage them I want to encourage you to memorize two more verses a week for that year. These verses will be listed in "The Commissioning Stage" This means you will have memorized approximately 350 verses of Scripture and reached biblical critical mass.

One of the issues you will face at biblical critical mass is time to review the Scriptures. I suggest that you have a core group of anchoring Scriptures that you believe are essential and review every day. This core represents how you want to live your life each day. Then at least one day a week--preferably several times a week--review all of your anchoring Scriptures. Use these Scriptures often--in your own life and to minister to others.

Here are some training tips for achieving and maintaining biblical critical mass:

- ❖ Be sure to write all your Scriptures on index cards and keep them handy at all times
- ❖ Always be looking for times when you can review—driving, waiting, work breaks etc.
- ❖ Memorize and review consistently—schedule time.
- ❖ Remain committed. See this discipline as essential not optional.

### **SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT**

When we reach biblical critical mass we have a firm foundation for spiritual discernment. Spiritual discernment is a gift from God as well as a discipline that is acquired through study and application. It is being able to think biblically about every area of life. *It is the Spirit empowered ability to distinguish truth from error and apply that truth to our lives.* True discernment is possible only for believers. Paul explained this to the believers in Corinth:

#### 1 Corinthians 2:14

*<sup>14</sup> The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

Paul goes on to say that while it is impossible to be truly discerning without the Spirit, possessing the Spirit alone does not guarantee discernment.

#### 1 Corinthians 3:1-2

*<sup>1</sup> Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. <sup>2</sup>I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.*

The believers in Corinth had the Spirit but they were thinking and acting like people of the world. They were following their natural instincts rather than spiritual instincts. The proof of their lack of spiritual discernment was the division and jealousy in the church. These people needed to grow up—to become mature. They were in dire need of changing their diet from milk to solid food. They needed to train themselves to be godly. The writer of Hebrews emphasized,

Hebrews 5:14

<sup>14</sup> *But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.*

The Greek word used here for training or exercise is *gegumnasmena*. This is a metaphor taken from the athletes in the Grecian games who wanted to employ all their knowledge, power, and skills to win the prize. Because of this zeal they habitually trained themselves to achieve the goal. Notice the emphasis on practice—on repetition. It was by “constant use” of “solid food” that would enable believers to discern or distinguish good from evil.

When a person’s training diet includes solid food he develops spiritual senses that are finely tuned to distinguish or discern true doctrine from false doctrine and good behavior from evil behavior. This person is not only able to distinguish between what is right and wrong but also determine what is the best course of action. Discernment produces a mature person who bears the fruit of righteousness which brings glory to God. Paul prays that the Christians in Philippi will develop this kind of discernment.

Philippians 1:9-11

<sup>9</sup> *And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,*  
<sup>10</sup> *so that you may be able to **discern what is best** and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ,* <sup>11</sup> *filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. (Bold added)*

Notice that knowledge develops depth of insight and the ability to discern what is best. This develops character and brings glory and praise to God.

## **DROPPING ANCHOR**

Anchoring gives us a foundation and standard for all we think and do. While we are to always live by biblical anchors there are times that we need to “drop anchor”. This involves intentional use of a specific anchor to keep us firm and secure when our faith is tested or we need special guidance. These are times of testing or temptation that are “moments of truth”.

### **The moment of truth**

The moment of truth is that time when a critical decision must be made. It is “crunch time”. It is always a time that calls for a high level of mature discernment or judgment. In basketball they call that mature judgment, “court sense.” In football they sometimes refer to it as “great vision.” It is sometimes called a “feel for the game” or “gut level instinct”. These terms are used to describe people who seem to have an uncanny ability to make the right decisions at the right time. We are in awe of such athletes, and assume that that they have some innate ability or gift. While these are often gifted athletes, this amazing ability to operate at a level beyond others is most often developed by a commitment to strict training and persistently practicing the basics.

The development of godly discernment is similar, but involves much more. It not only involves our practice of basic anchors but God’s supernatural wisdom. Godly discernment is a divine “spiritual court sense” that enables a person to make split second decisions when the “moment of truth” arrives. It is a discernment developed by *constant use* of God’s Word that leads to godly action. It is a result of biblical/critical mass. This discernment can be seen most clearly when the “game of our life” is on the line and we must make a critical

judgment. It is at this moment of truth that all the time and effort we have put into preparation pays off. We are ready to drop the anchor of truth and action. Like the Psalmist, we are able to say,

*Psalms 119:30-32*

<sup>30</sup> *I have chosen the way of truth; I have set my heart on your laws.* <sup>31</sup> *I hold fast to your statutes, O LORD; do not let me be put to shame.* <sup>32</sup> ***I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free.*** (Bold added)

### **Examples of those who have “dropped anchor”**

The Bible is filled with stories of people who relied on their biblical anchors. They relied on God’s Word as their sole and absolute authority for all their thoughts and actions. They were prepared to drop these anchors in the bedrock of God’s hope in times of trials. For example:

- **When David faced Goliath**, the giant Philistine whom the armies of Israel feared, he answered Goliath’s taunts by dropping the anchor of the power of God’s name.

*1 Samuel 17:45*

<sup>45</sup> *David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you **in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.**”* (Bold added)

- **When Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego**, three young Israelites, who were captive in Babylon, were about to be executed in a blazing furnace they dropped the anchor of absolute faith:

*Daniel 3:17-18*

<sup>17</sup> *If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the **God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king.*** <sup>18</sup> *But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”* (Bold added)

The three young men must have been incredibly well prepared to drop anchor. They were captives in a foreign land and yet when faced with death, they dropped the anchor of total faith in God. And of course God miraculously saved them from burning to death in the furnace.

- **When Jesus launched His ministry on earth** it was evident that Jesus had been well trained in the discipline of anchoring. The best example I can think of to demonstrate anchoring occurred immediately before Jesus launched His public ministry. After fasting for forty days and forty nights in the wilderness Jesus was hungry and physically weak. The devil was allowed to test Jesus’ resolve in keeping the commands of God. It was in this weakened condition that Jesus answered the devil’s three great temptations by dropping three divine anchors of God.

1. The first temptation was to give in to desires of the flesh.

*Matthew 4:3*

<sup>3</sup> *The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”*

**Jesus drops anchor** by quoting God’s own words from *Deuteronomy 8:3*. He drops anchor and obeys by not giving in to the temptation. Jesus trusted His Father to meet His needs and supply the real bread of life.

Matthew 4:4

<sup>4</sup> *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'*

2. The second temptation was to give in to *pride*—using God’s power for self-promotion.

Matthew 4:5-6

<sup>5</sup> *Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.* <sup>6</sup> *"If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'*

**Jesus drops anchor** by quoting God’s own words from *Deuteronomy 6:16* and obeys by not giving in to the temptation of self promotion and pride.

Matthew 4:7

<sup>7</sup> *Jesus answered him, "It is also written: '**Do not put the Lord your God to the test.**'*  
(Bold added)

3. The third temptation was to give in to materialism, desiring “*all this*” stuff.

Matthew 4:8-9

<sup>8</sup> *Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.* <sup>9</sup> *'All this I will give you,' he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me.'*

**Jesus drops anchor** by quoting God’s own words from *Deuteronomy 6:13* and obeys by worshiping the only true God, not the poor substitute of materialism.

Matthew 4:10

<sup>10</sup> *Jesus said to him, 'Away from me, Satan! For it is written: '**Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.**'* (Bold added)

With each attack Jesus dropped anchor at the “moment of truth” with a specific **truth** and **action**, the two essential ingredients of all anchors. He quoted a specific Scripture He had memorized and acted on it. Jesus **spoke** the truth and **obeyed** the truth. Notice that He did it immediately. There was no hesitation. He was in the reaction mode.

Jesus’ response was not just because He was the Son of God and therefore all-knowing. Jesus took on the limitations of man and therefore had to prepare like each of us has to prepare. As a young Jewish male an essential part of Jesus’ religious training most certainly would have been the memorization of key Scriptures from the Septuagint Bible. Since there would have been few written copies of Scripture in any form, memorization was emphasized. It was no accident that Jesus was able to answer each temptation immediately

with specific Scriptures from the Books of the Law. Even though He was the Son of God, Jesus took seriously the discipline of memorizing and meditating on Scripture.

There are countless examples of people both past and present who have depended on specific anchors of God to face the trials and tests. The eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews gives multiple examples of people from the Old Testament who dropped the **anchor of faith** when facing trials. In addition we have excellent examples of other people through the centuries who have relied on the anchors of God's Word.

In 2001 Martin and Gracia Burnham who served with New Tribes Missions in the Philippines were taken hostage by a militant Islamic organization. After 376 days of terrifying captivity, Martin was killed in a gunfight and Gracia was wounded but freed. When asked in an interview with Discipleship Journal, "What kept you going during your captivity?" Gracia answered,

*"God's Word. Once early in our captivity, Martin and I were very discouraged. We had endured yet another gun battle, some of the group were wounded, and we were starving, stinky, and tired. Martin said, 'Gracia, let's remind ourselves of what is true.' We began reciting Scripture to one another: 'If God is for us, who can be against us?' (Rom. 8:31); 'I have loved you with an everlasting love' (Jer. 31; 3). 'God...has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies' (Eph. 1; 3 DBY). We didn't feel loved and blessed, but we reminded each other that these things were true nonetheless." (Discipleship Journal; p. 20, July/August 2007)*

I believe that this is anchoring at its best. When our emotions are assaulted because of circumstances and we don't **feel** God's love and protection we nevertheless can drop these anchors by reciting anchoring Scriptures we have memorized. God always releases His comforting Spirit into our hearts and the power and truth of His Word anchors our emotions. Gracia and Martin were able to endure unimaginable emotional and physical trauma because they had memorized Scripture and were prepared to drop the anchor of God. It would certainly seem that they had attained biblical critical mass.

## **PERSERVERANCE**

### **There is no finish line**

In session one I mentioned the old Nike ad that read "*There is no finish line*", the idea being that an athlete is never to think they have arrived. That should be our attitude as well. Our mind set should be to persevere—always raise the bar—always do the things that got us there until God takes us home. This was the Apostle Paul's attitude. Toward the end of his life he said,

*Acts 20:22-24*

<sup>22</sup> *And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there.*

<sup>23</sup> *I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. <sup>24</sup> However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.*

It is my sincere prayer that for the rest of your life you will continue to do the strict training which is enabling you to successfully complete *The Disciple's Journey*. The most difficult aspect of training in godliness is being consistent forever. The goal of being a fully devoted disciple of Jesus is not a goal we reach but a journey we are on until we reach heaven. Being a disciple is who we are, not just what we do.

I read a story in the Orange County Register about a group of men in their fifties who had a unique approach to sticking to their fitness priorities. They called themselves “The Forever Boys”. They pledged to each other the following ways to stick to their priorities forever:

- ❖ Don’t treat fitness as an option. It is a priority.
- ❖ The secret is the buddy system. We encourage one another and hold each other accountable.
- ❖ We believe exercise is a requirement, like eating and sleeping

How would it affect our approach to persevering in spiritual fitness if we held to these principles? God has called us to be “The Forever Boys” (and girls) for Him.

### **Fix your eyes on the goal**

The only finish line for Paul was heaven. Until then he continued his regimen of strict training so he could finish the race and complete the task that God had given him. The key to his success in the race was keeping his eyes on the goal of Christ. As disciples that should be our goal as well. The writer of Hebrews says,

#### Hebrews 12:1-3

*<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. <sup>2</sup> Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup> Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

We are to fix our eyes on the goal of Jesus Christ. We will not reach that goal until we are in heaven. Until then there is no finish line, there is no off season. We are to press on—keep running the race.

### **Remember the prize**

The motivation to persevere always depends on how much we value the results of the strict training. I can’t imagine anyone working out with kettlebells who did not believe that the results would be worth the effort. The reward is physical fitness. That is the prize. Paul considered all he had done to persevere worth the ultimate prize. At the end of his life on earth he would receive the “*crown of righteousness*”.

#### 2 Timothy 4:7-8

*<sup>7</sup> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup> Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

The prize of the crown of righteousness to which Paul refers is the crown given to all believers by the righteous judge. We have received and will receive the righteousness of Christ. We will be clothed with His righteousness forever in heaven. This prize is a gift of God’s grace, but is worthy of our greatest efforts while we are on earth.

## THE "PROMISE"

I want to conclude this session's study with one of the greatest speeches ever given by an athlete. It is the "Promise Speech" delivered by Tim Tebow, a committed Christian. After the Florida Gators lost a game to Ole Miss that everyone thought they were going to win, Tebow, Florida quarterback and winner of the Heisman Trophy, delivered the following speech:

### *The Promise*

*"To the fans and everybody in Gator Nation, I'm sorry. I'm extremely sorry. We were hoping for an undefeated season. That was my goal, something Florida has never done here." "I promise you one thing, a lot of good will come out of this. You will never see any player in the entire country play as hard as I will play the rest of the season. You will never see someone push the rest of the team as hard as I will push everybody the rest of the season." "You will never see a team play harder than we will the rest of the season." "God Bless"*

Outside of the Florida football complex, there is a plaque memorializing this powerful speech.

## YOUR PROMISE

I think this is a good time nearing half way through *The Disciple's Journey* to make your own promise on how you will persevere in finishing the race. What are you willing to promise God regarding finishing strong? Write your promise in the following space.

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR SESSION 3

Answer the following questions about what you have read. Look up the Scriptures in your own Bible

1. In your own words define biblical critical mass. Have you ever seen this in operation? Explain.
2. What do you think about the three year plan? What would it take for you to reach biblical critical mass?
3. Look up Hebrews 5:14 and Philippians 1:9-11. How is discernment connected to biblical critical mass as defined in this session? What is the key to discernment?
4. Review the examples of people who have dropped anchor. What lessons can we learn from them? How will these lessons help you learn to drop anchor?
5. Read *Acts 20: 20-24*. What enabled Paul to persevere?
6. What one thing in this session do you believe will help you persevere for the rest of your life?

### ACCOUNTABILITY

Review the accountability questions on page 17 and be prepared to share your answers with the group.



## MEMORY AND MEDITATION PROJECT

Memorize and meditate on *Hebrews 12:1-3* and answer the questions that follow: Write the Scripture on the front side of your index card for this session.

### Hebrews 12:1-3

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. <sup>2</sup> Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup> Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

- How do the examples of others help us persevere?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What kind of things hinder you from running with perseverance the race marked out for you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- In practical terms what does it mean to “fix our eyes on Jesus”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- How does considering Jesus help us always to persevere and never lose heart?

**Write your “promise” on the back side of the index card. Review it weekly.**

# **PART 2: 7 GREAT ANCHORS OF GOD**

ANCHOR 1: THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

ANCHOR 2: THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

ANCHOR 3: THE SERVANTHOOD OF JESUS

ANCHOR 4: THE HOLINESS OF GOD

ANCHOR 5: THE WORD OF GOD

ANCHOR 6: THE LOVE OF GOD

ANCHOR 7: THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

# ANCHOR 1

## THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

ANCHOR POINT A: Our sovereign God is the all-powerful creator, sustainer & ruler of the universe.

### ANCHOR TRUTH

*<sup>17</sup> "Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you" Jeremiah 32:17*

*<sup>19</sup> The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. Psalms 103:19*

ANCHOR POINT B: Our sovereign God has irrevocable purposes and plans for the world.

### ANCHOR TRUTH

*<sup>10</sup> The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. <sup>11</sup> But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations. Psalms 33:10-11*

ANCHOR POINT C: Our sovereign God has specific purposes and plans for our lives.

### ANCHOR TRUTH

*<sup>29</sup> For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Romans 8:29*

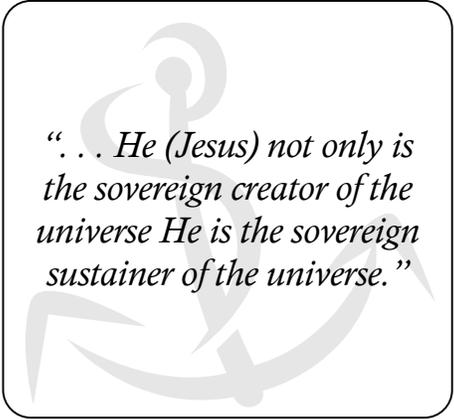
*<sup>10</sup> For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10*

### ANCHOR ACTION

*Lord, you are the all powerful sovereign creator and sustainer of the universe. I acknowledge your absolute rule over everything that exists. I know that nothing happens in heaven and on earth without your initiative or permission. Therefore I will trust you for your purposes and plans for the world and for my life.*

# SESSION 4

ANCHOR POINT A / Our Sovereign God is the all-powerful creator, sustainer and ruler of the universe.



*“... He (Jesus) not only is the sovereign creator of the universe He is the sovereign sustainer of the universe.”*

## GETTING STARTED

Meditate on and memorize the anchor truth and action. Write the anchor truth for the session on one side of an index card and the anchor action on the reverse side. Review all previous sessions' memory assignments. At least once a week review memory work from previous *Disciple's Journey* courses. Answer the questions that follow.

### ANCHOR TRUTH (memorize)

*Jeremiah 32:17*

*<sup>17</sup> "Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you".*

*Psalms 103:19*

*<sup>19</sup> The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.*

1. Based upon these two Scriptures, write of one sentence definition of the sovereignty of God.
2. What is there about creation that establishes the basis for the sovereignty of God?
3. What about these two Scriptures gives you confidence in the sovereignty of God?

### ANCHOR ACTION (memorize)

*Lord, you are the all-powerful, sovereign creator and sustainer of the universe. I acknowledge your absolute rule over everything that exists. I know that nothing happens in heaven on earth without your initiative or permission. Therefore I will trust you for your purposes and plans for the world and for my life.*



## EXPLORING THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

### SOVEREIGN IN THE BEGINNING

The Bible begins by introducing God as the all-powerful, sovereign creator and sustainer of the universe. **To say that God is sovereign is to say that He has supreme power, rank, and authority over all else.** This has huge implications for mankind. If a person is not anchored in the belief of a sovereign, all-powerful creator and sustainer of the universe, life becomes random and out of control. Therefore man believes that he must control people, events and even his own destiny. For those of us who have “been there and done that” we say “good luck.” We all need to be firmly anchored in the sovereignty of God.

#### **God is sovereign creator**

It is no accident that the Bible starts with this astounding statement: *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).* This summary statement introduces the six days of creation. The Bible immediately and emphatically states that *Elohim*, the Hebrew name for Creator God, created the heavens and the earth. The Psalmist affirmed this truth.

#### Psalm 102:25-27

*<sup>25</sup>In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.*

*<sup>26</sup>They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. <sup>27</sup>But you remain the same, and your years will never end.*

We see in this passage a beautiful description of the unchanging, eternal God who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth. God is shown here as the absolute sovereign creator and sustainer of the universe.

#### **God is all-powerful**

From the beginning of time God has made His sovereign power perfectly clear for everyone to see through His creation. One of the Hebrew language names for God was *El Shaddai* which most often is translated “God Almighty.” The word means literally “God the mountain one,” highlighting His invincible power. God first used this name when He appeared to Abraham.

#### Genesis 17:1

*<sup>1</sup> “When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless.*

Absolute power and sovereignty must always go together. You cannot have one without the others. To reign supreme over all creation, God must have all power. This fact allows us to have absolute faith in the strong hand of God in our lives. There is nothing He cannot do.

### SOVEREIGN IN THE IN-BETWEEN TIMES

## God is eternal

God is not only the sovereign creator in the beginning, but also sustains the universe in the in-between times. The Bible clearly documents the eternal nature of *Elohim*. He has always been and always will be. God existed before the creation of the earth and will exist after the earth is gone. The prayer of Moses says,

### Psalms 90:2

<sup>2</sup> *Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.*

The Bible reveals a God who **was**-has always been, who **is**-is present with us now, and who **is to come**- will be with us forever. The Apostle John in the book of Revelation writes of a vision of heaven where he saw heavenly beings praising the holiness and eternal nature of the sovereign God.

### Revelation 4:8

<sup>8</sup> *... "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."*

## God sustains His creation

### Colossians 1:15-17

<sup>15</sup> *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.* <sup>16</sup> *For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.* <sup>17</sup> *He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

Since Jesus is the second person of the Trinity, He is not merely a reflection of the sovereign God but is God. He is the absolute, authentic representation of God's being. God's absolute rule through the Trinity has always been and will always be. He not only is the sovereign creator of the universe He is the sovereign sustainer of the universe. Through Jesus, God created all we see and even the things we can't see. His incredible power assures that everything in nature works perfectly. It was through Jesus, the image of the invisible God, that all things were created. Not only were they created by Him, they are for Him and are held together by Him.

*No excuse!*

There is absolutely no excuse for man not to see that God is the all-powerful, sovereign Lord of the universe. To be convinced of the incomparable power of God Almighty a person needs only to look at creation. The Apostle Paul says,

### Romans 1:20

<sup>20</sup> *"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."*

By observing God's awesome creation we are able to clearly see the Almighty's sovereign power. God wants us to be one hundred percent certain that He is the supreme God of the universe and rules with absolute power. That is why the Bible often points us to His creation. God persistently says, "Look at the universe. How do you think all this came into being? Only I, the all-powerful God of the universe, could do this. What you see speaks clearly of me." In Psalms David says,

Psalms 19:1-4

<sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. <sup>2</sup> Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. <sup>3</sup> There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. <sup>4</sup> Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world...

God points so often to His hand in creation because He knows that if we do not believe in His sovereignty we will constantly be trying to control our own destiny. God understands that we will look for significance, security and help in all the wrong places. He wants to be the source of our significance and our needs. God said through the Prophet Isaiah,

Isaiah 48:12-13

<sup>12</sup> "Listen to me, O Jacob, Israel, whom I have called: I am he; I am the first and I am the last. <sup>13</sup> My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they all stand up together."

Think about it for a minute. Could there be anything more difficult than creating the universe we now live in from nothing? What kind of power would it take to create billions of stars, put them in place and have them do your bidding? How could we ever doubt that there is nothing too hard for God's hand? As the prophet Jeremiah affirms in prayer,

Jeremiah 32:17

<sup>17</sup> "Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. **Nothing is too hard for you.**"

### **Creation is God's answer to naturalism**

Naturalism is the philosophy of this world that states as fact that there is no sovereign God of the universe. It contends that all that can be seen just happened. It is not the result of a Creator but came out of nowhere. Adherents of this philosophy want us to believe that the universe and the people in it are a result of a natural chain of events. We evolved from nowhere. All of life simply evolved from some kind of a natural selection process. Therefore we are in control our of own destinies and must rule the universe ourselves. Since there is no God, we are gods unto ourselves and reign supreme over all that exists. If we don't save the planet, no one will.

A person who believes in naturalism has bitten off more than he can chew. Does anyone really believe that he can control what happens in life? Who can control the forces of nature? Who can control the nations? Who is in total control of his own health, or even what happens the next day? And who would want to be in control of all that? One natural disaster, serious disease or action such as the 9-11 terrorist attack causes people to face the reality of their lack of control, if only temporarily.

### **SOVEREIGN IN THE END TIMES**

There is a time when God's creation, as we know it now, will end and there will be a new beginning. God will cause all this to happen as He restores what was temporarily damaged by the sin of man in the Garden of Eden. The end times of the present heaven and earth will usher in a new and final reign of God over a new heaven and a new earth. God will still reign sovereign during end times and over the new heaven and the new earth. Image this scene!

Revelation 21:1-3

<sup>1</sup> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."

When the end times launch the new beginning, all of God's creation will acknowledge His sovereignty. We will experience an incredible time of worship when the angels and every living creature praises the sovereign creator of the universe. Revelation gives us a peek at what will happen.

Revelation 5:12-13

<sup>12</sup> In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" <sup>13</sup> Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

When Jesus returns we will experience God's creation in a new way—perfect with the Creator Himself. The new heavens and the new earth will not wear out. And in the in-between times we can trust in God to sustain His creation



## DIG DEEPER

Dig deeper into the sovereignty of God by answering the following questions about what you have just read. (Review the Scriptures in your Bible and underline important words and phrases)

1. Review *Psalm 102: 25-27*. What two characteristics of the sovereignty of God are found in this passage? How does this passage assure you of the complete control of God in all things?
2. To say that God is sovereign is to say that He has supreme power, rank, and authority over all else. How does either believing or disbelieving this effect how a person approaches choices in his life?
3. Why are the absolute power of God and His sovereignty inseparable?
4. Why does God point to His creation when He says that man has no excuse for not believing in Him? (*Romans 1:20*)
5. How was Jesus involved in creation sustaining the universe? Review *Colossians 1: 15-17*. (See also *Hebrews 1:1-4*)
  - What does it mean that Jesus is “...the image of the invisible God...?”
  - What does this passage say about Jesus’ sovereign power in creation?
6. In what ways do you believe that naturalism has affected our culture? In what ways does the sovereignty of God refute this philosophy?



## SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

Read and study *Isaiah 40*. This is possibly the greatest chapter in the Bible on the sovereignty of God. Answer the following questions:

**OBSERVATION:** What does it say?

- What are the key words or phrases that clearly demonstrate the sovereignty of God? Underline them in your Bible.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What other attributes of God are mentioned?

**INTERPRETATION:** What does it mean? (Consult your Study Bible to read the background of the book.)

- What is the context for this Chapter? To whom is Isaiah speaking? What is the political situation in the nation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Why the emphasis on the sovereignty of God? What are the comparisons to other gods?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What is the main point of the Chapter?

**APPLICATION:** (What does it say to me?)

- Based on this study, what is the most important thing for me to remember?

- What is the key verse that I want to remember?
- In what ways will this study impact my life?



## DROP ANCHOR

Following you will find practical ways in which you can drop anchor in the sovereignty of God as the all-powerful creator, sustainer and ruler of the universe.

### Anchored for Action

#### 1. Be aware and in awe of God's creation

God's creation is not only for us to enjoy but is to remind us of His love, power and sovereign rule. It is to help us put our trust in His control and not our own. Every day look around and be in awe of God's awesome creation. The Scripture reminds us,

*Isaiah 6:3*

... "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."

#### 2. Praise God for His creation

Take some time each day to praise God for His creation. The Psalms give many examples of great prayers of praise for God's creation. *Psalms 96* is a call to all nations to praise the glory of God's creation and His reign throughout the world. Read *Psalms 96* and spend some time praying this Psalm to God right now.

#### 3. Let God's creation help anchor God's sovereign rule in your life

To be truly anchored we must be willing to trust and obey God. His creation can help us trust in His sovereign power and rule to transform our lives. How will we know that this has happened? We will not feel compelled to control people, circumstances or our own destiny.

**My plan to drop anchor** (Write one thing you will do to drop anchor)

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Review the accountability questions in Session I and be prepared to share your answers with the group.

# SESSION 5

ANCHOR POINT B / Our Sovereign God has irrevocable purposes and plans for the world.

*“He (God) is the sovereign God of all He has created. He has absolute rule of the world and its nations. Every person and event is under His control. Nothing happens without either His initiative or His permission.”*

## GETTING STARTED

Meditate on and memorize the anchor truth and action. Write the anchor truth for the session on one side of an index card and the anchor action on the reverse side. Review all previous sessions' memory assignments. At least once a week review memory work from previous *Discipleship Journey* courses. Answer the questions that follow.

### ANCHOR TRUTH (memorize)

*Psalms 33:10-11*

*<sup>10</sup> The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. <sup>11</sup> But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.*

1. In what ways does God “foil the plans of nations?” Give an example.
2. How does God “thwart the purposes of the peoples?”
3. What main point does Scriptures make about the sovereignty of God? How does this affect how I should live?

### ANCHOR ACTION (memorize)

*Lord, you are the all powerful sovereign creator and sustainer of the universe. I acknowledge your absolute rule over everything that exists. I know that nothing happens in heaven and on earth without your initiative or permission. Therefore I will trust you for every purpose and plan for the world and for my life.*



## EXPLORING THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

God is not only the sovereign God who created the universe. He is the sovereign God of all He has created. He has absolute rule of the world and its nations. Every person and event is under His control. Nothing happens without either His initiative or His permission. We will look at three ways He exercises sovereign rule over the world and how it affects us.

### OUR SOVEREIGN GOD OWNS ALL

We have not totally grasped the sovereignty of God until we come to grips with the fact that He owns everything He has created. God's Word makes this clear.

*Psalms 24:1*

*<sup>1</sup> "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;"*

It only makes sense that if God created the universe and everything in it, He has the right to do whatever He wishes with what He has made. Everything God has made was created for our pleasure but He still retains the right of ownership. Through the Psalmist God reminds us that He is self-sufficient and owns even what we may think is rightly ours.

*Psalms 50:9-11*

*<sup>9</sup> I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, <sup>10</sup> for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. <sup>11</sup> I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine.*

### We are the managers of all

God has ultimate ownership and rule over everything He has created but has delegated to us management of His resources. From the beginning of time God gave man the responsibility of ruling what He created. The creation account says;

*Genesis 1:28*

*<sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*

To be appointed by God to manage His creation is truly an honor. David was not only in awe of God's creation but believed it was an honor and privilege to be given the responsibility of managing those resources.

*Psalms 8:3-6*

*<sup>3</sup> "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, <sup>4</sup> what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? <sup>5</sup> You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. <sup>6</sup> You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet:"*

David was in awe that the hand of God whose fingers created the moon and stars and put them in place also cared for him so deeply that he put a crown of glory and honor on his head. With this glory and honor came the responsibility to manage God's resources. You and I have been made rulers of the very works of God's hands. David always recognized God's ownership and his own responsibility as a manager.

When King David was asking people to give toward the temple God had instructed him to build, he became overwhelmed by the sovereignty of God. In *1 Chronicles 29: 10-14* David offers one of the great prayers of praise.

*1 Chronicles 29:10-14*

*<sup>10</sup> David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, O LORD, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. <sup>11</sup>Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. <sup>12</sup>Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. <sup>13</sup>Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name. <sup>14</sup>"But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.*

Wow! What a tribute to the sovereignty of God as ruler of everything He created. David praised God for all the attributes that accompany His sovereignty. David has an incredible understanding of who God is and how He rules His universe. In humble acknowledgment of who God is He gives all credit to God. He knows that who he is, what he possesses, and what he has accomplished is all from God.

When we believe in God as sovereign owner and ruler of everything that exists we do not have to worry about the stock market, how our 401K is doing or the world economy. God rules His economy and has promised to always meet our needs. We can relax and focus on the honor and privilege of being good managers.

## **OUR SOVEREIGN GOD HAS PURPOSES AND PLANS FOR THE EARTH**

Our sovereign God not only owns all but has specific and irrevocable plans for planet earth. We are delegated rulers but we are not totally responsible for all that happens on earth. God remains in charge and has everything under control. All will culminate in keeping with His perfect will. The current obsession with global warming is a clear indication that most of the world does not acknowledge God as sovereign creator and sustainer of the universe. Of course the universe is wearing down. It is obvious that there is some warming but this is no surprise to God. By His sovereign power He will sustain the universe until He is ready to restore it to its original condition. In Romans Paul explains all this. Read the following passage and underline all words and phrases that describe how God has sovereign plans for the earth.

*Romans 8:18-23*

*<sup>18</sup> I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. <sup>19</sup> The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth*

*right up to the present time.*<sup>23</sup> *Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*

As Christians our hope is not in man's ability to sustain the universe but in God's sovereign power and His promise to liberate us from this present world and give us a new heaven and a new earth. Of course we are to be good managers of the present earth and do what is reasonable to protect God's creation. If we are to be obsessed with something, however, we should be obsessed with the all-powerful, sovereign creator and sustainer of the universe who has prepared a place for us to live forever.

## **OUR SOVEREIGN GOD HAS PURPOSES AND PLANS FOR THE NATIONS**

### **God's purposes and plans cannot be deterred**

Because God is the creator of all and owner of all he is also the ruler of all. There is nothing that is outside of the "Lord Almighty's" rule. When we acknowledge that God is sovereign we acknowledge that nothing happens in heaven or on earth without His initiative or approval. No person or nation can deter God's purposes and plans. The truth for the week that you are memorizing makes this clear. Take a moment to read the entire Chapter. (*Psalms 33*)

### **God's purposes and plans are not to be challenged**

Of all the prophets Daniel seems to be the most firmly anchored in the sovereign will and power of God. Everything we know about Daniel demonstrates that he had complete trust in God's absolute rule over every circumstance. After God gave him the ability to interpret the King of Babylon's dream, Daniel said,

*Daniel 2:20-21*

*<sup>20</sup> "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. <sup>21</sup> He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.*

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, where Daniel and his friends were held captive during the exile, thought that He was in control and could challenge the sovereignty of God. Of course he has lots of company. From the very beginning man's tendency has been toward self-sovereignty, wanting to be his own boss and thinking that he can determine his own destiny. King Nebuchadnezzar found out the hard way that you do not challenge God's sovereignty. The King had another dream that he asked Daniel to interpret for him. The King did not like what he heard. Daniel told the King that unless he acknowledged the sovereignty of God he would suffer severe consequences. The King was warned that unless he acknowledged the following truth he would be in deep trouble. "...*The most high is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes.*" (*Daniel 4:25b*) Nebuchadnezzar arrogantly rebelled.

*Daniel 4:30*

*<sup>30</sup> he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?"*

### **There are severe consequences when God's sovereignty is challenged**

Not a good idea! It is never wise to challenge the sovereignty of God in any way. Because he would not acknowledge the sovereignty of God, the results of his rebellion were sudden and devastating.

Daniel 4:31-32

<sup>31</sup> The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. <sup>32</sup> You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes."

After Nebuchadnezzar had done his time and learned his lesson about God's sovereignty, the King's sanity and throne were restored. He learned his lesson, changing his tune dramatically. He affirmed God's sovereign rule over every person and nation. Notice the dramatic change in attitude. Nebuchadnezzar says,

Daniel 4:34-35

<sup>34</sup> "His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. <sup>35</sup> All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"

Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged that God had dominion over everything in heaven and on earth. Dominion means supreme authority, absolute ownership and is a synonym of power. This means that God will always do what He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth to accomplish his purpose and plans. No one is going to hold back His hand. No ruler or government can exist unless God allows it. If a ruler needs to be removed, God will remove him. If it is time for a nation to be defeated it will be defeated. There is no true national security, only God's sovereign security.

I am not saying that a nation should not defend itself. What I am saying is that God will never relinquish control and His perfect will, will always prevail. We should pray for world leaders so that we can live peaceful lives and there will be a stable environment in which people can be saved (1 Timothy 2:1-6). Governments exist because the sovereign God of the universe allows them to exist (Romans 13:1-7). We have a responsibility as citizens to do all we can do to elect the best leaders and influence the passing of laws that are in line with biblical standards.

Isaiah 14:26-27

<sup>26</sup> "This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over all nations. <sup>27</sup> For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?

People only think they are in control. Governments are only under the illusion that that they can make decisions without the approval or permission of God. In reality God is in control of the nations and **no one** will ever stand in the way of His ultimate purposes and plans. Therefore if we believe in the sovereignty of God we do not have to worry about governments and world conditions. We may be concerned but worry and anxiety are evidence that we are not completely anchored in the sovereignty of God. People and nations have always had a tendency to minimize the rule of God eventually and lose the anchor of the sovereignty of God. When this happens, trouble is just around the corner.

**Four characteristics of the sovereignty of God**

The following passage from the book of Isaiah was written during a very troubling time. Israel had wandered far from God and worshiped foreign gods. The leaders and people no longer acknowledged that God was sovereign and would have to pay the consequences for their rebellion. They were soon to be taken captive by

the evil Babylonian empire. Therefore God reminds His people of four very important characteristics of His sovereignty as He foretells of their eventual restoration.

Isaiah 46:8-11

<sup>8</sup> "Remember this, fix it in mind, take it to heart, you rebels. <sup>9</sup> Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. <sup>10</sup> I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. <sup>11</sup> From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do.

**First** - God reminds the people that He is the only one and true sovereign God. He says, "I am God and there is none other". (46:9) They had decided to try out some others "gods" and were experiencing disastrous results.

**Second** - God reminds Israel that He is all knowing. He says, "I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come." (46:10) Nothing catches God by surprise. He not only knows how things will start before they start, He also knows how they will end before they end. To be sovereign, God must also be all knowing.

**Third** - God reminds His children that His purposes and plans will happen **exactly** as He wishes. He says, "What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do." (41:11) There will be no deviation from what He has purposed.

**Fourth** - God tells the people that He will use some very unusual means to accomplish his purposes and plans. He says, "From the east I summon a bird of prey, from a far off land, a man to fulfill my purpose." The man from a far off land and the bird of prey refer to Cyrus, king of Persia. After the Israelites had paid the price for their rebellion by being held captive in Babylon for seventy years, God would use the heathen King Cryus from a foreign nation to rescue them from exile and return them to Jerusalem.



## DIG DEEPER

Dig deeper into the sovereignty of God by answering the following questions about what you have just read. (Review the Scriptures in your Bible and underline important words and phrases).

1. Review *1 Chronicles 29:10-14*. How did David respond to the ownership of God? What can you learn from Him about how you respond to the ownership of God?
2. According to *Romans 8:18-23* what should our view be of the condition of planet earth and global warming?
3. In *Psalms 33* what spoke to you most clearly about the impossibility of God's purposes and plans being deterred?
4. What can we learn from Nebuchadnezzar about challenging the sovereignty of God? (Review *Daniel 4:34-35*)
5. Review *Isaiah 46:8-11*. What lesson do you take away from the four characteristics of the *sovereignty* of God?



## SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

Read and study *Job 42:1-6* in your Bible. Answer the following questions about the sovereignty of God.

### **OBSERVATION:** (What does it say?)

- What are the key words? (Underline in your Bible)
- What are the key phrases? (Underline in your Bible)

### **INTERPRETATION:** (What does it mean?)

- What is the theme of the book of Job? (Use your Study Bible or other resource)
- According to Job, what had prevented him from understanding the sovereignty of God?
- What is the main point of this passage? Why is it stressed?
- What new insights about the sovereignty of God did Job gain through his suffering?

### **APPLICATION:** (What does it say to me?)

- How did Job respond to what he learned about the sovereignty of God?
- How will this study help you respond to the sovereignty of God?



## **DROP ANCHOR**

Following you will find practical ways in which you can drop anchor in the sovereignty of God by understanding that He has irrevocable purposes and plans for the world He created.

### **Anchored for Action**

1. Acknowledge that God is the owner of all and you are to manage His resources.
2. Affirm daily that our sovereign God is in complete control of everything in our world and that His purposes and plans will always be carried out.
3. Let these truths about the sovereignty of God renew your mind and transform your actions as you completely trust in His complete control.

**My plan to drop anchor** (Write one thing you will do)

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Review the accountability questions on page 17 and be prepared to share your answers with the group.

# SESSION 6

ANCHOR POINT C / Our Sovereign God has specific purposes and plans for our lives.

*“God not only wants us to acknowledge Him as the sovereign Lord of the universe but the sovereign Lord of our heart’s as well. . . He wants complete control.”*

## GETTING STARTED

Meditate on and memorize the anchor truth and action. Write the anchor truth for the session on one side of an index card and the anchor action on the reverse side. Review all previous sessions’ memory assignments. At least once a week review memory work from previous *Discipleship Journey* courses. Answer the questions that follow.

### Anchor Truth (memorize)

Romans 8:29

*<sup>29</sup> For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*

Ephesians 2:10

*<sup>10</sup> For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

1. In what ways do you see God’s sovereign will for your life in *Romans 8:29*?
2. What does God’s sovereignty have to do with you being conformed to the likeness of His Son?
3. Underline the key words in *Ephesians 2:10* in your Bible that indicate the sovereignty of God in our personal lives. How can this impact your life?
4. What does it mean to be “...created in Christ Jesus to do good works that God has prepared in advance for us to do?”

### Anchor Action (memorize)

*Lord, you are the all powerful sovereign creator and sustainer of the universe. I acknowledge your absolute rule over everything that exists .I know that nothing happens in heaven and on earth without your initiative or permission. Therefore I will trust you for every purpose and plan for the world and for my life.*



## EXPLORING THE ANCHOR OF SOVEREIGNTY

About ten years ago I was about to make a major change in my life. I had been teaching half time in a Christian College while serving in a church. When I informed one of my colleagues at the college of my intention to resign without having another position lined up I was taken off guard by her comment. “I’m really concerned for you. Your age (I was 59) is going to make it difficult to find another position. Churches don’t like to hire older people.”

I replied, “You know I really hadn’t considered that. I believe in a sovereign God where age or circumstances don’t make a difference. I know that God will place me exactly where He wants me.” Now that may sound a little “holier than thou”, but that was what I firmly believed. My friend who was a compassionate person was truly concerned. But I was surprised that she did not seem to factor in a sovereign God who is in control of all, including people and positions. I resigned both positions without any employment possibilities in sight. I know that may seem unwise to some people, but it is what I believed the Lord wanted me to do. I prayed in faith that the sovereign God of the universe would place me where I could best serve and believed that He would do just that.

Then the long period of waiting began. I contacted all the people and organizations that I could think of to let them know I was looking for a new ministry. Then I waited—and waited! At one point I explained to my wife that I believed I had done all I could do in pursuing employment. I said that as uncomfortable as it might be for both of us, I trusted that God knew exactly what our circumstances were and what He was doing. Our sovereign Lord would supply our need for a position in His time and in His place.

Time seemed to drag on. I certainly had days where I had to fight doubt and depression. One day while I was having my appointment with God I thought, “Absolutely nothing is happening. There are no leads, no possibilities—nothing!” Then another thought occurred to me. “God made the universe out of nothing. Nothing is impossible for God.” This truth gave me the strength to keep keeping on.

Firmly anchored in the sovereignty of God we kept on waiting. Did I have doubts at times? Of course. Was I tempted to work things out on my own? Definitely. There was a time I clearly remember when I started to devise a plan where I would teach part time, do some writing and speaking and work part time in a church. After several days of having no peace in what I was doing, I recognized that my need to control had raised its ugly head. I said to myself, “There you go again. You are getting anxious and are trying to work this out on your own. Are you going to trust in the sovereignty of God or not?” Two months later, at the last possible moment it seemed, our sovereign God intervened like He always does. With our faith and resources stretched to their limits I got a phone call from a church asking if I would be interested in exactly the kind of position I had been looking for. Within two months we were on site and had a fruitful ministry until my retirement. Age was never mentioned!

I know that it is a stretch to believe that the all-powerful, sovereign creator of heaven and earth designed you and me in a unique way to accomplish His specific purposes and plans for our life. As difficult as this is imagine, it is exactly what God has said He has done. His hand has delicately woven the fabric of our being and therefore we stand before Him exactly as He wants us to be.

To comprehend a God who can create billions of people with unique designs and specific purposes and then lovingly guide these people every step of the way simply boggles the mind. It pushes the limits of our reason. The whole idea brings us into contact with a divine dimension that we must perceive by faith and not by sight. Once we truly acknowledge that God is the all-powerful creator and sustainer of an incomprehensible universe, we can take the next faith step that He is able to design, develop and deploy for his purposes and plans.

## RELINQUISHING CONTROL

For us to be truly anchored in the sovereignty of God we have to give up the illusion and fantasy that we can be in control. I know the statement that we have no control goes against our grain. We want to be in control. We are afraid of what will happen when we are not in control. We think we can be in control. We are under the illusion that we can control outcomes, circumstances, and people—even our destiny. Everyone will have to face that reality at some point in his life. Following are just a few of the circumstances in which we become aware that we are powerless:

- Powerless to save a marriage when our spouse wants out.
- Powerless to save a child from destructive behavior when they rebel.
- Powerless to repair a relationship when the other person has no desire to reconcile.
- Powerless to please a person who cannot be pleased.
- Powerless to add one day to our life.
- Powerless to change our spouse.

The truth is that the only thing we can control is our response to God's sovereign control. We can relinquish our feeble attempts to control and put our lives firmly in His loving hands that control all. We can allow His power to flow through us. Now when I say we are powerless I am not saying we have no power at all. God has given us the power to respond to Him and receive His sovereign strength to accomplish His will. We do have God's power. We do have His perfect strength. We have His control when we have no control. His control is absolute and His power is unlimited. He will change what needs to be changed and give us the strength to accept what does not change. Understanding the sovereign nature of God and relinquishing our desire for control gives us great peace and joy. It is a relief to realize we don't have to be in control!

## GOD'S SOVEREIGN PURPOSE AND PLANS FOR OUR DESIGN

We are not self made people as the human potential movement would like us to believe. The sovereign God who created the universe not only created us but has a sovereign purpose for our design. Our sovereign God created man with His power. In His very own likeness God designed the masterpiece of His creation. The book of Genesis says,

*Genesis 1:27*

*<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

### **Fingerprints: created in the image of God**

As difficult as it is to comprehend the vastness of the universe it is even more difficult to fathom the intricate design of man. God makes it clear that we are the work of His hands and that He will not allow His sovereign right to rule his children to be challenged.

Isaiah 45:11-12

<sup>11</sup> "This is what the LORD says--the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker: Concerning things to come, do you question me about my children, or give me orders about the work of my hands? <sup>12</sup> It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts.

God's ownership begins with His children and He emphatically claims His sovereign right to do as He pleases with the work of His hands. There was a song that was very popular in the eighties titled, "He Has The Whole World In His Hands." I'm sure the person who composed this song did not understand the true meaning of the sovereignty of God but he did capture some truth. The title certainly captures the essence of God's sovereignty. As we have seen, God does have the whole world in His hands. His fingerprints are on everything that exists including us. As the song says, "He has you and me brother, in his hands."<sup>9</sup>

**Perfect design-wonderfully made!**

God created us after He created the earth, but we were no afterthought but a definite forethought. Before the creation of the world, God chose us according to the purpose of His will. Paul says,

Ephesians 1:4-5

<sup>4</sup>For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup>he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will —

The Scripture assures us that God put careful thought into our design. If we were to reflect His image then we would have to be, "wonderfully made." In the Psalms David gives us some astounding insight into how God had a hand in how we were formed.

Psalms 139:13-16

<sup>13</sup>For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. <sup>14</sup>I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. <sup>15</sup>My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, <sup>16</sup>your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

As amazing as it might seem, we were wonderfully made, knit and woven together in our mother's womb. God knew us before we were born. According to this passage we are exactly as God wants us to be, perfectly suited to accomplish his purposes for our life. He has even recorded every day of our life. The sovereign God who created the universe for a purpose created us for a unique purpose.

**Don't complain!**

We are not to complain about how our sovereign God has designed us. There are things most of us would like to change about ourselves. We wish we were a little taller, a bit shorter, smaller hips, bigger biceps, smarter, more talented, a little better looking--the list goes on! But God says, "Enough!" Enough of the complaining and I have given you enough. You have exactly what is needed to accomplish what I have planned for you. Through the Prophet Isaiah God warned His children not to argue about how they were made.

Isaiah 45:9

<sup>9</sup> "Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker... Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?' Does your work say, 'He has no hands'?"

## GOD'S SOVEREIGN PURPOSE AND PLANS FOR OUR DEVELOPMENT

The story of Genesis is both wonderful and tragic. Wonderfully made and placed in a perfect environment, man and woman were also created with a free will. They chose to challenge God's sovereign rule believing Satan's lie that they could become "like God" (*Genesis 3:5*).

### **The fall: God's masterpiece is marred**

From the time man rebelled, he was marred by sin, persistently rejecting the sovereign rule of God in his life and attempting to be his own god. As a consequence of their actions, Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden and alienated from God (*Genesis 3:14-24*).

### **The restoration: God's masterpiece is marred but not ruined**

God's original purpose for man was not terminated by man's sin. The crowning masterpiece of God's creation was marred but not ruined forever. God has never given up on His original purpose for man to glorify Him as the supreme ruler of the earth. God has never given up on his original creation. Immediately after the fall of man God initiated His plan to restore man to his intended place in creation. Even as man was being expelled from the Garden of Eden, God promised reconciliation and restoration through Jesus (*Genesis 3:14-15*).

The rest of the Bible is the story of how God seeks to reconcile us to Himself, and restore us to our rightful place in His creation. That story will not be complete until the end of time as we know it, and we live in the new heaven and the new earth. In the meantime God desires to restore us, His masterpiece, to our original design. God always sees us as He intended us to be, not as we are (*Col. 3:9-10; Ephesians 4:22-24*).

### **God reshapes us**

God works in our life as a potter, taking a pot that has been broken and marred, restoring it to its original condition. While God's design is perfect our character is flawed because of the fall and our propensity to sin. God wants to take what He has made and continually shape us into His perfect image. When the Lord was dealing with the rebellious children of Israel, He let them know that it was a sovereign God's prerogative to shape them as He thought best.

Jeremiah 18:4-6

<sup>4</sup> "But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. <sup>5</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to me. <sup>6</sup> 'O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?' declares the LORD. 'Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.'"

Like Israel, we are certainly flawed by sin. God takes us into His hands and continues to shape us until our character is in the form of His Son. The Apostle Paul said,

Romans 8:29

<sup>29</sup> For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

**We are our Master's masterpiece**

The Potter's ultimate goal is to produce a masterpiece. God will not rest until we are shaped into the likeness of His Son. God's Word says;

Ephesians 2:10

<sup>10</sup> "... we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

We are God's "workmanship." The Greek word used for "workmanship" denotes a masterpiece or work of art. God shapes us into a masterpiece for the purposes of helping Him accomplish His purposes and plans. In His sovereign will He has "prepared in advance" certain good works for us to do.

**God's reigns in our hearts**

We become the masterpiece God desires when we allow Him to reign in our heart. God not only wants us to acknowledge Him as the sovereign Lord of the universe but the sovereign Lord of our heart as well. He wants us to give Him His rightful place on the throne of our heart. He wants complete control. The Word says, "...in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord..." (1 Peter 1:15) When we set apart God in our hearts He rules our will. It is at that point we make God's purposes and plans our purposes and plans.

**GOD'S SOVEREIGN PURPOSE AND PLANS FOR OUR DEPLOYMENT**

**Don't resist**

God has a specific purpose for our life and definite plans for our deployment. What God purposes and plans, He will fulfill. As he reshapes us in His image He designs ministry assignments that fit our shape perfectly. Those are the works that He planned "in advance" for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10) From the beginning of time God has reshaped His marred people to accomplish His purposes. One of the great promises of the Bible is found in the book of Jeremiah. God, speaking to the people promised,

Jeremiah 29:11-13

<sup>11</sup> For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. <sup>12</sup> Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. <sup>13</sup> You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

While this promise was given specifically to the Children of Israel who would live as exiles in Babylon, I believe that the principles of the promise are true for God's children today. We know that God has plans for us. Those plans are specific and when we pursue them we face life and all its difficulties with hope. Filled with this hope we first seek God and find our purposes and plans in Him. And yet this same prophet who wrote these great words of encouragement from God resisted God's deployment. When God called Jeremiah to be His prophet he had a very familiar response. In the **Search the Word** study that follows you will be able to glean great insights into how God prepares and deploys us to accomplish His purpose and plans (*Jeremiah 1:4-10*).

## Trust in God's sovereign empowerment

We can have absolute confidence that the sovereign Lord who created and sustains the universe with His great power makes that same power available to us (*Eph. 1:18-23*). We will never lack God's power to accomplish His will. Isaiah 40 which you already studied, concludes with an incredible description of God's sovereign power and promise for our empowerment.

### Isaiah 40:27-31

*<sup>27</sup> Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God"? <sup>28</sup> Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. <sup>29</sup> He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. <sup>30</sup> Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; <sup>31</sup> but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*

God has designed eagles to have special aerodynamic lifts on their wings that enable them to soar effortlessly in the sky. Because of their specially designed wings, eagles position themselves so that their wings catch the updraft of the wind allowing them to soar for hours. To receive the strength that the wind provides eagles need only to go to where the wind will fill their wings for flight. Where they position themselves is critical.

The analogy that Isaiah makes is clear. God has equipped us like the eagles to receive His strength. God has designed our souls to be like wings that are uniquely designed to receive the wind of His Spirit. With the wind of the Spirit we have the strength to soar above our circumstances. The aerodynamic lift is a permanent part of our souls but, like the eagles, we must position ourselves to receive the empowering wind of the Spirit. No wind, no strength.

Hope is essential if we are to position ourselves to receive God's power. Remember that hope is the essential ingredient of every anchor. When our hope is the Lord we place our absolute trust in His character. Because we have faith that our sovereign God is who He says He is and faithfully fulfills all His promises, we put ourselves in a position to receive His strength. We stay in position by being connected to the "true vine" of Jesus in intimate fellowship (*John 15:1-5*). The power of the Holy Spirit flows to us as we hope in God (*Romans 15:13*).



## DIG DEEPER

Dig deeper into the sovereignty of God by answering the following questions about what you have just read. (Review the Scriptures in your Bible and underline important words and phrases).

1. You read that for us to be truly anchored in the sovereignty of God we must give up the illusion and fantasy that we can be in control. Is there an area of your life where you have difficulty relinquishing control to the sovereignty of God? Explain.
2. Read *Psalms 139:13-16* in your Bible and underline the words that indicate that our sovereign Lord gave careful thought to your design before you were born. What do these words say to you about your uniqueness?
3. Based on this passage what should your attitude be toward who you are and what God wants to do with your life?
4. Read *Jeremiah 18:4-6* in your Bible. Imagine being a clay pot in the Potter's hands. How do you believe the Potter wants to shape you? How willing are you to be shaped as our sovereign Lord sees best?
5. To what degree do you believe in your heart that God has a specific purpose for your life and definite plans for your deployment? Circle one: Not sure Somewhat sure Very sure Absolutely sure
6. Read *Isaiah 40:27-31* in your Bible. What does this passage say to you about God's sovereign empowerment for His purposes and plans for your life?



## SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

Read and study *Jeremiah 1:4-10* and answer the following questions the sovereignty of God.

### OBSERVATION: (What does it say?)

- What are the key words? (Underline in your Bible)
- What are the key phrases? (Underline in your Bible)

### INTERPRETATION: (What does it mean?)

- What is the historical setting for this book? Who is Jeremiah, where is he to prophecy and what is going on in the surrounding nations? Read *Jeremiah 1:1-3* and the background section of your Study Bible.
- What is God's emphasis in verse 5? Where do you see God's sovereignty in this initial statement? Why this immediate emphasis by God?
- What is Jeremiah's initial response? In what way is Jeremiah conflicted over the sovereignty of God? Would his response be typical of most of us? Explain.
- How does God answer Jeremiah's objections? What basic human needs does God's answer assure?
- In what tangible way does God demonstrate His sovereignty in verses 9-10? What is the significance of God touching and putting words in Jeremiah's mouth?

### APPLICATION: (What does it say to me?)

- In what ways does the example of God's sovereign power in Jeremiah's life speak to you? What principles did you discover that will help you respond positively to God's sovereign purpose and plans for your life?



## **DROP ANCHOR**

Following you will find practical help to become anchored in the sovereignty of God rule over your life.

### **Anchored for Action**

1. Renew your mind daily with the truth that your sovereign God has created you as His masterpiece to accomplish His purposes and plans for your life.
2. Remember how important it is to be persistent in the strict training of memorization and meditation. It is through the renewal of your mind with the Word that the Holy Spirit will transform you.
3. Remember that you are clay in the Potter's hand and He is continually shaping you for His purposes as He sees best.
4. You don't have to be perfect to accomplish God's purposes and plans for your life, but you do need to be perfected. Your responsibility is to cooperate with how the Potter is shaping you, and remain in His hands. It is through obedience to God's Word that you will be shaped.
5. Be ready, confident and eager for God to deploy you.
6. Be prepared. Be consistent in your training in godliness. Trust that God will use you to accomplish His purposes and plans as He sees fit. Be sensitive to what God is doing around you and how He wants you to be involved.

**My plan to drop anchor** (Write one thing you will do)

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Review the accountability questions in Session I and be prepared to share your answers with the group.

# **ANCHOR #2:**

## **THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD**

### **ANCHOR POINT A: I am adopted by the Father**

#### **ANCHOR TRUTH**

*<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will - Ephesians 1:3-5*

### **ANCHOR POINT B: My heavenly Father meets all my needs**

#### **ANCHOR TRUTH**

*Matthew 7:7-8*

*<sup>7</sup> "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.*

### **ANCHOR POINT C: My identity is a son/daughter by adoption, a servant by choice and a disciple by calling**

#### **ANCHOR TRUTH**

*<sup>15</sup> For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." - Romans 8:15*

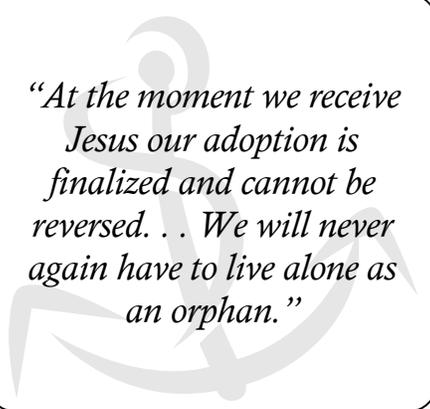
*<sup>26</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be your slave. - Matthew 20:26-27*

#### **ANCHOR ACTION**

*Heavenly Father, my significance, value and identity are in you alone as a son/daughter by adoption, servant by choice and disciple by calling. Help me to know in my heart as well as my head that I have intimacy with you as my Abba-Father and that you will meet all of my needs.*

# SESSION 7

## ANCHOR POINT A / I Am Adopted by the Father



*“At the moment we receive Jesus our adoption is finalized and cannot be reversed. . . We will never again have to live alone as an orphan.”*

### GETTING STARTED

Meditate on and memorize the anchor truth and action. Write the anchor truth for the session on one side of an index card and the anchor action on the reverse side. Review all previous sessions' memory assignments. Once a week review memory work from previous *Disciple's Journey* courses. Answer the questions that follow.

### ANCHOR TRUTH (memorize)

*<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will - Ephesians 1:3-5*

1. What spiritual blessings are available to us through God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ?
2. Explain how being chosen in Christ makes us holy and blameless in our heavenly Father's sight.
3. How can being adopted by our heavenly Father by "His pleasure and will", give you confidence in your position as a child of God?

### ANCHOR ACTION (memorize)

*Heavenly Father, my significance, value and identity are in you alone as a son/daughter by adoption, servant by choice and disciple by calling. Help me to know in my heart as well as my head that I have intimacy with you as my Abba-Father and that you will meet all of my needs.*



## EXPLORING THE ANCHOR OF THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

Last week we looked at the sovereign power and transcendence of God and this week we will focus on the immanence of God. God is transcendent because He is infinite and cannot be compared to finite beings. His vastness as creator and sustainer of the universe is beyond our finite minds to fully comprehend. One who has always been and will always be transcends anything we can imagine.

### THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD STARTS AND ENDS WITH GRACE

The transcendent God is also immanent. He has made Himself present and personal to each of us. Through His Son and His Spirit, the Father has given us complete access to Himself. In the sovereignty of God we experience His power and might. We come to believe that He is in control of all things and that nothing happens in heaven or on earth without His initiative or permission. It is when we receive His grace that we can experience true intimacy with our heavenly Father.

#### It's all about our Father's grace

Before we move on I want us to us, to review how you receive grace. There are some very important things to remember. By the Father's **grace** you have been saved. You were a lost child but now you have been found (*Ephesians 2: 8-9*). Because you have been **justified** (pardoned and put right with God) you have been fully **accepted** by God (*Romans 5:1*). You have also been **sanctified**, or set apart to God and declared **holy** and **blameless** in His sight (*Ephesians 1:3-4*). At the moment you were saved the Heavenly Father granted you the status of sonship (*John 1:12*). You were **adopted** into His family with all the rights and privileges of a child of the King (*Romans 8:15-17*.) The Father made all of this possible, not because of anything you did or will do, but purely because of His **unmerited favor**. Based on this grace your Heavenly Father now wants to develop this intimate relationship with you.

### SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED

On the day you were adopted by your Heavenly Father you received a birthday gift. This gift was a page in a family heritage book purchased at a great price by Jesus. In this book there is a page dedicated to you. Your name is written on this page identifying you as a son or daughter of the Father Himself. This book is called "The Lamb's book of life." In the book of Revelation God says this about that book:

#### Revelation 21:27

*<sup>27</sup> Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

This book was written just for you and all others in the family of God. This honored book in the library of heaven is called the Lamb's book of life because the Son of God purchased it for you. I can imagine the author's dedication saying something like this:

"I dedicate this book to my beloved Son who gave His life for every person whose name is written on these pages. Without His loving obedience this book would have never been written. It is signed, *"With love, the*

Heavenly Father.” The significance of this book is that we have been signed, sealed and delivered to our Father in heaven forever. Here is how it happened.

### **Signed by the Father**

Our Heavenly Father goes to great lengths to assure us of His everlasting love. At the moment we receive Jesus our adoption is finalized and cannot be reversed. We are God’s possession for all eternity. We will never again have to live alone as an orphan. Our Heavenly Father wants us to know that our adoption papers are **signed, sealed and delivered**. He knows that only a confident child will experience true joy and peace. Only a secure child will obey from love and not fear.

There is a wonderful word picture in the book of Isaiah that graphically portrays the loving signature of the Heavenly Father on His beloved children.

#### Isaiah 49:15-16

<sup>15</sup> *“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! <sup>16</sup> See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.”*

This message was given to the Israelites by God to assure them of His unfailing love and faithfulness. It was a common practice in that culture for people to puncture, or “engrave” their hand or arms with symbols of cities or temples to show their zeal and affection for them. They did this as a reminder to themselves and as a sign to others that what that engraving symbolized was of extreme value.

Our name engraved on the palm of our Father’s hand is to help us picture His everlasting love. He compares that love with the deep personal love of a mother for her child. While it is unthinkable to imagine a mother forgetting a nursing child, and while rare it does occasionally happen. But our Heavenly Father assures us that it is impossible for Him to forget us. He has made us unforgettable! He has engraved our names on His loving hands and in His Book of Life forever. Because of His signature no one can take us out of His hands. Jesus made this clear when He said,

#### John 10:27-30

<sup>27</sup> *“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. <sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one”*

### **Sealed by the Holy Spirit**

We have seen that at the very moment you received Christ your adoption papers were signed by the Heavenly Father and your name recorded in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Because your sins were forgiven and you were made pure by the blood of Jesus, your name was entered into a book that guarantees your entrance into heaven as God’s child. Your name written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, documents the fact that you are “*holy and blameless in His sight*”, a condition of entering heaven (*Ephesians 1:4; Rev. 21:7*).

God does not make any mistakes when He enters a name in the Lamb’s Book of Life. He has spelled your name correctly. An all-knowing God has observed your life from the beginning to the end. He knows with one hundred percent certainty those who have truly received Him through faith and become His children. In Romans Paul says,

Romans 8:29

*<sup>29</sup> For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*

- **The seal closes the deal!**

Our heavenly Father does not want us to feel insecure, always wondering if we are going to be orphaned again. Therefore God has given us the seal of the Holy Spirit to assure us that we will never again be separated from Him. **The seal closes the deal.** It is superimposed on the Father's own page in the signed copy of the Lamb's Book of life. It is personalized for us. The seal of the Holy Spirit in our life forever verifies that we are God's children. The signature and the seal use the permanent "ink" of the blood of Jesus. Paul says,

Ephesians 1:13-14

*<sup>13</sup> And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.*

In Bible times a seal was often used to complete a legal transaction of importance. A seal was usually a signet ring or cylinder engraved with the owner's name or symbol. It was used as a pledge or guarantee of full payment. The seal of the Holy Spirit that Paul speaks of in this passage is our guarantee that we will receive our full inheritance in heaven. This seal authenticates those who belong to God and fully certifies us for eternal life with all rights and privileges of children of God. God's Word guarantees that He has,

2 Corinthians 1:22

*<sup>22</sup> set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*

- **The seal erases all doubt**

Our Heavenly Father wants there to be **no doubt** in our minds that we are secure as His children forever, with no fear of being banished or abandoned. When I was growing up every so often, when my mother was totally frustrated with my behavior, she would threaten to send me to "Reform School." She never explained where reform school was or what they did to reform you, but it didn't sound good to me. I do remember taking the threats seriously enough to think that my behavior could possibly get me kicked out of the family. I'm sure there are more than a few of you who had similar threats. You might have even used some threats of your own to control your children.

I remember a heart rending time when I had to tell one of my daughters that she could no longer live in our home. She had been on her own for some time but wanted to move back in for a while. There were some issues we asked her to clear up as a condition for living with us. When she returned home I asked her if she had done what I had asked. She said she had not, so with a heavy heart I told her that she could not stay with us until she had done what she had agreed to do. I wanted her to be absolutely clear about her secure place in the family so I also said, "I want you to know that you will never do anything that is so bad that you are no longer part of this family. Our love is unconditional but our resources are conditional. We will always love you no matter what."

- **How much more!**

Now if I, an imperfect earthly father, could assure my daughter of unconditional love, **how much more** certain can we be of our perfect Heavenly Father's unconditional love for us. He has gone to great lengths to make sure we understand that we are eternally secure in His love. The Apostle John emphasizes this fact.

1 John 5:11-13

<sup>11</sup> *And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* <sup>12</sup> *He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.* <sup>13</sup> *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so **that you may know that you have eternal life.***

- **Everlasting love**

The Father wants us to know that if we believe in His name that we have eternal life. The Father who chose us in the beginning will choose us in the end as well. Once we our adopted our Heavenly Father does not threaten us with banishment or abandonment. He does warn us about our behavior. He does discipline us as deeply loved children, but He does not threaten to disown us. Just the opposite, our Father constantly reassures us that we our **forever secure in His everlasting love.** He may withhold His resources but He will never withhold His love. His Word of assurance says,

Psalms 103:17

<sup>17</sup> *But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children--*

There is an entire Psalm that helps us understand that our Heavenly Fathers' love is everlasting. Each verse of *Psalm 136* ends with the reassuring promise, *His love endures forever.* Twenty six times this promise is repeated, ending with this promise.

Psalms 136:26

<sup>26</sup> *Give thanks to the God of heaven. His love endures forever.*

Once we are part of the family our Father will never disown us. We can never do something so grievous that our Father says, "That's it! You're out of here. I've had it with you. You are no longer part of this family." We have the family name that identifies us as His forever. There may be times when the "accuser of the brethren" plants doubts in our minds. We think, "Is someone who fails so often really going to make it? Am I really secure"? How many ways does the Heavenly Father have to say "yes"? Well, here is one more way.

### **Delivered by the Son**

We have been signed by the Father, sealed by the Holy Spirit and are delivered to the Father by the Son of God. Imagine this scene for a moment. It is judgment day and you are standing before your Father in heaven, dressed in dazzling white clothes The Father is seated on His throne with His Son seated on His right. You are standing next to the Son. Imagine your excitement as you wait to see what happens next. The Son speaks. "Father, this is \_\_\_\_\_ (your name). He was adopted by you on \_\_\_\_\_ (the date of your new birth). His name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

With a big smile on His face the Father says, "Welcome home my son/daughter. Well done good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" (*Matthew 25:23*) While no one knows the exact details of this encounter, there is no doubt that the Son will represent us before the Father in heaven. Jesus promises,

*Revelation 3:5*

*<sup>5</sup> He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.*

We will stand before our Heavenly Father on judgment day to account for everything we have done, both good and bad. (*Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10*) We are responsible for everything we have done on earth but this accounting to God has nothing to do with our salvation. The Son has assured us that the account of our sin has already been settled. It has been forgiven and wiped off the ledger forever. Jesus has canceled our debt with His blood and we will stand before the Father, spotless in our white garments. Because our life is hidden in Christ we appear pure and blameless before the Father.

*Colossians 3:3-4*

*<sup>3</sup> For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

Every sin has been deleted from the book by the blood of Christ. As the Father looks at us He sees us through His Son. What more evidence do we need?

## **INTIMACY WITH OUR HEAVENLY FATHER**

One of the greatest challenges most of us face is to grasp the significance of our adoption by the Heavenly Father and live in true intimacy with Him. It is only from experiencing this kind of relationship that we are freed from fear and can have complete trust in our Heavenly Father's love.

*Romans 8:15-16*

*<sup>15</sup> For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*

Our adoption as sons and daughters frees us from the fear that drives us to attempt to meet our own needs, prove our own value and determine our own destiny. Our adoption frees us from believing the greatest of all lies that claims our deepest needs can be met outside of God's provision. When we fully comprehend the meaning of our adoption, we stop trying to meet our own needs with a thousand things that will never satisfy, and are content to allow our intimate relationship with the Father fulfill our every desire. Our desire will be for God alone and will fulfill all other desires.

### **What is intimacy?**

Intimacy is not a word that is found in the Bible but it is a word we use in our culture to describe the closest of relationships. In the Bible intimacy is defined as "oneness." The Father and the Son are "one", describing the perfect intimate relationship. Jesus prayed that all of us would experience oneness with the Father and Son and with one another within the Body of Christ.

John 17:20-23

<sup>20</sup> "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,  
<sup>21</sup> that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so  
that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> I have given them the glory that you gave me, **that  
they may be one as we are one:** <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity  
to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (Bold added)

In this prayer Jesus describes perfect intimacy. It is being one with God and with one another. This oneness produces complete unity. *Intimacy is a relationship of oneness, characterized by the perfect love of the Father that casts out fear and builds trust.* When the Father adopted us, we were given the position of an intimate child. The practice of intimacy however, was something that we would have to develop. Our adoption opens the door to intimacy with our heavenly Father. It is up to us to walk through that door and **experience** intimacy with Him.



## DIG DEEPER

Dig deeper into the Fatherhood of God by answering the following questions about what you have just read. (Review the Scriptures in your Bible and underline important words and phrases).

1. Read *Ephesians 1:13-14*. What was it that included you in Christ? What guarantees you eternal life and your inheritance? What does the seal mean to you?
2. Compare *1 John 5:11-13* with *Ephesians 1:13-14*. What do these two passages have in common? What is the significance of the common theme?
3. Imagine yourself standing in front of the Father with the Son at your side and the Holy Spirit over you. You hear the Father say, "Welcome home my son/daughter", as you stand there, holy and blameless in His sight. How do you think you will feel and respond?
4. Read *Romans 8:15-16*. What is it that we fear? What is the answer to that fear?
5. What is the most important thing you read today? How can this impact your life?



## SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

Read and study *John 17* and answer the following questions the Fatherhood of God.

### OBSERVATION: (What does it say?)

- What is the background of this passage? Who are the people? When and where did this prayer occur?
  
- What key words and phrases do you find in this passage? (Underline in your Bible)

### INTERPRETATION: (What does it mean?)

- What are the major themes that Jesus addresses in this prayer?
  
- What in this prayer indicates the kind of relationship Jesus had with his Father?
  
- Jesus prayed in the disciples presence. What specifically do you think he wanted them to hear?

### APPLICATION: (What does it say to me?)

- What can you learn about intimacy with your heavenly Father from this prayer?



## **DROP ANCHOR**

Following you will find practical ways in which you can drop anchor in the Fatherhood of God by understanding how deeply He loves you and how He has made it possible to have an intimate relationship with Him.

### **Anchored for action**

1. Let your mind be renewed by the truth about how deeply the Father loves you as His child.
2. Ask God every day to make the reality of your adoption real in your heart.
3. Begin each day with the Lord's Prayer.
4. Make a list of Scriptures from this week's study to memorize in the future.

**My plan to drop anchor** (Write one thing you will do to drop anchor)

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Review the accountability questions in Session I and be prepared to share your answers with the group.

# SESSION 8

## ANCHOR POINT B / MY HEAVENLY FATHER MEETS MY NEEDS

*“Why would we want to be close to someone who we cannot trust or might hurt us in some way? . . . this is why Scripture stresses the loving, compassionate Fatherhood of God.”*

### GETTING STARTED

Meditate on and memorize the anchor truth and action. Write the anchor truth for the session on one side of an index card and the anchor action on the reverse side. Review all previous sessions' memory assignments. At least once a week review memory work from previous *Disciple's Journey* courses. Read *Matthew 7: 7-11* and answer the questions that follow:

#### ANCHOR TRUTH (memorize)

*Matthew 7:7-8*

*<sup>7</sup> “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ”*

1. What is Jesus major emphasis concerning the heavenly Father? What does He want His disciples to learn?
2. What are we as God's children given permission to do? Why is this important?
3. Why do you think Jesus compared the heavenly Father with earthly fathers? How does this help you understand the Fatherhood of God?

#### ANCHOR ACTION (memorize)

*Heavenly Father, my significance, value and identity are in you alone as a son/daughter by adoption, servant by choice and disciple by calling. Help me to know in my heart as well as my head that I have intimacy with you as my Abba-Father and that you will meet all of my needs.*



## EXPLORING THE ANCHOR OF THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

It is essential that we have a true image of God as our loving heavenly Father if we are to have an intimate, trusting relationship with Him. The Bible's picture of our heavenly Father is unlike that of any earthly father. Even the best of earthly fathers are imperfect. We all fall short of meeting our children's emotional, spiritual and physical needs. But the heavenly Father does not! However there are some obstacles most of us will need to overcome to have a true image of a perfect heavenly Father.

We will have a tendency to project onto God the image we have of significant people in our lives: fathers, mothers, or other significant authority figures and caregivers. We project certain imperfect characteristics of these people onto our Heavenly Father. These characteristics result in a distorted image of God. There are many people who can't imagine a perfectly loving heavenly Father because they never experienced a loving earthly father. When these people think of the heavenly Father, His identity is distorted in their minds because of the image of their earthly father.

I was able to witness a clear example of this kind of false identity a few years ago. I was having a conversation with my grandson Saylor, who was six at the time, his mother and my wife. I can't remember exactly what we were talking about but I said something about our heavenly Father providing for us. Saylor without hesitation corrected me and said, "heavenly Grandfather".

You see Saylor's image of a father was distorted. His biological father was never really there for him. Other than a few brief appearances, his father was out of the picture. Saylor only experienced disappointment and abandonment from his father. On the other hand I had always been there for him. Saylor knew that his grandfather loved him and would never abandon him. Even at this young age Saylor had already formed a false identity of God as a heavenly Father. He could not conceive of a father being there for him. He had not yet learned to separate the image of his earthly father from his image of his heavenly Father.

Not all people who have been raised by distant, abusive or otherwise very emotionally unhealthy parents have a mistaken identity of the Heavenly Father. I have known some people with very unhealthy parents who had no problem at all with their image of God. Still others struggle with intimacy because of their mistaken identity of God. There are some important principles that will help all of us develop a true image of God as Abba-Father and deepen our intimate relationship with Him. First we will look at how we are to enter our heavenly Fathers' presence.

### ENTERING OUR FATHERS PRESENCE

- **Enter His presence as *Abba-Father***

In the study of *Spiritual Boot Camp* we studied the Lord's Prayer and the importance of entering God's presence as *Abba-Father*. Jesus said,

Matthew 6:9-13

<sup>9</sup> "This, then, is how you should pray: "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, <sup>10</sup> your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us today our daily bread. <sup>12</sup> Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

In this simple prayer Jesus says it is of first importance is to address God as their heavenly Father. Jesus wanted his disciples to understand that they could enter God's presence on the most intimate of terms.

With these first four words of instruction Jesus pointed His disciples to the heart of prayer—their relationship with the heavenly Father. The first thing they needed to know was that His Father was their Father as well. Jesus wanted His disciples to understand that the heavenly Father was delighted when they entered His presence. As believers we have the advantage of understanding even more than the disciples did at the time about the intimacy we can have with our heavenly Father. Because the heavenly Father adopted us, we have permission to call Him Abba, Father. Paul explains that God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts so we can communicate with Him with deep emotion and closeness. Because we are sons and daughters God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."

Galatians 4:4-7

<sup>4</sup> But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. <sup>6</sup> Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." <sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

The word *Abba*, is an Aramaic word for father that expresses deep personal affection. The word *Father*, comes from the Greek word "*Pater*." The Holy Spirit in our hearts gives us the capacity to approach God in the spirit of both names. We can call out *Abba, Father*, knowing that our heavenly Father will hear us and is delighted to be with us.

- **Enter without fear**

One of the main obstacles we face when entering our heavenly Father's presence is fear. These fears often develop because of imperfect human relationships and prevent us from developing an intimate relationship with our *Abba-Father*. We project these fear producing characteristics onto our heavenly Father. These false assumptions of who He is cause us to be afraid of Him. Why would we want to be close to someone who we cannot trust or might hurt us in some way? I believe this is why Scripture stresses the loving, compassionate Fatherhood of God. Our heavenly Father wants us to be confident that He loves and cares for us more than we can imagine. We have no reason to fear Him. The Apostle Paul writes,

Romans 8:15-17

<sup>15</sup> For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. <sup>17</sup> Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

In this passage Paul could not have made it clearer; we have no reason to fear our heavenly Father and every reason to trust Him. Because we have been adopted by the Father we are His deeply loved children and He designated the Spirit to “*testify with our spirit that we are God’s children.*” This means that God’s Spirit speaks to our spirit to convince of us His fatherhood. What we have difficulty believing about a perfect heavenly Father the Spirit explains to our inner spirits. We believe what we could otherwise not believe about His love.

- **Enter with pure delight**

In the 1970’s Janet and I lived in Seattle, where I was struggling to make a living writing and holding seminars on marriage and family. I was constantly looking for low budget ways to entertain our three young daughters. One day I spotted a large box outside the appliance store just up the street from our house. I thought the girls would have great fun making a playhouse out of an appliance box so I dragged it home. Heidi and Liesl enthusiastically endorsed the idea and we started the building project by cutting out doors and windows.

That same day I had a speaking engagement in a nearby city and returned home at about 10:00 pm. I entered the house quietly because I assumed everyone would be asleep. Instead of silence I was greeted by the sound of two excited little girls running towards me at full speed. “Daddy, Daddy”, they said, “Come look at our house.” They had defied bedtime rules and had been laying awake, waiting for me to come home.

I was dead tired from the stress of travel and speaking, but I didn’t want to squelch their excitement so I let them drag me into their bedroom to show me their new playhouse. They had done a good job with the decorating but asked me for input in a couple of areas. “Daddy, don’t you think we need curtains for the widows? What do you think we should do?”, they asked. I gave them my input on the windows and a couple of other things. They were obviously impressed. “Daddy”, one of them said, “you sure know a lot about cardboard boxes.” I still have fond memories of that night when two little girls couldn’t wait to show me their mansion and crown me as a cardboard box expert. My daughters knew just how much I delighted in their presence and would rejoice in their treasure so they were unafraid to defy the curfew.

Jesus told a story about a rebellious son that illustrates just how much our heavenly Father delights in our presence and wants us to delight in Him. There was a father who had two sons; a “good” son and a “bad” son. Sound familiar? In the Parable of the Lost Son the younger son asks for his inheritance early, heads off for a distant land and squanders it all. He ends up feeding pigs for a living. It was when he was up to his knees in you know what, that he realized that he would be better off as a servant at home. Here is what happened

*Luke 15:20-22*

*<sup>20</sup> So he got up and went to his father. “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ <sup>22</sup> “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.*

In this story of we get a glimpse of how much the heavenly Father loves and delights in the presence of even his irresponsible children. What He wants most, even when we are at our worst, is for us to come home to where we belong. He stands with open arms ready to forgive us. He has great joy in our return.

No expense is denied for our homecoming party. Considering all this, how can we not enter our heavenly Father's presence with great delight?

## TRUST ABBA-FATHER

Our heavenly Father knows what is best for us. That it is to trust, love and obey him with all of our hearts. Everything else flows from this. Following are six areas in which our heavenly Father wants us to trust Him.

### 1. Trust in the Father's omniscience

We can trust our heavenly Father because He is all knowing. Because the heavenly Father is omniscient, He knows what you need before you ask. Jesus told the disciple not to pray like the pagans who think their prayers will be answered because of their many words.

Matthew 6:8

*<sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

### 2. Trust in the Father's omnipotence

We can trust our heavenly Father because He is all-powerful. As you know, nothing happens without his initiative or permission. Jesus illustrated this when He said,

Matthew 10:29-31

*<sup>29</sup> Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. <sup>30</sup> And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup> So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.*

Not even a hair of your head will be harmed without the Father's will. It is because of your incredible worth.

### 3. Trust in the Father's omnipresence

We can trust our heavenly Father because of His omnipresence. The illustration of the sparrows applies here as well. As with the sparrow the Father is always with us every minute of every day. God has said,

Hebrews 13:5

*<sup>5</sup> Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*

### 4. Trust in the Father's provisions

We can trust God to meet all of our needs. Jesus stresses this in His Sermon on the Mount. After telling people how He feeds the birds and clothes the lilies of the field, He reminds them that they are much more valuable. Jesus then says,

Matthew 6:31-34

*<sup>31</sup> So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup> Therefore*

*do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

## **5. Trust in the Father's compassion**

We can trust in our heavenly Father's compassion. He realizes we are only children with faults and weakness but still has a deep compassion for us. The Psalmist says,

*Psalm 103:13-14*

<sup>13</sup>*As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;*

<sup>14</sup>*for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.*

## **6. Trust in the Father's discipline**

And finally we can trust in the heavenly Father's discipline. We often misunderstand the Father's discipline. We usually don't enjoy our heavenly Father's discipline. But we can trust that no matter what happens to us it is always for our good. God will use every hardship for His glory and our benefit so we can share in His holiness. The writer of Hebrews says,

*Hebrews 12:7, 10*

<sup>7</sup>*Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?...*<sup>10</sup>*Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they **thought** best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. (Bold added)*

## **OBEY YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER**

When we know how much our heavenly Father loves us we will trust Him to always do what is best for us. When we love and trust Him we will want to obey His commands. Jesus made this clear.

*John 14:23*

<sup>2</sup>*If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.*

True intimacy is reciprocal. It involves two people whose word can be trusted. Our heavenly Father has done His part. We can trust that every promise He makes will be fulfilled. (*Numbers 23:19; Jos. 23:14; Psalm 119:140*) Our part is to trust in the Father's love enough to obey Him. Jesus demonstrated this kind of trust in His heavenly Father as His life on earth was drawing to a close. In those agonizing final hours He turned to His Father as he always did for spiritual and emotional support. Jesus' soul was "*overwhelmed with sorrow*" as He faced death (*Mark 14:34*).

*Mark 14:34*

<sup>34</sup>*"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."*

Then turning to the only person Jesus knew would care for His soul in those times of intense sorrow, He said to His Father in total trust:

Mark 14:36

<sup>36</sup> "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Jesus not only taught with His words but also demonstrated by His example how each one of us can experience the heavenly Father's care if we will trust Him to meet our needs. Unlike even the best of earthly parents who are not omniscient (all-knowing), omnipresent (always-present), or omnipotent (all-powerful), our heavenly Father is all of these and more. He is all-loving. It is always our responsibility to put our complete trust in His loving hands.

I end today's study with this amazing story. Marylyn Laslo who spent 25 years in Papua New Guinea creating a written language and translating the New Testament for a remote tribe, tells a great story of the kind of faith we all need to have in our Abba, Father's care. Periodically Marylyn would need to travel down the river to an outpost for supplies. She would take a couple of men with her to help. It would be an all day trip that required exactly three containers of fuel to get them back up the river to the village.

On one return trip the motor stopped because it ran out of fuel. When Marylyn asked where the final container of fuel was, the men admitted that they were one short. Distressed, Marylyn admonished the men for their carelessness. They were in a precarious position, still an hour away from the village. "We will pray to Papa God, (their term for heavenly Father), and He will give us fuel", they assured Marylyn.

"Papa God is not going to fill the gas tank", Marylyn replied. "You forgot the fuel and now we are stuck on the river." Undeterred, the men prayed that Papa God would fill the tank and take them home. When they attempted to start the motor, Marylyn's was astonished. The motor roared to life and miraculously kept running for the next hour until they reached the village. That day the teacher learned from the pupils about the loving care of "Papa God." They had learned well the lesson of simple, childlike faith. They knew Papa God would meet their needs.



## DIG DEEPER

Dig deeper into the Fatherhood of God by answering the following questions about what you have just read. (Review the Scriptures in your Bible and underline important words and phrases).

1. This week's study contends that we will have a tendency to project onto God the image we have of significant people we have in our lives. Is this true in your life? How have you seen it played out in other people's lives?
2. Read *Galatians 4:4-7* in your own Bible. How does the Spirit in our hearts enable us to call God "*Abba, Father*"? How can understanding this term help us have an intimate relationship with our heavenly Father?
3. Read *Romans 8:15-17*. Underline the important words in your Bible. How does this passage answer the questions about any fears we may have of God? What does this passage want us to understand?
4. Read *Matthew 10: 29-31*. How can the truth of this Scripture deepen your intimacy with the heavenly Father?
5. How does trusting and loving our heavenly Father affect our obedience to Him?



## SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

Read and study *Mathew 6: 19-34* and answer the following questions the Fatherhood of God.

### OBSERVATION: (What does it say?)

- What is the background of this passage? Who are the people? When and where did this teaching occur?
- What key words and phrases do you find in this passage? (Underline in your Bible)

### INTERPRETATION: (What does it mean?)

- What is the main point of this passage? What does Jesus want the people to understand?
- What is the significance of verse twenty one? How does the other principles in this passage depend on an understanding of what Jesus teaches in this verse?
- How does what Jesus says about the eyes fit into this passage?
- Jesus concludes this teaching with a very significant statement in verses thirty three and thirty four. In what ways does this sum up everything Jesus has said?

### APPLICATION: (What does it say to me?)

- What speaks to you in this passage about trusting your heavenly Father?
- What one truth can you glean from this passage that you will hold onto for the rest of your life?



## **DROP ANCHOR**

Following you will find practical ways in which you can drop anchor in the Fatherhood of God by understanding how deeply He loves you and how He has made it possible to have an intimate relationship with Him.

### **Anchored for action**

1. Are there any fears of intimacy with the heavenly Father that you need to tell Him right now? Are there any incorrect images of the heavenly Father that need to be corrected?
2. Check your “trust factor” on a regular basis. Ask yourself, “Am I really trusting my Heavenly Father to care for me much more than any earthly Father”? “What is changing in my thoughts or actions that indicate that I am growing in my dependence on my Heavenly Father”?
3. What other Scriptures do I want to memorize in the future?
4. Spend some time in prayer, asking your heavenly Father to make the truths you have been exposed to today a reality in your life

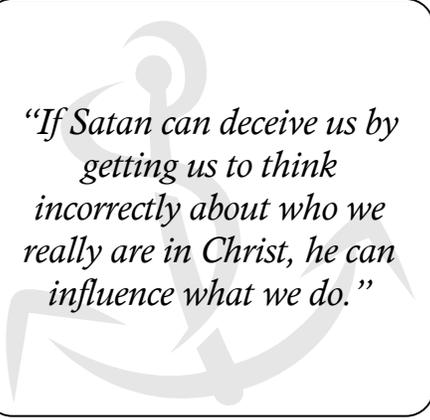
**My plan to drop anchor** (Write one thing you will do to drop anchor)

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Review the accountability questions on page 17 and be prepared to share your answers with the group.

# SESSION 9

## ANCHOR POINT C / MY IDENTITY IS A SON BY ADOPTION, A SERVANT BY CHOICE, AND A DISCIPLE BY CALLING



*“If Satan can deceive us by getting us to think incorrectly about who we really are in Christ, he can influence what we do.”*

### GETTING STARTED

Meditate on and memorize the anchor truth and action. Write the anchor truth for the session on one side of an index card and the anchor action on the reverse side. Review all previous sessions' memory assignments. At least once a week review memory work from previous *Discipleship Journey* courses.

### ANCHOR TRUTHS (Memorize)

1. What spirit of fear can cause us to doubt the reality of our sonship? In what way does the Spirit enable us to call out “*Abba, Father*”? How is this our core identity?

*<sup>15</sup> For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” - Romans 8:15*

2. In your own words what does it mean to you to become great by becoming a servant? How can this become an essential part of our identity?

*<sup>26</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be your slave. - Matthew 20:26-27*

3. How does answering the call of Jesus to follow Him complete our identity in Christ?

*<sup>23</sup> Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” - Luke 9:23*

### ANCHOR ACTION (memorize)

*Heavenly Father, my significance, value and identity are in you alone as a son/daughter by adoption, servant by choice and disciple by calling. Help me to know in my heart as well as my head that I have intimacy with you as my Abba-Father and that you will meet all of my needs.*



## EXPLORING THE ANCHOR OF THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

Our identity is how we define ourselves. It is the basic beliefs we hold about who we are. How we define ourselves is important because that core identity is the truest indicator of how we will function and what we will do with our life. We will inevitably default to what we see as our core identity. That identity is the engine that drives the direction of your life.

### HOW WE IDENTIFY OURSELVES

People have a variety of ways in which they define themselves. Following are some of the major categories:

1. **Distinguishing characteristic:** For some people their primary identity is based on some distinguishing characteristic such as their intelligence, body, beauty, industriousness, or that they are creative, wealthy, entrepreneurial, nice, etc.
2. **Roles:** There are people whose primary identity is in some role that they fill. They identify themselves in roles such as: wife, mother, father, peacemaker, victim, engineer, doctor, lawyer, or pastor. Take a moment to think about your own identity. How do you define yourself? Start with your primary identity and then in any other ways in which you may identify yourself.

"I am \_\_\_\_\_

While roles, occupations and distinguishing characteristics are a part of our identity they do not provide us with our primary or core identity. We are much more than the traditional ways we have of defining ourselves. God primarily defines us as a **son or daughter**. We are also defined in Scripture as **servants**. This is a distinguishing characteristic of a Christian. We are to have the attitude of a servant. A final part of our identity is as a **disciple**. That is our true **vocation**. We are called to be a fully devoted follower of Jesus and complete His work on earth.

### IDENTITY THEFT

I'm sure it is no news to you that identity theft is a huge issue in today's world. In America alone someone's identity is stolen every 3 seconds. When a person's identity is stolen it can cause all kind of havoc, taking months if not years to untangle the mess. However this kind of identity theft involves only the data about who a person is, not his core identity. There is another kind of identity theft that occurs when the god of this world, steals the true identity of a believer. This happens far too often. The tragic fact is that people don't

realize that their identity has been stolen but they still suffer the tragic consequences of empty, unfulfilled lives. I want us to look at how this happens. It is important for us to understand some of the evil one's schemes for stealing the identities of believers. Jesus warned about identity theft when He said,

John 10:10

<sup>10</sup> *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

Satan is the thief. He remains true to his core identity as a liar and thief and wants to steal from the believer the very thing that gives him a full, satisfying life as a child of God. One of Satan's preferred ways of stealing true identities is to subtly insert false information about the believer. One of the ways he does it is to tell believers lies about who they really are. If Satan can deceive us by getting us to think incorrectly about who we really are in Christ, he can influence what we do.

Jesus gives a prime example of how Satan is able to steal the identity of people and influence their behavior. There were some Jews who had made a kind of formal belief in Jesus but were not true believers. (*John 8:31-32*) They rejected God's Son but still claimed that God was their father (*John 8:34-41*). When Jesus confronted them about their mistaken identity they were indignant.

John 8:41

<sup>41</sup> *"We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself."*

These Jews had listened to the father of lies and were deceived into thinking they were someone they were not. Their identity was tied to a false view of God and who they were, not the true identity that the heavenly Father wanted to give them. Jesus said,

John 8:44

<sup>44</sup> *You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

These people bowed to their identity as sons and daughters of the father of lies. As a result their actions were consistent with their identity. There is a principle here that we can apply to our lives. In much the same way the father of lies wants to steal your true identity. What he actually steals is how you identify yourself not **how God** identifies you. In God's eyes your core identity is set forever. You will always be His deeply loved, adopted son or daughter. What is stolen is the **truth** of your core identity. This occurs when you believe the lie and do not define yourself first and foremost as your Father's son or daughter but in some secondary way. It is how you see yourself through vision that has been blurred by the evil one. While your identity is secure you fail to see it. You will always be your heavenly Father's deeply loved child but in your mind's eye and in your behavior you are someone else.

Jesus offered the solution to the issue of true identity. He told the Jews that the only way to be free and live fully satisfied lives, was to reject the lies of the father of lies and hold to the real truth of who they were.

John 8:31-32

<sup>31</sup> *To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.*

<sup>32</sup> *Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

## OUR TRUE IDENTITY

You and I will be completely free to live life to the full if we hold to the truth of how God identifies us. I want us to look closer at the three dimensions of our true identity. I want us to see how we can hold to the truth of how God identifies us. There are three dimensions of our true identity as children of God.

### 1. We are sons and daughters by adoption

We have already looked closely at the importance of understanding our adoption. We have been adopted as a son or daughter of our Heavenly Father. Everything else flows from this position. It is our core identity. If we do not understand this we will always struggle as a Christian. The intimacy we have with our Father enables us to feel valued, significant and reflect His image. However the thief wants to steal our identity by having us believe the following lie about our adoption:

❖ The lie

The lie is that we are not of a royal bloodline but are of natural decent. The lie suggests that while in theory we are children of our Heavenly Father, in reality He is distant and not all that available or interested in our lives. We are, the liar contends, on our own to work out our own destiny.

❖ The truth

The truth about our adoption is that we are born of God and He has given us His divine DNA. We are not of natural descent. We are not an accident of nature. Our Heavenly Father is and has always been involved in every area of our life and wants us to enjoy a secure, intimate relationship with Him. In the Gospels the Apostle John says,

John 1:12-13

<sup>12</sup> *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God* <sup>13</sup> *children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

Later he reminded believers,

1 John 3:1

<sup>1</sup> *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.*

God has **lavished** His love on us that we should be called His children. That is who we really are! That is our core identity.

### 2. We are servants by choice

Jesus' distinguishing characteristic was as a servant. It was an essential part of how He identified Himself. Jesus made a choice to be a servant when He came to earth. Paul talks about how Jesus identified himself as a servant and how we are to follow His example.

Philippians 2:5-7

<sup>5</sup> Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

Being a servant was not merely something Jesus did, it was who He was. He made the choice of being a servant as a part of His true identity. He could have chosen to come in any form. He could have come as a king but made Himself, *nothing* so that He could show us the extent of His love and teach us how to function as servants. (*John 13:1-17*) Jesus made sure His disciples understood the importance of identifying themselves as servants.

Matthew 20:25-28

<sup>25</sup> Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>26</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be your slave- <sup>28</sup> just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus did not force His disciples to be servants. Jesus modeled how to be a servant. He asked them to become servants. He also asks each of us to be a servant as He was a servant. But He wants us to respond in love from our own free will. Jesus wants us to recognize that this is a distinguishing part of our true identity and choose to be a servant. If we identify ourselves as a servant we will have the attitude and actions of a servant. The implication of this dimension of our identity is significant. When we identify ourselves as a servant we will consistently look for ways to serve others. We will do this, not because we are duty bound to do so, but because that is who we are. We will never stop serving because we will never stop being a servant. The thief, however, wants to steal our identity by having us believe the following lie about being a servant.

❖ The lie

The lie is that I am on earth primarily to be served not to serve. While the evil one may allow that it is good to serve others at times, we are influenced to do it in a self-serving way. We may perform certain tasks but certainly not as humble, sacrificial, obedient servants.

❖ The truth

The truth about being a servant is that God wants us to be servants as an essential part of our identity, a distinguishing characteristic. The Father wants us to serve because that is who we are, not merely to complete a task.

### 3. We are disciples by calling

Every believer is called to be a disciple. A disciple is a fully devoted follower of Jesus who has answered the call to carry out His work. This is something we **are** rather than just something we **do**. Jesus has called us to be disciples just as he called the original twelve to be disciples. Before Jesus left earth He said,

Matthew 28:18-20

<sup>18</sup> ... "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and

*teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'*

Our primary **vocation** is as a disciple of Jesus. Just as surely as the twelve disciples were chosen, we have been called and chosen as disciples to join the Father and Son in their work on earth. Therefore an essential part of our identity is a disciple. It is not some kind of short-term training program. It involves much more than someone mentoring us. We have been called by Jesus to be **identified** as disciples for a lifetime. It is our vocation. What we do for a living as our work or profession becomes our **avocation**--something we do in addition to our primary vocation as a disciple.

Identifying ourselves as a disciple has significant implications on how we prioritize our life. If our identity is as a disciple and follower of Jesus, our priorities in life will be following in His footsteps. As a disciple we will invest our life in producing fruit and reproducing other disciples who will produce fruit. (*John 15:16; 2 Timothy 2:2*) Because of this we will prioritize our spiritual, physical, and emotional resources in such a way that we will bear much fruit. Since being a disciple is part of our core identity, we will continue performing the tasks of a disciple until the day we die. We will finish the race as a disciple as did the Apostle.

*Acts 20:24*

*<sup>24</sup> However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.*

In the Bible it is very clear that we are to identify ourselves as disciples but the thief wants to steal our identity by deceiving us.

❖ The lie

The identity thief wants us to believe that our profession or work is our primary vocation and being a disciple is something we do in our spare time. Being a disciple may be a role we perform for a period of time--a part of what we do as a Christian--but it is not who we are. And certainly we are not called to be a fully devoted follower of Jesus for a lifetime.

❖ The truth

The truth about being a disciple is that it is our primary vocation. We are to be fully devoted "lifestyle" disciples, following in the footprints of Jesus. We are to be "lifetime" disciples, completing the lifetime of work the Father has ordained for us to do.

## YOU LIVE LIKE WHO YOU ARE

In a Peanuts cartoon Linus asks Lucy, "Why are you always yelling at me?" Lucy answers, "Well, I'm not sure I can help it...it's me... it's what I do." In your face Lucy got it right. Her actions were true to her identity. Much like Lucy, our actions will always reveal who we really are. One of the most accurate ways to determine if your identity is a son or daughter, servant and disciple, is to take a close look at how you are living your life. If you have identified yourself in these three ways, the focus of your life will reflect that identity. You will do what a true son or daughter, servant and disciple does. Your responses will be internal not just external. You will not be performing religious duties merely out of obligation but from your heart. What you say and what you do will flow outward from who you are.



## DIG DEEPER

Dig deeper into the Fatherhood of God by answering the following questions about what you have just read. (Review the Scriptures in your Bible and underline important words and phrases).

### Identity Analysis

To help you make an honest assessment of your identity, answer the following questions:

1. Review *John 1:12-13* and *1 John 3:1* in your own Bible. What is there in the way I think and act that shows that my core identity is as a son or daughter of the Heavenly Father? Is there anything in my life that indicates that I have not yet fully embraced that identity?
  
2. Review *Matthew 20:25-28* in your own Bible. What is there in the way I think and act that shows that my core identity is as a servant? Is there anything in my life that indicates that I have not yet fully embraced that identity?
  
3. Review *Matthew 28: 18-20* in your own Bible. What is there in the way I think and act that shows that my core identity is as a disciple? Is there anything in my life that indicates that I have not yet fully embraced that identity?
  
4. After a prayerful and careful analysis of how I identify myself I conclude the following and will make the following changes:



## SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

Read and study *John 10:1-18* and answer the following questions about the Fatherhood of God.

### OBSERVATION: (What does it say?)

- What is the background of this passage? Who are the people? When and where did this teaching occur?
- What key words and phrases do you find in this passage? (Underline in your Bible)

### INTERPRETATION: (What does it mean?)

- What primary figure of speech does Jesus use in this teaching? What significance would this figure of speech have to people in this culture?
- What is the identity thief called and how does he operate? What is his main objective? (V. 10)
- What are the characteristics of the one who is the source of our true identity?
- What is the source of our true identity and how can we be secure in that identity? What does the Good Shepherd come to do?

### APPLICATION: (What does it say to me?)

- What one thing speaks to you most clearly in this passage?
- What will you do with that truth?



## DROP ANCHOR

Following you will find practical ways in which you can drop anchor in the Fatherhood of God by understanding how deeply He loves you and how He has made it possible to have an intimate relationship with Him.

### **Anchored for action**

1. After making an honest evaluation of how you identify yourself, what did you discover? If you need to strengthen any of the three core identities, chose one to work on now.
2. Note any lies you might have believed and replace them with the truth of what God's Word says about your identity. Start by memorizing and meditating on a key Scripture associated with that identity.
3. "Defining moments" Take a few minutes during your daily appointments with God to think about your core identity.
4. Ask yourself, "What in my thoughts, actions and emotions this week indicate that I am identifying or not identifying myself as a son/daughter, servant and disciple?"
5. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to your spirit about the reality of your identity as a son/daughter, servant and disciple.

**My plan to drop anchor** (Write one thing you will do to drop anchor)

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Review the accountability questions in Session I and be prepared to share your answers with the group.

# ANCHOR #3

## THE SERVANTHOOD OF JESUS

### ANCHOR POINT A: The Humble Servant

#### ANCHOR TRUTH

Philippians 2:5-7

<sup>5</sup> Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

### ANCHOR POINT B: The Selfless Servant

#### ANCHOR TRUTH

Philippians 2:3-4

<sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

### ANCHOR POINT C: The Obedient Servant

#### ANCHOR TRUTH

Philippians 2:8

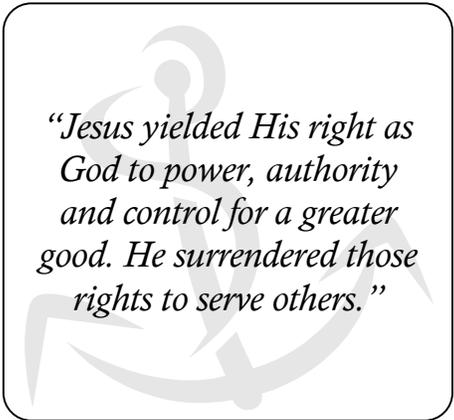
<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!

#### ANCHOR ACTION

*Jesus, I am committed to being a humble, selfless and obedient servant following your example of serving others by sacrificially meeting their needs.*

# SESSION 10

## ANCHOR POINT A / THE HUMBLE SERVANT



*“Jesus yielded His right as God to power, authority and control for a greater good. He surrendered those rights to serve others.”*

### GETTING STARTED

During the next three weeks you will have the privilege of memorizing a passage of Scripture on how to be a servant in all your relationships. Each week you will memorize a portion of *Philippians 2: 3-8*. When put into practice, this anchor will transform any relationship. It is the key to successful relationships.

### ANCHOR TRUTH (memorize)

#### *Philippians 2:5-7*

*<sup>5</sup> Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

1. How is this passage opposite of the common leadership model held by many corporations and even some churches?
2. In what ways did Jesus make Himself nothing?
3. Why was Jesus' attitude so critical to His mission?
4. What does this passage say to you about your identity as a humble servant?

### ANCHOR ACTION (memorize)

*Jesus, I am committed to being a humble, selfless and obedient servant following your example of serving others by sacrificially meeting their needs.*



## EXPLORING THE SERVANTHOOD OF JESUS

### JESUS CAME TO SERVE

This anchor is called “the servanthood of Jesus” because He chose to come to earth as a servant rather than a king or powerful political leader. Servanthood was the distinguishing mark of His time on earth. It was determined in heaven from the beginning that Jesus would serve and lay down His life for others. It was this example Jesus wanted to set for His disciples. This allowed Him to teach His disciples the revolutionary concept that to be a great leader one must first become a humble servant.

This flew in face of the philosophy of the time which held that a person became great by achieving rank and power. Servants were the lowest of the low and despised by all. The Pharisees, Sadducees and teachers of the law were anything but humble. Others followed the example of these religious leaders. Jesus called them all hypocrites. They took great pride in following the letter of the law, but completely missed what God wanted them to be as leaders.

### Woe! Don't lead like this!

Jesus had little tolerance for their hypocrisy. He used these religious leaders as an example of what true religious leaders should not be. In Matthew 23 Jesus pronounced seven woes against the kind of hypocrisy and pride they demonstrated. He introduced these woes by saying,

#### Matthew 23:1-7

*<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: <sup>2</sup> “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. <sup>3</sup> So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. <sup>4</sup> They tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. <sup>5</sup> “Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; <sup>6</sup> they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; <sup>7</sup> they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them ‘Rabbi.’*

The example of true greatness that Jesus had given the disciples and crowds was the exact opposite of the model practiced by the religious leaders. Before His pronouncement of the seven woes, He explained what happens when people are not humble servant leaders. They do not practice what they preach. They load up people with do’s and don’ts which have nothing to do with godliness and only burden them with obeying the letter of the law. Everything they do is motivated by selfish pride.

Why did Jesus make this emphasis? It is because avoiding the pitfall of pride and learning to be a humble servant is one of the most important principles a person who wants to be a leader will ever learn. If we don’t learn to be humble servants we will never become great leaders. Today we start the process of looking at this first distinguishing characteristic of the servanthood of Jesus. Jesus chose to empty Himself of His prerogatives as God by becoming a humble servant. He modeled this for His disciples and for us to follow.

## THE PYRAMID OF LEADERSHIP

Jesus introduced a new “pyramid of leadership” to the disciples. It was the opposite of what they had seen in the religious leaders. Jesus said “don’t lead like them but rather lead like this”:

### Matthew 20:25-28

*<sup>25</sup> Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>26</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be your slave — <sup>28</sup> just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

Jesus had modeled this leadership style for His disciples for nearly three years. Now he explains clearly how He had led and how He wanted them to lead. He turned their view of leadership upside down. They were not to lord it over others. They were not to exercise authority over people. They were not to be first. They were only to be great by sacrificially serving others.

## TOP GUN

In order to picture the two contrasting models clearly I want us to compare two pyramids. I call the secular model, “Top Gun” and the Biblical model “Top Servant.” We will look closely at the differences in these two models and what they say to us about leading others. First we will look at the “Top Gun” pyramid.



This model of leadership resembles a kind of traditional leadership style followed in Biblical times but one that is also practiced by many businesses, organizations and more than a few churches today.

### 1. Submission is upwards to the leader

The first thing you will notice in the Top Gun model is that submission is upward. People are required to submit upward to the Top Gun or Guns of the organization. There is no choice here. It’s “my way or the highway”. The leaders demand that people submit to their will.

**2. The leader wants to be first**

In this leadership model the leader is number one. With his or her title comes the preeminent position and privileges. The position carries with it power and authority. Number one rules. Compliance or obedience is demanded.

**3. The leader’s strategy is to control**

While the Top Gun can use authority to control people he may first try to control them through manipulation. This can take on many forms such as promises of benefits or veiled threats of consequences if they do not do the Top Gun’s bidding. If manipulation does not work, coercion will often follow. The leader’s exalted position of power gives him the leverage to coerce or pressure people into complying.

**4. The leader’s goal is to be served**

The goal of the Top Gun leader is to have people do his bidding. His agenda must be accomplished in his way. He expects people to meet his needs. Everything and everyone in the organization is subservient to Top Gun and his agenda.

**TOP SERVANT**

The Top Servant style of leadership is radically different than the Top Gun. The distinguishing mark of the Top Servant is that he or she is humble. This servant model turned prevailing leadership philosophy upside down. The Pyramid of Leadership is the exact opposite of the secular Top Gun model. Jesus said,

*<sup>26</sup>...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be your slave (Matthew 20:26-27).*



**1. Submission is downward toward others**

Gale Erwin in his excellent book *The Jesus Style* demonstrates how in Jesus’ style of leadership submission was always downward. The leader chooses to be a servant to those he leads in a humble, submissive way. Jesus modeled this for His disciples and for us. Jesus’ humility as a servant was a choice. He emptied

Himself of His rights as God and took on the form of a servant. It started with His submission to His Father and continued with His choice to submit to others as a servant. Paul explained how this occurred:

Philippians 2:5-7

*<sup>5</sup> Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup>Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

Jesus did not take His prerogative as God to force others to submit to Him but emptied Himself and took on the form of a servant. In making this choice He led by submitting downward not asking people to submit upward. Jesus yielded His right as God to power, authority and control for a greater good. He surrendered those rights to serve others. He came to earth as a humble servant rather than in the position of a ruling monarch. All this was for a single reason—so that all people could **freely choose** to be reconciled to God. He became a servant so that He could “... *give his life as a ransom for many.*” (Matt. 20:28) The Apostle Paul explained how submission worked in a very practical way. He took on the hot button issue of submission in marriage. He started with the foundational principle that we are to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Ephesians 5:21

*<sup>21</sup> Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

Paul levels the playing field here as he prepares to address husbands and wives. Submission, is always done out of reverence for Christ. It is following His example. If we read what immediately precedes this subject we see that submission out of reverence to Christ is made possible when we are “...*filled with the Spirit*” (Eph. 5:18). It is when we position ourselves to receive God’s transforming power that we can comply with what is so naturally difficult. Paul went on to say this about submission:

Ephesians 5:22-26

*<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,*

Jesus took the position of a submissive servant so we could respond to His love and choose to submit to Him and others. Wives are to voluntarily submit to husbands as they are to the Lord. Husbands are to love their wives as Jesus loved the church. How did Jesus love the church? He did so by laying down His life for her. This calls for a man to lay down His life for his wife. This entails meeting her needs as a servant. It requires submission downward--putting his wife’s needs before his own.

I haven’t always practiced submission downward very well in my marriage. I well remember a couple of times when I made the serious mistake of trying to pull rank on my wife and insisting that she submit “because God told her she had to”. I don’t remember the issues, but I do remember being so frustrated that I decided to opt for position and control to get my way. As you can well imagine my approach was disastrous. No good was accomplished when I demanded submission. This approach only met with resentment and more resistance.

I want to be clear on something here. I do believe that the Bible clearly teaches that God has appointed certain roles of leadership. The husband does have a leadership role in the family. There are elders in the churches that have leadership roles. The buck has to stop somewhere. However a person can be a strong leader and at the same time be a humble servant. But submission upward never really works. A person may gain temporary control or compliance but not true Biblical submission. It is only submission by the servant downward that is truly Biblical. It is only then that the other person is free to choose to submit and respond to love.

## 2. The leader chooses to be last

We seem to be hardwired to want to be first. Competition seems to be part of our nature. Even people who do not see themselves as competitive often compare themselves to others and attempt to be better. At some level we all are tempted to compete to be first or put ourselves first. Jesus turned things upside down when He told his disciples that the only way to be first was to be last. When he overheard them arguing about who was the greatest He said:

Mark 9:35

*<sup>35</sup> Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."*

This must have boggled their minds. Jesus answered the disciples' desire to be first by informing them that the only competition was to compete to be a humble servant. The only way to get to the top was to be at the bottom. The only title they were to desire was the title of a slave. Jesus consistently warned against the dangers of titles and positions. Often titles indicate positions of rank and power above others. I understand that in some cases, such as in the military, titles and ranks are necessary. Not so among Christians. Perhaps every leader should go by the title of "slave" followed by their area of responsibility—such as "servant who pastors the flock". In the Bible titles are primarily used to describe function not position or rank.

## 3. The leader's strategy is to set people free

As we have seen the Top Gun's strategy is to control people in any way he can. A person who feels a need to control is actually demonstrating that they do not trust God to do His work in the lives of people. They do not sincerely believe in the sovereignty of God. This comes from pride born of insecurity. Controllers have the mistaken belief that if they do not control people or situations that God's will cannot be accomplished. God needs their help. Therefore, rather than to free people to accomplish God's will they restrict them through control.

The Top Servant's strategy is the exact opposite. The humble servant sets people free to accomplish the plans and purposes God has prepared for them rather than his own. Rather than manipulate and coerce, he **equips** people so they are set free to use the spiritual gifts God has given them to advance His kingdom. This is the primary responsibility of leaders. Humble servants firmly believe they have been given their "positions" by God to serve others by preparing them for works of service. Paul said,

Ephesians 4:11-13

*<sup>11</sup> It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may*

*be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (bold added)*

This equipping was never done from above in positions of authority, but from below and alongside as mentors and friends. It was done **with** people in intimate relationships. When Jesus led His disciples He chose to be **with them** as a humble servant so they could freely choose to trust and love and learn to serve others.

Mark 3:14-15

*<sup>14</sup> He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach <sup>15</sup> and to have authority to drive out demons. (bold added)*

It was only by being with them that Jesus could demonstrate the example of leading as a humble servant. He did not do this by dictating or forcing them to serve but by serving them.

John 13:13-15

*<sup>13</sup> “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup> Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. <sup>15</sup> I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*

The message was clear. Jesus set an example of humble servanthood. The disciples were to follow His example demonstrating in action that they submitted downward, chose to be last so they could serve as humble servants. This would be essential if they were to set others free to serve as they were set free to serve by Jesus. They would eventually lead as they had been led. Jesus equipped the disciples and then set them free to go and equip others. His final words were, “...Go and make disciples...” (Matthew 28:18-20) This same message was passed on by the Apostle Peter to elders in the churches. They were to set people free by leading as servants. Peter admonished,

1 Peter 5:2-3

*<sup>2</sup> Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; <sup>3</sup> **not lording it over** those entrusted to you, but being **examples** to the flock. (bold added)*

#### 4. The leader’s goal is to serve others

The goal of a humble servant is not to be served but to serve. Jesus believed it, lived it and taught it. He knew that if a leader became a humble servant all else would be a fruit of that virtue. A servant’s job is to serve. It’s as simple as that. A humble servant seeks out the needs of others and meets them through the power of the Holy Spirit. That is who he is. That is what he does. He does everything possible to make life better for those he serves. Jesus set the standard. Jesus set the example. Jesus established the goal. It is this: **we are to serve as He served.**

Matthew 20:28

*<sup>28</sup> just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

Here then is Christ’s essential message: **To be first is to be last and to humbly and selflessly serve, for the only true greatness is in service.**

## HUMILITY COMES FROM SEEING OURSELVES AS GOD SEES US

Our humility begins with knowing who God is and therefore knowing who we are. A true perspective of who we are is only possible when we have a clear and accurate image of God. This allows us to see ourselves as God sees us. The prophet Isaiah quoted God as saying,

### Isaiah 66:1-2

*<sup>1</sup> This is what the LORD says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? <sup>2</sup>Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the LORD. **"This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.** (Bold added)*

When we remember who God is we remember who we are. We are able to view ourselves as God views us. The great and awesome God who created and sustains the universe "esteems" those who are "humble and contrite in spirit". We have seen that our true identity is a deeply loved son or daughter by adoption, a servant by choice and a disciple by calling. Our security for who we are and what we are worth must be only through God's eyes, not cultural standards or the opinions of others. The apostle Paul put it simply, <sup>10</sup> *But by the grace of God I am what I am...* (1 Corinthians 15:10). Paul saw himself only through the eyes of God. How others viewed him mattered little. He most often referred to himself as a servant of Christ. Because Paul viewed his significance, value and identity through the eyes of God he had absolute confidence in his ability to lead. He explained,

### 2 Corinthians 3:4-6 (NIV)

*<sup>4</sup> Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. <sup>5</sup>Not that we are competent in ourselves **to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.** <sup>6</sup>*



## DIG DEEPER

Dig deeper into the Fatherhood of God by answering the following questions about what you have just read. (Review the Scriptures in your Bible and underline important words and phrases).

### 1. Reflect on the Top Gun model of leadership and answer the following questions:

- Discreetly give some examples of leadership you have seen that operated on the “submission upward” model.
- Have you ever observed or been involved in a leadership model where there was competition to be number one? Explain.
- What are your thoughts about Top Gun control? What Scriptures in this week’s study directly refute this model of leadership?

### 2. Reflect on the Top Servant model of leadership and answer the following questions:

- Contrast the strategy of controlling others to the Biblical model of setting people free by equipping them to serve.
- What Scriptures in today’s study stress how essential it is to make it a goal to serve others?

3. Read *Isaiah 66:1-2* and comment on how a true image of God affects our view of ourselves and how we lead.

4. Evaluate the way you lead. Would you say you have more a Top Gun leadership style or a Top Servant style? What are your strengths and weaknesses based on the four characteristics described in the pyramid?



## SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

Read and study *Ephesians 5:22-33* and answer the following questions about servanthood.

### OBSERVATION: (What does it say?)

- What is the background of this passage? To whom was Paul speaking? When and where did this teaching occur?
- What key words and phrases do you find in this passage? (Underline in your Bible)

### INTERPRETATION: (What does it mean?)

- How does verse 21 tie what came before and what comes next together? What significance does this have for a Biblical view of submission?
- According to verse 22 what is the key to submission? How does this affect our view of submitting to one another in any situation?
- What kind of leadership is the husband instructed to have? How does the example in verse 25 fit into the humble servant style of leadership?
- What is the main point that Paul is making in this passage?

### APPLICATION: (What does it say to me?)

- What in this passage speaks directly to you? How will it affect your ability to be a humble servant?
- Are there any changes you will make in how you view submission? Explain.



## **DROP ANCHOR**

Following you will find practical ways in which you can drop anchor as a humble servant.

### **Anchored for action**

1. Commit to faithfully review the truth and action of the Anchor of Serventhood for the rest of your life.
2. Evaluate your leadership style in comparison to the humble servant pyramid. Make some specific changes in any of the four areas that need improvement.
3. Make a commitment to always submit downward.
4. Think of practical ways you can free and equip others to be all that God wants them to be.

**My plan to drop anchor** (Write one thing you will do to drop anchor)

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Review the accountability questions in Session I and be prepared to share your answers with the group.

# SESSION 11

## ANCHOR POINT B / THE SELFLESS SERVANT

*“Jesus did not play favorites. He cared not for people’s positions or status. He unselfishly met their needs whether they were rich, poor, sick or even outcasts of society.”*

### GETTING STARTED

Meditate on and memorize the anchor truth and action. Write the anchor truth for the session on one side of an index card and the anchor action on the reverse side. Review all previous sessions’ memory assignments. Once a week review memory work from previous *Disciple’s Journey* courses. Answer the questions that follow.

#### ANCHOR TRUTH (memorize)

Philippians 2:3-4

*<sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:*

1. Read *Philippians* 3-8. What in this passage indicates that Jesus was a completely selfless servant?
2. What does it mean to look to the interests of others?
3. What does this anchor truth say to you about what you can do to be a selfless servant?

#### ANCHOR ACTION (memorize)

*Jesus, I am committed to being a humble, selfless and obedient servant following your example of serving others by sacrificially meeting their needs.*



## EXPLORING THE SERVANTHOOD OF JESUS

Whatever Jesus did on earth he did in humility as a selfless servant. *A servant is one who demonstrates his love and loyalty by meeting the needs of others in practical ways.* In each of the gospels we can see the selfless characteristic of leadership clearly demonstrated by Jesus. Just follow His footsteps and you will see the imprint of selfless service in everything He did. In just the first chapter of the book of *Mark* we see Jesus serving in a variety of ways. He casts out a demon from a man possessed by an evil spirit (*Mark 1:24-28*). Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law and many others with various diseases. He drives out many more demons (*Mark 1:29-34*). The chapter ends with Jesus healing the man with leprosy (*Mark 1:43-45*). In today's study we will look at five basic ways that Jesus was a selfless servant.

### JESUS WAS SELFLESS WITH RESPECT TO HIS POSITION

To best understand the humble servanthood of Jesus we will continue to study Paul's teaching in *Philippians*. In this great passage Paul focuses on how Jesus was a humble, selfless servant and how we are to follow His example. First we will see how Jesus was selfless with His position.

#### *Philippians 2:5-7*

*<sup>5</sup> Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup>Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

#### **He made Himself nothing**

We know Jesus was God. That was His position. He was in "*very nature God*". He was God the Son, second person of the Trinity, creator and sustainer of the universe. He could have come to earth as a king. He could have set up an earthly kingdom and required everyone to submit upward or else. He didn't have to come at all. But rather He **chose** to "*make Himself nothing*". He made Himself nothing so He could become everything for us.

#### **He became a servant**

Jesus considered His rightful position of equality with God to be less important than becoming a humble servant who could "*...serve and give His life as a ransom for many.*" (*Matt. 20:28*) Jesus exchanged His nature as God for the "*...very nature of a servant...*" Jesus did something that was unheard of in the ancient world. Rather than aspire to the highest of positions He aspired to the lowest of positions. His disciples never really understood this until after His resurrection. They were a disillusioned bunch who until the very end thought He would set up an earthly kingdom and take His rightful place on the throne.

#### **He became human in likeness**

Jesus showed His selflessness by taking on all human limitations. He was "*...made in human likeness...*" This started with His birth. Jesus chose to be born in a manger in the humblest of circumstances (*Luke 2: 7*). Jesus came in human likeness so that He could be Immanuel which means "*God with us.*" In Matthew's account of Jesus' birth he says,

Matthew 1:23

<sup>23</sup> “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” — which means, “God with us.”

Jesus came in human likeness in every way. The prophet Isaiah describes what God would be like in human form. Jesus selflessly took on every human condition and limitation. He gave Himself no privileges or immunities.

Isaiah 53:2-4

<sup>2</sup>He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. <sup>3</sup>He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. <sup>4</sup>Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.

## JESUS WAS SELFLESS IN REGARDS TO HIS OWN NEEDS

A selfish person is obsessed with his own needs. This kind of person is so self-absorbed with what he wants that he is not able to see, let alone meet, the needs of others. We all have a tendency to default to the character flaws of selfishness and pride. This Scripture gives the antidote to these viruses. The attitude that will cure us of pride and selfishness is the humility and selflessness of Jesus. We are to model our behavior after His. Paul says,

Philippians 2:3-4

<sup>3</sup> **Do nothing out of selfish ambition** or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the **interests of others**. Your attitude should be the same as Christ... (Bold added)

Jesus always put the needs of others before His own. That is what a humble servant does. He did this in the following ways:

### He did not please himself

Nowhere in Scripture do you see Jesus pleasing Himself. Nowhere! In Jesus we have the example of a totally selfless life. Want to know what it is like to be selfless? Just look at Jesus. Paul reminds the believers in Rome,

Romans 15:1-3

<sup>1</sup> We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. <sup>2</sup> Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. <sup>3</sup> **For even Christ did not please himself** but, as it is written: “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.”

### He gave up the right to earthly possessions

We see no record of Jesus having earthly possessions. He had no place to even call home. When a wannabe disciple said that He would follow Him Jesus always reminded him of the cost.

Luke 9:57-58

<sup>57</sup> As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." <sup>58</sup> Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

Although Jesus could have had all the riches of the world at His disposal He chose a life of selflessness. He intentionally became poor for our sakes so that we could have the true riches of a relationship with Him.

2 Corinthians 8:9

<sup>9</sup> For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

### **He was forsaken so we would not be forsaken**

Jesus was forsaken so we would not have to be forsaken. Jesus gave up the right to every reasonable need for our sakes. He also gave up the human need for safety, respect and common decency. All this was so we could be reconciled to the heavenly Father through the sacrificial death of the Son. It was prophesied,

Isaiah 53:4-5

<sup>4</sup> Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

## **JESUS WAS SELFLESS WITH HIS OWN RESOURCES**

While Jesus did not have physical resources He had unlimited spiritual resources. He was man but He was also God. He was human and divine. Jesus selflessly gave of Himself and His divine resources to meet the needs of people. This was always done to demonstrate the love of God. It was through the unselfish meeting of people's needs that people would be able to receive the truth about God.

### **He served all people equally**

Jesus did not play favorites. He cared not for people's positions or status. He unselfishly met their needs whether they were rich, poor, sick or even outcasts of society. He healed lepers when others would not even go near them. He went to the home of a despised tax collector. He befriended an immoral woman. He met the needs of all who came to Him for assistance. He healed the sick, cast out demons and fed the hungry.

### **He gave selflessly of His time**

Never do we see Jesus selfish with His time. There are times when He withdrew from the crowds, but it was always so that He could use His resources wisely. From the beginning of His ministry Jesus devoted a large amount of His time to training the disciples. In the first record of Jesus having contact with His future disciples we see Jesus inviting them to where he was staying and spending the day with them (*John 1:35-32*). From that point on we know that Jesus spent an increasing amount of His time training the disciples (*Mark 3:13-15*). The remainder of Jesus' time was spent teaching, preaching, and meeting people's physical needs.

### **He spent time with the Father**

While Jesus gave of Himself unselfishly to meet the needs of others there was one personal need that He never neglected—that was time with His Father. Jesus knew that His Father was the source of all His strength. He was dependent on His Father. Jesus made a practice of withdrawing from the crowds and His disciples

for intimate times with His Father. In the first chapter of Mark we are able to see how Jesus spent His time and resources. The things Jesus did in this short chapter were repeated throughout His time on earth. Included was time with His Father. Mark records this:

Mark 1:35-36

*<sup>35</sup>Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. <sup>36</sup>Simon and his companions went to look for him,*

Spending time with His Father was always Jesus' highest priority. Jesus unselfishly denied Himself sleep so He could spend time with His Father. He went to a place where He could be alone with his Father and pray. This was His pattern throughout His life on earth.

## **JESUS WAS SELFLESS WITH HIS EMOTIONS**

Jesus was selfless with His emotions. He was not afraid to share a wide range of emotions with everyone. He certainly showed anger with the arrogant religious leaders. He showed anger when He chased the money changers out of the temple. When Jesus took on the basic nature of a man it included human emotions. The way Jesus expressed His emotions was completely consistent with who He was as a humble, selfless servant. He could be totally open and honest because He was totally secure with who He was.

It is only when we are humble servants that we will be able to share openly and honestly our deepest emotions with those around us. We will not fear rejection because we will be secure in our identity, value and significance in Christ. We will have no shame over our true emotions. I'm not suggesting that we will perfectly express how we feel at all times. We are still imperfect servants. Only Jesus was perfect. However, as humble servants we have been given a firm foundation for expressing our emotions in an unselfish way.

### **He shared openly and deeply with His Disciples**

A touching example of Jesus sharing openly and honestly is in the last hours before He was crucified. His human side was deeply distressed. His human side needed prayer and support. His human side was suffering untold agony as He faced being temporarily separated from His Father and bearing the enormous burden of the sins of the world. Matthew recounts,

Matthew 26:36-38

*<sup>36</sup>Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." <sup>37</sup>He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. <sup>38</sup>Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."*

Jesus is open and honest with His disciples. He shares His great sorrow without shame. He has nothing to hide. Of course the disciples still had a lot to learn about being servants so they were not able to support Jesus in His time of need. They fell asleep on Him. So much for emotional support!

### **He showed his emotions openly with people**

When His dear friend Lazarus died Jesus did not try to hide his true emotions from the people around Him. He was an open book so people could see His human side—his love and response to loss. He wept openly.

John 11:32-36

<sup>32</sup> When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." <sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. <sup>34</sup> "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. <sup>35</sup> Jesus wept. <sup>36</sup> Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

Jesus was deeply moved by the sorrow of Mary. Then Matthew records the only place in Scripture where Jesus wept. Notice there is no record of His apologizing for His emotions. There was no trying to cover up His true emotions. He openly cried for everyone to see and didn't apologize for "breaking down".

## **HE WAS SELFLESS WITH HIS PRIORITIES**

Jesus was very clear about His purpose for coming to earth. He said,

Luke 19:10

<sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

From this single purpose came Jesus' priorities. Everything He did was aligned with His purpose. He prioritized His time. You only have to read the first chapter of the book of *Mark* to discover what Jesus' priorities were. He selflessly used His time in five basic ways.

### **1. Jesus' first priority was to spend His time proclaiming the good news of God.**

Mark 1:14

<sup>14</sup> After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.

This was Jesus' highest ministry related priority. He came to show the love of God and explain how people could be reconciled to Him.

### **2. Jesus' second priority was to spend His time training the disciples.**

His second highest priority seemed to be the training of the twelve. He would put the responsibility for spreading the gospel in their hands. They would hand the baton to others so that the entire world could hear the gospel (*Matthew 28:18-20*). To do this Jesus would need to be with them continually. Mark says,

Mark 1:16-18

<sup>16</sup> As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup> "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." <sup>18</sup> At once they left their nets and followed him.

### **3. Jesus' third priority was to spend His time teaching people how to trust, love and obey God.**

Mark 1:21

<sup>21</sup> They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach.

Soon after He called His disciples He began His ministry of teaching. The teaching focused primarily on how they were to trust God and love God and love others. He taught the importance of knowing and obeying the Word of God.

**4. Jesus' fourth priority was to serve others, meeting their physical, emotional and spiritual needs.**

Mark 1:34

*<sup>34</sup> and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.*

This fourth priority enabled people to **experience** the love of God, not just hear about it. Jesus touched people as He healed them, cast out demons, fed the hungry and lifted up the outcasts. As He served in this way people could see the love of God in action.

**5. Jesus' highest priority was to spend time with his Father in intimate fellowship.**

Even higher than Jesus' priority of proclaiming the good news was His priority of spending time with his heavenly Father. As we saw previously in *Mark 1: 35-36*, Jesus allowed nothing to stand in the way of His time with His Father. Everything else flowed out of this Father-Son relationship. Jesus said,

John 5:19

*<sup>19</sup> Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.*

**WE ARE TO BE SELFLESS SERVANTS**

Jesus went out of His way to make it clear that we are to follow His example and be humble and selfless servants. After washing His disciples' feet Jesus said,

John 13:14-15

*<sup>14</sup> Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*



## DIG DEEPER

Dig deeper into the servanthood of Jesus by answering the following questions about what you have just read. (Review the Scriptures in your Bible and underline important words and phrases).

1. **Read *2 Corinthians 8:9* and answer the following questions:**

- What does God's grace have to do with being selfless servants?

- How can you apply this Scripture to your life?

2. **Read *John 11:32-36* and answer the following questions:**

- What can we learn from Jesus about the open and honest sharing of His emotions?

- How does our identity as a humble servant affect how open we are with others?

3. Review the five priorities of Jesus. In what ways have you seen your priority of time with the heavenly Father affecting other things in your life?

4. Read and apply *John 13:14-15*. What does this passage say to you about how you can grow in your ability to be a selfless servant?

## SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

Read and study *Romans 15:1-3* and answer the following questions about selfless servanthood.

**OBSERVATION:** (What does it say?)

- What is the background of this passage? To whom was Paul speaking? When and where did this teaching occur?
- What key words and phrases do you find in this passage? (Underline in your Bible)

**INTERPRETATION:** (What does it mean?)

- What does it mean to “*bear with the failings of the weak...*”? Give an example.
- In what way does Paul use the word “*strong*” in this passage?
- What are other examples of how Jesus did not please Himself? What other Scriptures can you find that apply?
- What is the meaning of “*The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me*”? What Psalm is Paul quoting?
- What is the main point that Paul is making in this passage?

**APPLICATION:** (What does it say to me?)

- What in this passage speaks directly to you?
- How will it affect your ability to be a selfless servant?



## DROP ANCHOR

Following you will find practical ways in which you can drop anchor as a humble servant.

### **Anchored for action**

1. Spend some quality time meditating on *Philippians 2:3-5*. Ask God to show you ways that you can be more selfless as a servant.
2. After you meditate on the passage write any insights God reveals to you.
3. Think of at least one way you can be more selfless as a servant.
4. Note some other scriptures on selflessness you would like to memorize in the future.

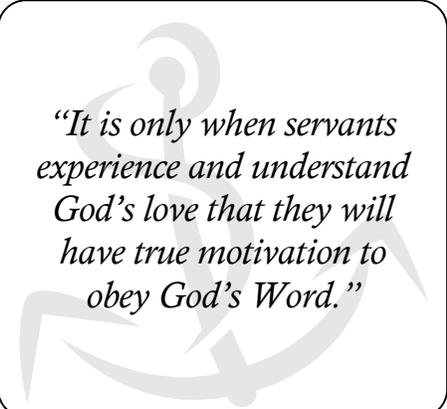
**My plan to drop anchor** (Write one thing you will do to drop anchor)

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Review the accountability questions in Session I and be prepared to share your answers with the group.

# SESSION 12

## ANCHOR POINT C / THE OBEDIENT SERVANT



*“It is only when servants experience and understand God’s love that they will have true motivation to obey God’s Word.”*

### GETTING STARTED

Meditate on and memorize the anchor truth and action. This week you will complete the memorization of *Philippians 2: 3-8*. Write the anchor truth for the session on one side of an index card and the anchor action on the reverse side. Review all previous sessions’ memory assignments.

### ANCHOR TRUTH (memorize)

*Philippians 2: 6-8 (NIV)*

*<sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross*

1. What is the significance of Jesus emptying Himself of His rights as God and coming to earth in human likeness? What does that say to you as a servant?
2. In what ways does humility affect obedience? How does pride affect obedience?
3. Jesus culminated His example of a humble servant by being obedient to death on the cross. What does this say about the importance of obedience?

### ANCHOR ACTION (memorize)

*Jesus, I am committed to being a humble, selfless, obedient servant, following your example of serving others by sacrificially meeting their needs.*



## EXPLORING THE SERVANTHOOD OF JESUS

### JESUS WAS AN OBEDIENT SERVANT

The servanthood of Jesus began and ended in obedience. In the beginning He obeyed by making Himself nothing and at the end He obeyed by dying on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. The Bible reports:

Philippians 2:8

<sup>8</sup> *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and **became obedient to death**— even death on a cross. (Bold added)*

Throughout the gospel we see Jesus constantly submitting to His Father in humble, selfless obedience. Everything He did was according to His Father's will. In those last days before He was to die on the cross and leave His disciples on earth Jesus ramped up His teaching on the connection between love and obedience. After assuring the disciples that He was going away to prepare a place for them and would return to take them with Him, Jesus said,

John 14:15-16

<sup>15</sup> *"If you love me, you will obey what I command. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—*

Jesus elaborated on the importance of obedience being the primary sign of true love when He continued this teaching.

John 14:23

<sup>23</sup> *Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.*

Jesus knew how difficult it would be for the disciples to remain faithful after He left them. He knew the persecution they would face. Because of this He stressed His love of them and their love of Him as the motivation for obedience. At the same time it served as the proof of their love. It was love and obedience that would provide fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus concludes this portion of His teaching on love and obedience by explaining that their love and obedience will be extremely important for others to see. It will be through them that love and obedience is modeled and passed on to other faithful disciples. One of the primary ways that the lost will be drawn to the Father is through the demonstration of the love and obedience shown by His followers. Jesus said,

John 14:30-31

<sup>30</sup> *I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me, <sup>31</sup> but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me. "Come now; let us leave.*

## OBEDIENCE BEGINS WITH THE LOVE OF GOD

There is one primary motivation for obedience and that is love. Jesus reserved His most direct and profound teaching on this essential connection between obedience and love for the final weeks of His life on earth. He knew that while they could not immediately comprehend the significance of what He was teaching, they soon would. It would be after He was crucified that the disciples would realize what it meant to lay down their lives for others. It was only then that they would finally understand what was required to be true servants of Jesus. Building on what He had just taught them about love and obedience Jesus revealed how they were to put it into practice.

### John 15:9-14

*<sup>9</sup> "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup> I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup> My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command.*

Jesus had done everything he could do to help the disciples understand the great love of the heavenly Father. They would have heard Him tell about how much the Father loved Him and how much He loved the Father. Jesus explained that His Father was their Father as well. Jesus not only taught about the Father's love but He demonstrated it by loving them in the same way. The love He experienced from His Father they also could experience. Now, just before his death he explains how love and obedience are forever connected.

It is only when servants experience and understand God's love that they will have true motivation to obey God's Word. The disciples were finally able to put it all together when He died on the cross for their sins. Now all of His teaching on love and obedience made sense. They had heard it all before but now they had seen it. They had finally experienced the full extent of God's love. Jesus had become "obedient to death-- even death on the cross." (Philippians 2:8) The apostle Paul also understood that obedience was motivated by the love of God. He said to the believers in Corinth,

### 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

*<sup>14</sup> For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. <sup>15</sup> And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

We are compelled or motivated to obey because of what God has done for us. We no longer live for ourselves but for Christ who loves us enough to die for us on the cross. It is because of this grace that we want to express our love to Jesus by obeying all He has commanded.

## REMAINING IN GOD'S LOVE DEPENDS ON OBEDIENCE

Jesus told his disciples that if they were to remain in His love they must obey Him. He said, "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love..." (John 15:10) Jesus says that to truly remain in His love we must obey his commands. It is only by obeying Jesus that we demonstrate that we have experienced God's love. It proves that we know how much we are loved, and how much we love and trust Him. To remain in God's love is to experience intimate fellowship with Him. It is to possess the full extent of God's love so it fills us to capacity. It is through our obedience that God's love remains in us, overflowing to others.

## Complete joy comes from obedience

Jesus goes on to say that complete joy requires complete obedience. He said, “*I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*” (V. 11) Jesus wanted to be sure that they understood that obedience is positive not negative. It was something that would bring great joy into their lives, not a burden. This was great news to the disciples. They had been exposed to the rules and regulations of the Hebrew law. So many rules and regulations had been added to Scripture that it was impossible to remember, let alone obey all that was required. The law was a burden, not a joy. Motivation to obey was not out of love but out of duty. It was to gain God’s love and approval, not because of God’s love. Now they could have great joy by obeying God. The apostle John who wrote down what He heard Jesus say about love and obedience expanded on this in his letter to the Christians.

### 1 John 5:1-3

*<sup>1</sup> Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. <sup>2</sup> This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. <sup>3</sup> This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,*

If we love the Father it will be shown in the way we love others. We demonstrate that we are God’s children when we obey Him. John stresses that this is not a burden. God wants us to obey because He knows what He asks us to do is best for us. If we obey Him we will experience peace and joy. The apostle Paul connected obedience to the peace of God.

### Philippians 4:9

*<sup>9</sup> Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into **practice**. And the God of **peace** will be with you. (Bold added)*

## OBEDIENCE RESULTS IN SACRIFICIAL LOVE OF OTHERS

Jesus concludes this teaching by defining love. He wanted to make sure that His disciples knew exactly what He meant when He used the terms “*love*” and “*obedience*”. He said,

### John 15:12-13

*<sup>12</sup> My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command.*

The definition is precise. It is clear. Jesus’ disciples had already heard Jesus teach on the “great commandment.” (Matt. 22:34-40) They had been with Him when He introduced the “new commandment.” (John 13: 34-35) Now Jesus defines what it means to truly love one another. **Love is sacrificially laying down our lives to meet the needs of others.** The disciples would soon witness exactly what Jesus meant. He would give them an example of the true meaning of love.

## Sacrificial love is practical

Many of us would claim that we would be “*obedient to death—even death on the cross*”. But to most of us this is a rather remote concept. It is not likely to happen. The question is are we willing to die to our own needs and interests to meet the needs and interests of others? Are we willing to lay down our own desires to satisfy the desires of our spouse, children, and others in need? Sometimes we men claim we are willing to lay down our lives for our families, but are we willing to pick up a dish towel to help our spouse or take out the trash

without being reminded? We all need to start with seemingly “small” sacrifices to demonstrate that we are humble, selfless servants.

The apostle John stresses the importance of sacrificial love expressing itself in practical ways. He defines love in this way:

1 John 3:16-18

*<sup>16</sup> This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. <sup>17</sup> If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? <sup>18</sup> Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

That’s very clear, isn’t it? Very convicting! Love is laying down our lives for others. The practical demonstration of love is meeting peoples’ felt needs in tangible ways. Our sacrificial love is to express itself not only in word but “...with actions and in truth.” How much clearer could that be? If we are not willing to use our physical, spiritual and emotional resources to meet the needs of others, God’s love is not really “remaining” in us. We have missed the grace of God. If we fail to connect the love of God and obedience, we have some growing to do.

## **STAYING CONNECTED TO THE VINE PRODUCES THE FRUIT OF LOVE AND OBEDIENCE**

God wants His servants/disciples to bear fruit. Loving one another and obeying His commands will accomplish God’s plans and purposes for our lives. Fruit is produced when we stay connected to the vine and respond to God’s power in our lives to love and obey Him and love others.

### **The vine is the essential connection**

Jesus told His disciples,

John 15:4

*<sup>4</sup> Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.*

As we have seen, Jesus taught that love and obedience were essential if the disciples were to have intimate fellowship with the Father. Love and obedience would only happen if they stayed connected to the Father and Son in intimate fellowship. Fruit-bearing was a result of an intimate relationship with Jesus. It was a fruit of staying connected to the vine. The fruit that was produced was the fruit of obedience and love. Jesus went on to say,

John 15:16-17

*<sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. <sup>17</sup> This is my command: Love each other.*

### **Our response is to love and obey**

As we have seen throughout this study, the Bible stresses obedience as a response to the incredible love of God demonstrated by grace. As God’s love flows through us it displays itself with obedience to God’s Word. It is a sign that we know how much God loves us and that we trust and obey Him in return. Jesus made this

increasingly clear to His disciples toward the end of His time on earth. On one occasion Jesus said to His disciples:

*John 14:23-24 (NIV)*

*<sup>23</sup> ... "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. <sup>24</sup> He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.*

We cannot be a faithful servant and pick and choose what we will obey. Servants obey their masters in all things. They listen when their masters speak and they obey them. Faithful servants recognize their masters' words as "the final word" and their only source of authority. In Jesus' final instructions to His disciples He told them they were to "Teach them to obey **all** that I have commanded you..." (Matthew 28:20)



## DIG DEEPER

Dig deeper into the servanthood of Jesus by answering the following questions about what you have just read. (Review the Scriptures in your Bible and underline important words and phrases).

1. **Read *John 14:30-31* in your own Bible and answer the following questions:**

- Why was Jesus highlighting His love and obedience to the Father in these last days on earth?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What was His purpose in this?

2. **Read *John 15: 9-14* and answer the following questions:**

- What is the vital connection Jesus is making here between love and obedience?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- In what ways is God's love for us the motivating force for obedience?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What does it mean to **remain** in the Father's love?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- In what ways does loving and obeying God give us "complete joy"?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- In what ways is the sacrificial love that Jesus commands us to have in verses 12-14 the ultimate proof of our love for Him?

3. What has God said to you today about the connection of love and obedience in your life?



## SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

Read and study *1 John 3: 16-18* and answer the following questions about being an obedient servant.

### OBSERVATION: (What does it say?)

- What is the background of this passage? To whom was John speaking? What was the purpose of this letter?
- What key words and phrases do you find in this passage? (Underline in your Bible)

### INTERPRETATION: (What does it mean?)

- How does John define love? How does this differ from how love is defined in our popular culture?
- Why the strong language in verse 17? What is John trying to refute?
- What does John mean when He uses the word “truth” in verse 18? Can you think of any other Scriptures that support this?
- How do truth and action fit together?

### APPLICATION: (What does it say to me?)

- In your own words summarize what John is saying in this passage
- What in this passage speaks directly to you?
- How will it affect your ability to be a loving, obedient servant?



## **DROP ANCHOR**

Following you will find practical ways in which you can drop anchor as a humble servant.

### **Anchored for action**

1. Based on this study what is your honest assessment of yourself as a humble servant?
2. If this reveals an area in which you need to grow, what specific steps will you take to grow as a humble servant?
3. Spend some time in prayer asking God to renew your mind and transform your actions in this area.
4. Focus on just one thing that you can do this week to grow in humility.

**My plan to drop anchor** (Write one thing you will do to drop anchor)

### **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Review the accountability questions on page 17 and be prepared to share your answers with the group.

# **SECTION 2**

## **THE SENDING**

# ANCHOR #4

## THE HOLINESS OF GOD

ANCHOR POINT A: God is Holy - Glorifying God with Our Lives and Our Lips

### “GOD IS HOLY” ANCHOR TRUTH

Isaiah 6:3

<sup>3</sup> And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

### “LIVES” ANCHOR TRUTH

Isaiah 43:7

“...everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.

### “LIPS” ANCHOR TRUTH

Psalms 34:1

<sup>1</sup> I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.

ANCHOR POINT B: Glorifying God with Our Minds, Bodies and Service

### “MINDS” ANCHOR TRUTH

Philippians 4:8

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

### “BODIES” ANCHOR TRUTH

Romans 12:1

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

### “SERVICE” ANCHOR TRUTH

*This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. John 15:8*

# ANCHOR POINT C: Glorifying God with Our Obedience, Example and Relationships

## “OBEDIENCE” ANCHOR TRUTH

1 Samuel 15:22

<sup>22</sup> *But Samuel replied: “Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.*

## “EXAMPLE” ANCHOR TRUTH

1 Peter 2:12

<sup>12</sup> *Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

## “RELATIONSHIPS” ANCHOR TRUTH

Ephesians 5:1-2

<sup>1</sup> *Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children* <sup>2</sup> *and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

## ANCHOR ACTION

Holy Lord Almighty, I am committed to glorifying you with my lips, life, mind, body, service, obedience, example and relationships 24/7. I want to be holy because you are holy.

# SESSION 13

## ANCHOR POINT A / GOD IS HOLY: GLORIFYING GOD WITH OUR LIPS AND OUR LIVES

*“(God) is set apart from all else in creation. Since He is the only God of the universe and the creator and sustainer of all that exists, He alone can claim to be holy.”*

### GETTING STARTED

This anchor will be a challenge but tremendously rewarding. With each anchor point there are several sub points—nine in all. You will learn the awesome privilege of glorifying God 24/7. I have been doing this for over ten years and find it one of my greatest blessings.

#### ANCHOR TRUTHS (memorize)

##### 1. God is holy

*<sup>3</sup> And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” Isaiah 6:3*

- Read *Isaiah 6: 1-8* to get the full impact of this passage. What is your response to this display of the holiness of God?

##### 2. Glorifying God with our lives

*“...everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.” Isaiah 43: 7*

- What do these verses say about our purpose on earth? What do these verses say to you?

##### 3. Glorifying God with our lips

*Psalm 34:1*

*<sup>1</sup> I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.*

- In what ways can we praise God with our lips? How are we to do this at all times?

## ANCHOR ACTION (memorize)

*Holy Lord Almighty, I am committed to glorifying you with my lips, life, mind, body, service, obedience, example and relationships 24/7. I want to be holy because you are holy.*



## EXPLORING THE ANCHOR

In this section we will enter hallowed ground! As we focus on the holiness of God we will enter His presence and not only be in awe of His sovereign power but also His perfection. In Anchor point A we will examine the pure holiness of God and how it affects our lives.

### GOD IS HOLY

From *Genesis* to *Revelation* God unveils His holiness. Over 600 times the Bible refers to the holiness of God. It is His distinguishing attribute. All other attributes are unified in the holiness of God. He puts His holiness on display in clear and often dramatic ways for all to see. One of these dramatic scenes unfolds before the prophet Isaiah as the Lord uses angelic beings to reveal His holiness. Isaiah recounts this scene as seraphs were flying around proclaiming God's holiness:

#### Isaiah 6:3

*<sup>3</sup> And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."*

While we may never see God's holiness and glory revealed by seraphs, He does reveal His holiness to us in many majestic and awesome ways. "*The whole earth*" is still "*full of his glory*". **God's glory is the demonstration of His holiness.** It is holiness on display for all to see. All we have to do to see this display of holiness is to look around us. The Psalmist says,

#### Psalms 19:1-2

*<sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. <sup>2</sup> Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.*

### God is set apart

The first thing we see about God's holiness is that He is set apart from all else in creation. Since He is the only God of the universe and the creator and sustainer of all that exists, He alone can claim to be holy. His separateness from all else is acknowledged in "The Prayer of Moses".

#### Exodus 15:11

*<sup>11</sup> "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you--majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?"*

God emphasizes throughout His Word that there is none like Him. His holiness is majestic. It is awesome in its display of who He is and what He has done. The Lord is sovereign and there are no other gods. Since He

is the creator and sustainer of all creation--the only one who is eternal--He has no competition. He makes this clear to Israel through the prophet Isaiah. God says,

Isaiah 40:25-26

<sup>25</sup> "To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One. <sup>26</sup> Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing."

### **God is perfect**

When the Bible calls God "holy" it is referring to all He is—the sum total of all of His attributes. The word signifies everything about God that sets Him apart from all else and makes Him the object of our worship. The holiness of God speaks of His perfection. Every dimension of His character is referred to as holy. Everything He says and does is holy because He is holy. David, who wrote often of the holiness of God said,

Psalms 18:30

<sup>30</sup> As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him.

Holiness is an attribute of God that also refers to the perfection of all His other attributes. Therefore every attribute or characteristic of God is holy and worthy of our praise. The entire Bible is a treasure trove of the attributes of God. Here is a list of just a few:

- God is perfectly just (*Revelation 15:3*)
- God is perfectly righteous (*Isaiah 5:16*)
- God is our perfect provider (*James 1:17*)
- God is perfectly merciful (*Deut. 4:31*)
- God is our perfect Rock (*Deut. 32:4*)
- God is our perfect Savior (*Hebrews 4:14-16*)
- God is our perfect Spirit (*John 14:16-17*)
- God is our perfect protector (*Psalms 91*)
- God is perfectly compassionate (*Psalms 103:8, 13*)
- God is the perfect King (*Revelation 15:3, 17:14*)

### **God is pure**

A perfect God is a pure God. He acts in complete conformity with who He says He is. There is never a time that He acts contrary to His character. Because God is pure He cannot tolerate any form of sin. The prophet Habakkuk acknowledged this when He was having a tense discussion questioning God's fairness. He said,

Habakkuk 1:13a

<sup>13</sup> Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong...

Jesus came to earth to display the holiness and purity of the Father in human form. In Jesus we see God's perfection. His life provided for us a perfect example of the holiness of God. We are able to see His pure love and His holy sacrifice for our sins. This was the only kind of sacrifice that would satisfy a holy God. The writer of Hebrews says of Jesus:

Hebrews 7:26

<sup>26</sup> *Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*

## GLORIFYING GOD WITH OUR LIVES

### Created to glorify God

The Bible declares that we were created to glorify God with our lives. The apostle Peter says,

1 Peter 2:9

<sup>9</sup> *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

We are chosen by God to be holy “...that we may declare the praises...” of God. That is why we were put here on earth. That is our purpose in life. God said,

*“...everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made. ...the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.” Isaiah 43:7,21*

### We have been set apart

When we consider how we are to glorify God with our lives we first need to examine how He has made us holy. God is holy and wants us to be holy as well. First and foremost, He has set us apart for Himself and made us holy in His sight.

Ephesians 1:4-5

<sup>4</sup> *For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will —*

God has set us apart, consecrated us for Himself. We are chosen people who are to bring glory to His holiness through our lives. We are set apart to God and from sin.

### We have been made holy

Because God is holy and pure and cannot tolerate sin, we have been made holy and pure so we are acceptable to Him. The Father did this by making us perfect in His sight by giving us the life of His perfect Son. The writer of Hebrews says,

Hebrews 10:14

<sup>14</sup> *because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.*

The New Testament has two words for holiness. *Hagiasmos*, also translated “sanctification”, refers to our **position** in Christ. This position is given to us at the time of our conversion. It is a completed work of God that makes us holy, perfect and set apart for His service. We have been purified and made holy, righteous and therefore blameless in the sight of God through the sacrifice of his Son.

2 Corinthians 5:21

<sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.



Our holiness is God's sovereign act of grace where he sets us aside for his service to glorify Him and declares us pure and blameless in his sight, cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ

**We are to be holy because God is holy**

In the Old and New Testaments God's people are told to be holy. In the book of Leviticus God says, *I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy...* (Leviticus 11:44) The apostle Peter quotes from this Old Testament Scripture when He says,

1 Peter 1:15-16

<sup>15</sup> But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; <sup>16</sup> for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

Because of our perfect and therefore holy **position** in Christ we are to become holy in our **practice** as well. God says we are to be *...holy in all you do.* (1 Peter 1:15) The practice of our holiness is to conform to God's holiness. While this seems impossible for us to do in our own strength, it is possible in God's strength. God has a plan to transform us into His image, making us holy. In practice we will be holy only to the extent that we allow the image of His character to be reflected in our character. His Word says,

1 Thessalonians 4:7

<sup>7</sup> For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.

This brings us to the second word the New Testament uses for holiness, *hosiotetes*. This word refers to the **quality** of holiness in the believer's life. It means that because of our position in Christ and right relationship with God, our conduct is meant to be holy or righteous. We are to be holy in our actions as God is holy. Our behavior is to reflect His attributes. This word is used in Ephesians when Paul reminds believers that since they were created to be like God (their position) they were to make sure that their conduct was consistent with that position. They were, Paul says,

Ephesians 4:23, 24

<sup>23</sup> To be made new in the attitude of our minds; <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

For us to be holy like God in our behavior and reflect His image we must cooperate with His sanctifying work in our lives (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24). We are to respond to the renewed mind and transformed character God is developing in us by focusing on spiritual growth and obeying His Word.



Our holiness is an ongoing process of sanctification (being made holy) requiring our cooperation with God to conduct ourselves in a holy and pure way with a goal of reflecting the character of God.

**Holiness takes effort**

Scripture makes it clear that practical holiness is not some supernatural event where God causes us to be like Him, conducting ourselves in a pure and holy way in everything we do. We are told to pursue holiness. We are to make **every effort** to be holy in our conduct. The book of Hebrews urges believer to,

Hebrews 12:14

<sup>14</sup> Make **every effort** to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. (bold added)

**We are motivated by God's holiness**

What is our motivation to focus on becoming holy rather than desiring all the world has to offer? What can cause us to look past the distractions around us and motivate us to make every effort to become holy because God is holy? The only answer is the holiness of God. Once we have a true perspective of the glory and splendor and holiness of God, we will be in awe of His holiness and want to glorify Him with our lips and with our lives. When we see God in all His glory true awe will translate into glorifying a perfect God and perfecting holiness in ourselves out of reverence for God. Paul speaks of this motivation in his letter to the church in Corinth.

2 Corinthians 7:1

<sup>1</sup> Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

**We are to glorify God 24/7**

Since we were created for God's glory to proclaim His praise, our primary purpose in life is to glorify God and we are to do this 24/7. The Westminster Catechism sums it up well. "*The chief end and duty of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.*"

**GLORIFYING GOD WITH OUR LIPS**

We are also to glorify God by praising Him with our lips for who He is and what He does. When we glorify God we put His holiness on display for the whole world to see. Rather than try to explain how to glorify God with my own words I will let Scripture speak for itself. *Psalm 96* is a beautiful example of what it means to glorify God with our lips. Here is a portion of that Psalm:

Psalms 96:3, 7-9

<sup>3</sup> Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples...<sup>7</sup> Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. <sup>8</sup> Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts. <sup>9</sup> Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.

This Psalm shows us that glorifying God involves both words and actions. We are to *declare* God's glory so that others may see His glory. When we worship we are to *ascribe* or give credit to God in very specific and practical ways the honor due Him. This involves not only lip service, but also life service. It includes describing in words the attributes and holiness of God and demonstrating in actions how God's holiness makes His people holy.

**Thirsting for God**

Glorifying God 24/7/ starts with a heart that passionately seeks and thirsts for God. When we seek God, we will see Him in all His holiness. When we see God in all His holiness our only response will be to praise Him with our lips and lives. When David was on the run in the dry desolate desert of Judah he demonstrated what a heart that passionately seeks and thirsts for God looks like.

Psalms 63:1-4

<sup>1</sup>O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. <sup>2</sup> I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. <sup>3</sup> Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. <sup>4</sup> I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.

First David seeks God. Then He sees God. Then he glorifies God. When he glorifies God his life is aligned with God's will. (*Psalm 63:5-11*) It is God who puts His DNA in our hearts to worship Him. It is our responsibility to respond by glorifying Him with our lips and our lives as the writer of Hebrews says:

Hebrews 13:15-16

<sup>15</sup> Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. <sup>16</sup> And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

It is through our relationship with Jesus that we are able to continually offer up praise to the Father. We are reminded that when our life is connected to our lips with holy actions our sacrifice of praise is pleasing to God.

**Learning the language of praise**

The book of *Psalms* is a primer for learning the language of praise. You can use the very words in the *Psalms* and make them your own. You can pray a Psalm of praise and make it your own language of praise. The *Psalms* give us words that help us glorify God, words such as:

*Exalt, honor, glorify, worship, extol, magnify, shout, sing, tell, rejoice, proclaim, praise, cry out, acknowledge, bless, play skillfully, trust, boast, fear, delight, tremble, speak, remember, clap, lift up your hands, dance, bow, make music, pray, be glad, thanksgiving, bring an offering,*

In the *Psalms* many attributes of God are mentioned. There are words and phrases that describe His holiness and glory. Many of these are in the form of prayers of praise. Just of few words and phrases that describe who God is and what He does are:

*Majestic, glory, holy, strength, splendor, marvelous deeds, Maker, Rock, Lord, Great God, Fortress, Mighty One, Almighty, Most High, compassionate, faithful, loving, everlasting, forgiving, merciful, gracious, good, kind, fortress, deliverer, miracles, protector, redeemer, Creator, Sovereign God, ruler, guide, awesome, stronghold, rescuer, refuge, hope, Father, Shepherd, just, righteous, Provider, beauty, wonders, salvation,*

**Practice the language of praise**

We must approach learning to glorify God with our lips like any other new skill. Competence comes only with practice. The more you practice praising God the more naturally you will be able to praise Him 24/7. That was certainly true of David who could honestly say,

Psalms 34:1

<sup>1</sup>I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.

A great Psalm that will help you learn how to praise God with your lips is *Psalm 96*. This short Psalm of only 14 verses contains 17 names or attributes of God and 13 different ways to glorify God. Pray this Psalm repeatedly and it will help you learn the language of praise.

### **Always start with praise**

Often prayers in the Bible start with praise and thanksgiving. Praising God with our lips prepares our hearts to enter the presence of God with the right attitude. Focusing on the holiness of God helps us pray in God's will. Jesus taught us to enter the Father's presence with praise, glorifying His name:

Matthew 6:9

*<sup>9</sup> "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,*

I suggest always starting your prayer time in exactly the way Jesus taught. First focus on your intimate relationship with your heavenly Father, and have a time of praise, glorifying God with your lips.

### **Include thanksgiving**

Scripture often reminds us to express thanks to God when we pray. (*Philipp. 4:4-7; 1 Thess. 5:16*) Praise is glorifying God for who He is. Thanksgiving is thanking God for what He has done. We have so much for which to be thankful. Always include a time of thanksgiving when you pray. The Psalmist reminds us to:

Psalm 100:4

*<sup>4</sup> Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.*



## DIG DEEPER

Dig deeper into the holiness of God by answering the following questions about what you have just read. (Review the Scriptures in your Bible and underline important words and phrases).

1. Review the section, "God is holy". Write your own definition of the holiness of God.
2. How is the holiness of God to impact our lives?
3. Read *Hebrews 10: 11-18*. What does this passage say about our holiness?
4. Describe in your own words the difference between positional and practical holiness.
5. Read *Psalms 63: 1-11*. What are the keys that enable David to glorify God with his lips? What does this Psalm say about glorifying God 24/7?
6. What has this week's study said to you about glorifying God with your life and your lips?



## A TIME FOR GLORFYING GOD

Instead of the Search the Word Bible study that you would usually do at this time I would like you to spend that same amount of time glorifying God. Make sure you have a special place and a special time so this time with the Lord will be uninterrupted. Read *Psalm 96* several times. Meditate on any words or phrases that speak to your heart. Learn the language of praise by praying this Psalm. When you finish this time of praise, write out your own psalm of praise to the Lord,

**My psalm of praise:**



## DROP ANCHOR

Following you will find practical ways in which you can drop the anchor of the holiness of God:

### Anchored for action

1. Commit to always starting your time in prayer with praise.
2. Make a commitment to review the anchor of holiness truths and action regularly for the rest of your life.
3. Make sure that you always glorify God with your lips and your life.
4. Spend some time in the *Psalms* each week learning the language of praise.

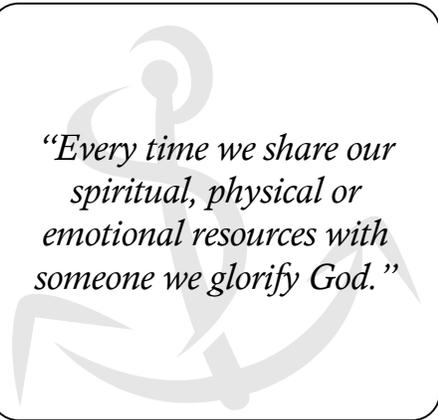
**My plan to drop anchor** (Write one thing you will do to drop anchor)

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Review the accountability questions in Session I and be prepared to share your answers with the group.

# SESSION 14

## ANCHOR POINT B / GLORIFYING GOD WITH OUR MINDS, BODIES AND SERVICE



*“Every time we share our spiritual, physical or emotional resources with someone we glorify God.”*

### GETTING STARTED

Meditate on and memorize the anchor truth and action. Write the anchor truth for the session on one side of an index card and the anchor action on the reverse side. Review all previous sessions' memory assignments.

#### ANCHOR TRUTHS (memorize)

##### 1. Minds

*<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things. Philippians 4:8*

- How can our thoughts glorify God? What is the key?

##### 2. Bodies

*<sup>1</sup> Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship. Romans 12:1*

- What does it mean to offer our bodies as living sacrifices? How is this a “spiritual act of worship”?

##### 3. Service

*<sup>8</sup> This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. John 15:8*

- In what ways can bearing fruit be an act of worship, glorifying God?

## ANCHOR ACTION (Memorize)

*Holy Lord Almighty, I am committed to glorifying you with my lips, life, mind, body, service, obedience, example and relationships 24/7. I want to be holy because you are holy.*



## EXPLORING THE ANCHOR

### GLORIFYING GOD WITH MY MIND

Imagine for a moment that at the end of the day all of your thoughts for that day had been recorded. They had been made into a power point presentation with a few visual effects thrown in for interest. You have invited a few close friends to view the presentation with you and see if your thoughts for that day glorified God. The standard you would use for judging those thoughts is the following Scripture:

#### Philippians 4:8

*<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*

I am quite sure that from the moment I suggested that your thoughts for a day would be put on display, a shiver went up your spine and your anxiety level rose. Even though there is no chance of that happening this side of heaven, the very thought of even the people we trust being able to see all of our thoughts would unnerve most of us. And rightly so because we are well aware that “*our righteousness is as filthy rags*”. The truth is that our thoughts really are on display for God to see and He has asked us to glorify Him with what we think.

### God knows our thoughts

Sometimes we forget that while all of our thoughts are not on display for other people to see, God knows every one of them. King David admitted,

#### Psalms 139:1-4

*<sup>1</sup> O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. <sup>2</sup> You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. <sup>3</sup> You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. <sup>4</sup> Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.*

Our all-knowing God knows every thought we have—even before we think it. There is nothing hidden from His all-seeing gaze. We need not fear Him or try to hide, for He is a loving, compassionate and understanding heavenly Father. As a loving earthly father David urged his son Solomon to understand this. He said,

#### 1 Chronicles 28:9

*<sup>9</sup> “And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and **understands every motive behind the thoughts**. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever. (Bold added)*

God knows every thought and every motive behind each thought. As He searches our hearts He understands every motive and wants us to serve Him with “...wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind...” The key is to “...seek Him...”

### **Our thoughts come from our hearts**

David said, “...the Lord searches every heart...” knowing that from our hearts come our thoughts. Jesus pointed this out to the Pharisees and teachers of the law who falsely believed that following rules and regulations was more important than hearts that truly knew, loved and obeyed God. Jesus rebuked them for this kind of thinking. He said,

Matthew 15:19

*<sup>19</sup> For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.*

Jesus says that out of the heart come the evil thoughts that produce evil behavior. Behind every sinful behavior is some kind of sinful thought. Therefore the sum of your thoughts is the best indication of the shape of your heart. Your actions are driven by your thoughts. If you have a heart devoted to God you will glorify Him with your thoughts and your actions

Our thinking is perhaps the most challenging of all the ways we are to glorify God. It certainly is for me. I find it very sobering when I stop to evaluate the content of my thoughts for a day. Did I have any judgmental or unkind thoughts about people? Did I have any impure or immoral thoughts? What about the overall contents of my thoughts for the day? Did they include God? Were my thoughts focused on His purposes and plans for the day? Was I aware of His presence in all I said and did? Was I thankful throughout the day?

The key question is “were my thoughts *praiseworthy*?” This word sums up what Paul was stressing about our thoughts in *Philippians 4:8*. Each of us needs to ask ourselves, “Is what I am thinking worthy of bringing praise to God? Will this thought bring glory to God’s name? Will it honor Him by being true to His Word? Will it reflect His image in me? Will what I think show that I have the mind, or thinking of Christ? Will my thoughts demonstrate that I love God with all my heart and my neighbor as myself? Will the total sum of my thoughts show that my purpose in life is to glorify God?”

Consider some of the previous questions as you analyze the content of your thoughts in the course of a 24-hour day. What percentage of your thoughts do you believe bring glory to God? Take a moment to consider your daily thoughts about the following:

- People?
- Possessions?
- Pleasure?
- Plans and purposes?
- Purity?
- Media? (What I listen to, read, and watch)

### **Let Scripture judge your thoughts**

We are not the final judges of what we think. Only God searches our hearts and knows our true motivation. It is His truth that enables us to think praiseworthy thoughts. The best preparation for thoughts that glorify

God is to know the Word and have your thoughts and attitudes shaped by its cutting edge. The writer of Hebrews says,

Hebrews 4:12-13

<sup>12</sup> For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. <sup>13</sup> Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

As the Word of God judges the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts, our hearts will be prepared by God to bring Glory to Him!

## GLORIFYING GOD WITH OUR BODIES

Romans 12:1

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

According to Paul it is because of God's wonderful grace in our lives that we are to respond by glorifying Him with our bodies as "living sacrifices". As an act of worship we are to offer bodies that are "...holy and pleasing..." to God. While Paul is referring specifically to our physical bodies, the larger meaning is that our entire lives—body, soul and spirit are to be voluntarily offered to God for His glory. We will look at four things the Bible says about glorifying God with our bodies

### **Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit**

God's Word places great value on the bodies God has created. We are to treat these miracles of God's creation with honor and respect. God emphasizes this by saying they are a "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19). As Paul says, they are God's dwelling place. Our bodies are His temple.

1 Corinthians 6:19

<sup>19</sup> Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;

What a sobering thought. Our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit. God, Himself indwells us. Our bodies are sacred. They are not to be worshiped as our culture teaches us. They are not to be neglected as we sometimes do. We are not to give in to the evil desires of our flesh as we are often tempted to do. We are to train and maintain our bodies so they will be suitable temples for the Holy Spirit.

### **We were purchased at a great price**

There was a significant cost involved in providing our bodies as a temple for the Holy Spirit to live in. We were purchased for God at the cost of His Son. The purchase price was the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for our adoption as sons. The book of Revelation says of this sacrifice:

Revelation 5:9

<sup>9</sup> *And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation."*

Since we were purchased at a great cost, we have an equally great responsibility to honor God with these temples.

**We are to honor God with our bodies**

Paul concludes his teaching on our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit by saying, "...you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) But how do we honor God with our bodies? In what ways can our bodies glorify God? In His letter to the believers in Rome Paul shows us.

Romans 6:11-14

<sup>11</sup> *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.* <sup>12</sup> *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.* <sup>13</sup> *Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.* <sup>14</sup> *For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.*

We honor God by deciding to be obedient to what God has told us in His Word in regard to what is **best** for our bodies. We glorify Him by offering ourselves--every part of our body-- to God as **instruments of righteousness** rather than instruments for our own evil desires. Scripture mentions very specific ways we are to bring honor and glory to God with our bodies. Following are three ways to offer ourselves as *living sacrifices* to God.

- **Glorify God by being sexually pure**

Much is said in the Bible about being sexually pure. This is an important subject and we will deal with it more thoroughly in next week's study. Paul says that we are to be holy and avoid any kind of sexual immorality. This means even the slightest compromise.

Ephesians 5:3-4

<sup>3</sup> *But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.* <sup>4</sup> *Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.*

- **Glorify God by purifying yourself from anything that contaminates your body**

There are things which are not specifically forbidden in Scripture, but they can certainly contaminate our bodies, keeping us from being holy. Paul mentions this to the believers in Corinth. He says,

2 Corinthians 7:1

<sup>1</sup> *Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*

I have no desire to compile a lists of "do's and "don'ts" that are not in Scripture, however there are some things that can contaminate our bodies: drugs, alcohol, overeating, not enough exercise, too much exercise, too much concern for our bodies, not enough concern for our bodies, too much sleep, not enough

sleep, overwork and excessive stresses. The question we always need to ask ourselves is, “Is how I am taking care of my body glorifying God?”

- **Glorify God by using your body as an instrument for righteousness**

Glorifying God with our bodies is not simply following a checklist of things we are not to do. We honor God with what we do with our bodies. They are to be, as Paul says, “...instruments of righteousness...” (*Romans 6:13*). This means that our bodies are to be fit to do our best for Kingdom work.

A good question to ask ourselves is, “Is how I am taking care of my body preparing me to be the best instrument of righteousness for God? Is it bringing the most glory to God?”

## GLORIFYING GOD THROUGH OUR SERVICE

Every act of service done in the name of Jesus brings glory to our heavenly Father. We know this because that is one of the primary ways that Jesus brought glory to His Father when He was on earth. In a wonderful prayer Jesus prayed for His disciples (and for us), He said,

*John 17:4*

*<sup>4</sup> I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.*

The work Jesus did was to sacrificially serve others. By serving others He demonstrated God’s love in tangible ways. Scripture clearly indicates that because we are His disciples we are to complete the work that our heavenly Father has appointed us to do. (*Ephesians 2:10; Acts 20:24; 2 Th. 1:11*) Following are some ways we bring glory to God through our service:

### We glorify God when we serve others

The service involved in completing this work involves acts of kindness that bring glory to our Father in Heaven. As servants/disciples an important aspect of our work is to meet the needs of others. The writer of Hebrews reminded the believers of this:

*Hebrews 13:16*

*<sup>16</sup> And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

Each time we do a good deed it is a sacrifice to God. It is an act of worship that glorifies Him. Every time we share our spiritual, physical or emotional resources with someone we glorify God. It also is a sacrificial act of worship. Paul spoke of glorifying God in this way when he said,

*Romans 15:17*

*<sup>17</sup> Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God.*

God is glorified when our walk matches our talk and we show in practical ways that we love Him and others. It is in this sense that we glorify God by serving others. Every good deed, every kind word, every gift, every word of encouragement, every gift of time, every expenditure of emotion, every thought and prayer of compassion is a way of bringing praise to God.

## **We glorify God when we have faith**

One of the most astounding promises in the entire Bible is one that Jesus made to His disciples shortly before He left earth. Jesus told His disciples that if they had faith in Him they would accomplish greater things than he had accomplished. Jesus promised,

### John 14:12-14

*<sup>12</sup> I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup> And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. <sup>14</sup> You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.*

Jesus says that these *greater things* that we will do will “...bring glory to the Father...” (John 14:13). Jesus does not say exactly what these greater things are, but we can be certain that they include anything that advances God’s kingdom on earth (Luke 11: 2). These greater things certainly would include serving others in the name of Jesus, loving others as we are loved (John 14:15, 21).

How is it possible for us to do greater things that those Jesus did? It is possible because we now have the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus exponentially produces through His disciples much more than He ever did on earth. That was the plan from the beginning. That is God’s genius of discipleship. Produce reproducers.

It is our prayers of faith and our faithful implementation of the way God answers those prayers that bring the most glory of Him. The question is, “How do we know if our prayers will bring glory to the Father”? The following questions can help us offer prayers that will bring glory to God:

- Will my prayer bring glory to God by accomplishing His purposes?

In what way am I asking God to further His kingdom and accomplish His will? How will my prayer demonstrate His love to a watching world? How will my prayer be a sacrifice to God? What will it require of me?

### Psalms 141:2

*<sup>2</sup> May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.*

- Do I have absolute faith that God will accomplish what I have asked for?

How we answer this question reveals our faith in the character of God. The promise Jesus made was to “...anyone who has faith in me...” Jesus had been developing in His disciples this absolute faith in God from the very beginning. On one occasion His disciples were amazed when He caused a barren fig tree to immediately wither. When they asked him about it Jesus taught them the following lesson about faith:

### Matthew 21:21-22

*<sup>21</sup> Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. <sup>22</sup> If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”*

It is absolute faith in the character of God to fulfill His promises that causes our prayers to bring glory to Him.

### **We glorify God when we bear much fruit**

The Father is glorified in the work of the Son (*John 13:31-32*) and He is also glorified in the fruit bearing of all of His disciples, which include you and me. Jesus said,

*John 15:8*

*<sup>s</sup>This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples*

The previous verses in John Chapter 15 lay out the heavenly Father's process for fruit bearing. We can bear the kind of fruit that glorifies God only when as a branch we stay attached to the vine of Jesus. The fruit that we bear is supernatural, growing from the union we have in Jesus. It is through the pruning process of the heavenly Father than we produce "...*much fruit...*" that glorifies God. This fruit includes the fruit of service as we have seen, the fruit of character, (*Galatians 5:16-26*) and the fruit of people who are saved. (*Romans 15:16; Matthew 9:35-37*)



## DIG DEEPER

Dig deeper into the holiness of God by answering the following questions about what you have just read. (Review the Scriptures in your Bible and underline important words and phrases).

1. Read *Matthew 15:10-20*. What point is Jesus making in this parable? Why was this so important for the disciples to understand? Why is what Jesus teaches in this passage important for us to do if we want our thoughts to bring glory to God?
2. To what degree do you believe your thoughts bring glory to God? What area or areas need improvement?
3. Read *Romans 12: 1 and 1 Corinthians 6:19*. How do these Scriptures fit together? What does offering your body as a living sacrifice mean to you? What is the condition of the sacrifice you are offering to God?
4. Read *John 15:8*. In what ways does bearing “*much fruit*” bring glory to God? What does this phrase mean?
5. Read *John 14:12-14*. This is truly an amazing Scripture. How does it amaze you? Do you really believe the promise in this passage?
6. What in today’s session spoke most directly to you? In what ways do you believe God wants you to glorify Him in a greater way?



## SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

Read and study *2 Thessalonians 1:11-12* and answer the following questions about glorifying God.

### OBSERVATION: (What does it say?)

- What is the background of this passage? To whom was Paul speaking? What was the purpose of this letter?
- What key words and phrases do you find in this passage? (Underline in your Bible)

### INTERPRETATION: (What does it mean?)

- Why do you think Paul finds it necessary to constantly pray that God will count the believers "*worthy of His calling*"? What does this mean?
- How do God's power and our faith come together in this passage? What is God's part and what is our part?
- What is the source of glory that Paul speaks of here? In what way do our acts of service glorify God according to His grace?

### APPLICATION: (What does it say to me?)

- In your own words summarize what Paul is saying in this passage.
- What does this passage say to you about glorifying God through your service?



## DROP ANCHOR

Following you will find practical ways in which you can drop the anchor of the holiness of God:

### **Anchored for action**

1. Make a thorough evaluation of how you think. Do your thoughts glorify God? Is there any room for improvement?
2. Make a commitment to review *Philippians 4:8* daily and ask God to help you glorify Him that day with your mind.
3. What kind of a temple is your body? Is it a living sacrifice bringing glory to God?
4. Remember that every act of your service brings glory to God.

**My plan to drop anchor** (Write one thing you will do to drop anchor)

### **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Review the accountability questions in Session I and be prepared to share your answers with the group.

# SESSION 15

## ANCHOR POINT C / GLORFYING GOD WITH OUR OBEDIENCE, EXAMPLE, RELATIONSHIPS

*“God wants our best and our best is to obey Him in all things. When we obey Him we glorify Him though our love and trust. When we obey God we glorify Him before a watching world.”*

### GETTING STARTED

Memorize the anchor truths and action and answer the questions that follow. Review all previous memory assignments.

#### ANCHOR TRUTHS (memorize)

##### 1. Obedience

*<sup>22</sup> But Samuel replied: “Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. - 1 Samuel 15:22*

- What does this verse say about the importance God places on our obeying Him?

##### 2. Example

*<sup>12</sup> Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. - 1 Peter 2:12*

- What does the word “see” refer to in the context of this verse? How can this admonition motivate us to live in such a way that our character consistently brings glory to God?

##### 3. Relationships

*<sup>1</sup> Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children <sup>2</sup> and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. - Ephesians 5:1-2*

- How did Christ’s sacrificial love for us bring glory to God? In what way does it bring glory to Him when we live a life of love? What does this mean?

## ANCHOR ACTION (memorize)

*Holy Lord Almighty, I am committed to glorifying you with my lips, life, mind, body, service, obedience, example and relationships 24/7. I want to be holy because you are holy.*



## EXPLORING THE ANCHOR

### GLORIFYING GOD WITH MY OBEDIENCE

There is an Old Testament story that demonstrates in graphic detail how God values obedience to His commands more than any other way of glorifying Him. When Saul was king of Israel, God gave him instructions to attack and destroy a neighboring nation called the Amalekites.

#### 1 Samuel 15:3

*<sup>3</sup> Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.*

Saul attacked the Amalekites but only partially obeyed God's instructions. He spared King Agag and the best of the animals and "...everything that was good...they were unwilling to destroy **completely**" (1 Sam. 15:9) God sent the prophet Samuel to confront Saul with his disobedience. Listen to the lame excuse Saul gave for not obeying God completely:

#### 1 Samuel 15:20-21

*<sup>20</sup> "But I did obey the LORD," Saul said. "I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. <sup>21</sup> The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal."*

Saul tries to justify his actions. After all, he did go on the mission the Lord assigned to him. He did destroy the Amalekites and although he didn't kill King Agag he did capture him. And while he did not kill all of the livestock like he was told, his intentions were noble because he saved the best to sacrifice to the Lord. So here was Saul's rationale: "What is the big deal about tweaking God's Word a little bit if my intentions are good?" "Shouldn't I get some credit for doing **most** of what God has commanded?" "After all I am merely human!"

God had a different standard for obedience. God let Saul know that His instructions were clear and there was **no excuse** for not obeying **completely**. God did not allow for any wiggle room when it came to His commands. Samuel, who understood God's standard for obedience, reprimanded Saul:

#### 1 Samuel 15:22-23

*<sup>22</sup> But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. <sup>23</sup> For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."*

Saul's mistake can teach us an important lesson about obedience. There are five basic principles of complete obedience. To obey God is better than any other sacrifice we might make. We glorify God by demonstrating total trust in what He asks us to do.

- **Every act of disobedience is a sin not to trust God**

Our heavenly Father wants us to trust Him enough to do exactly what he tells us to do. Saul was not willing to trust in God's provisions. He felt He had to take things into his own hands and provide for himself. But God's desire is for us to have a heartfelt belief that He knows best and whatever He asks us to do will be in our best interests. He wants us to depend totally upon Him and His provision. It really does come down to our faith in God. Every sin is in some way a sin not to trust God.

- **Every act of disobedience is a sign of our rebellion and arrogance.**

Samuel confronted Saul with His *rebellion* and *arrogance*. He rebelled against God by rejecting His Word. He demonstrated his arrogance by setting his own will above the commands of the Lord. When we dare to change what God has said to conform to our desires or behavior not only are we guilty of rebellion, but show that we are arrogant. We set ourselves above God. We believe we know better than Him what is best for us. What pleases God is a humble, dependent spirit. After an act of rebellion the Psalmist said:

*Psalms 51:16-17*

*<sup>16</sup> You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. <sup>17</sup> The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.*

- **Every act of disobedience makes a mockery of our worship of God.**

Saul's mistake was that he believed he could reject God's clear commands by substituting burnt offerings and sacrifices rather than obedience and get away with it. But Saul made a mockery of his worship of God by offering a few animals rather than a life of obedience. God wants pure hearts that love and trust and obey Him. He does not want us to substitute any other gift we might possess for total obedience, no matter how spiritual or seemingly sacrificial it might seem. Jesus made this clear in the sermon on the mountain. He said,

*Matthew 7:21-23*

*<sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, **but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.** <sup>22</sup> Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' <sup>23</sup> Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' (Bold added)*

- **There is nothing we can do that shows that we love God more than obeying Him.**

According to God's Word the only true sign of our love for Him is obedience. If we fail at this point we fail in our love for Him. This obedience is not an effort **to be** loved or accepted by God, but our grateful response **for** being loved and accepted by Him. Our obedience to God's commands shows that we fully understand His grace. The Apostle John says,

*1 John 5:3*

*<sup>3</sup> This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,*

- **When we love and obey God we glorify Him.**

*Samuel told Saul, "...To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams."  
(1 Samuel 5:22)*

God wants our best and our best is to obey Him in all things. When we obey Him we glorify Him through our love and trust. When we obey God we glorify Him before a watching world.

## **GLORIFYING GOD WITH OUR EXAMPLE**

If we are world-class servants we will be world-class examples. That is what God wants us to be. To be His glory bearers we must also be His image bearers. Our character and example are to surpass that of those who do not know God. (*Matthew 5:20*) How will people be drawn to the glory of God if those who are supposed to represent Him do not reflect the glory of His character? What motivation will those outside the family of faith have to join the family if there is no distinct difference that attracts them? When the church was in its infancy the book of Acts tells of thousands of people being attracted to the faith because of the believers' unique love for God and one another. Luke writes of these early Christians:

*Acts 2:46-47*

*<sup>46</sup> Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Bold added)*

We enjoy the favor of all people when God has such control of our lives that we are radically different than those around us. It is only when they see in us a distinctly different quality of life that they will desire to have what we have.

Some years back I had an interesting experience that illustrates what I have been talking about. I had just finished playing racquetball when my opponent started telling me about how unhappy and depressed he was. I was caught off guard because Terry was a successful businessman who always seemed to be upbeat and happy. I will never forget what he said next. "Wayne, I have noticed that you are different. I don't know what it is but I want what you have." I was at the same time humbled and elated. We decided to meet for lunch so we could continue our discussion.

When we were having lunch a few days later Terry told me about a robbery that had occurred at his jewelry store two years earlier. Two men had broken into his store and shot him and his wife. While both survived physically, the emotional wounds remained. The trial was coming up in a couple of weeks and the memory had sent Terry into a tailspin. I listened a lot and then answered Terry's question about what I had that he wanted. He listened closely as I shared with him how he could have what I by receiving Jesus.

A perfect ending to this story would be that Terry received Christ, but he did not. He started feeling better, and unfortunately his motivation for turning his life over to God diminished. We remain good friends and I continue to pray for him daily. What sticks with me is not the imperfect ending—that is between God and Terry and is certainly not over yet—but that my life raised the right kind of questions for Terry and I was given the privilege of answering them.

### **Our example should raise questions**

We glorify God by our example when how we live raises the right kind of questions. Peter says,

1 Peter 3:15

<sup>15</sup> *But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,*

The key to our example is in our hearts to "...set apart Christ as Lord..." When Christ rules in our hearts as Lord, our character will be noticeably different and raise questions. Some of the questions we need to be ready to answer are: "What makes you different?" "Why do you care?" "Why are you so content?" and "Why do you want to help?"

**Our example should cause others to glorify God**

God's Word tells us that our example should cause people to glorify God. This will happen when we declare the glory of God not only with our words but also with our good deeds. It is only when our example demonstrates grace and truth that it brings glory to God (*John 1:14; 1 John 3:16-18*). Jesus emphasized three important principles of example in His teaching on the mountain.

Matthew 5:13-16

<sup>13</sup> "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. <sup>14</sup> "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

- **Be salt**

Jesus says we have been made the salt of the earth in order that we might bring the flavor of His glory to others. We are to do this by being an example of God's character on earth with our words and actions. Paul mentions both when he says that believers are to,

Colossians 4:5-6

<sup>5</sup> *Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. <sup>6</sup> Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

- **Be light**

We all once walked in darkness and were called out of that darkness into the *wonderful light* of God for the purpose of glorifying God (*1 Peter 2:9*). God's glory (his character) is reflected onto to His chosen people so they can be an example of God's perfect love. Jesus says, "... let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven". (*Matt. 5:16*) The example of our good deeds done in the name of Jesus will cause others to see the light of God.

- **Be intentional**

Jesus says we are to intentionally be salt and light in our example. We are to intentionally live in such a way that people will notice and praise God. This means we must think about how we come across to others. Does what we say and what we do put us on a "short list?" Does our character draw attention to God? Do we conduct ourselves in such a way that we are "above reproach" in all things? The Apostle Peter gives us this admonition:

1 Peter 2:12

<sup>12</sup> *Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

### **It's all about character**

We are an example only because Jesus lives in us and reflects His light through us. Our Christ-like character is solely a fruit of being connected to the vine of Jesus. (*John 15:1-5*) Paul reminds the believers at Philippi of this important principle. He says,

Philippians 1:9-11

<sup>9</sup> *And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,*  
<sup>10</sup> *so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ,*  
<sup>11</sup> ***filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ-to the glory and praise of God.*** (Bold added)

## **GLORIFYING GOD THROUGH OUR RELATIONSHIPS**

It is not just with non-believers that we are to be an example of God's love, but to our families and the family of God as well. Scripture is clear that we are to glorify God in all of our relationships. His love is to flow through us to others. It is in this way that we bring the most glory to God. Paul stressed this when He said,

Ephesians 5:1-2

<sup>1</sup> *Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children* <sup>2</sup> *and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a **fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*** (Bold added)

First we see that we are to imitate God's love by living a life of love. This is to be modeled after how Christ loves us. It was through laying down His life that He brought glory to God. That one loving act was an offering and sacrifice to God. It was an act of worship.

I find it a rather sobering thought that the way I conduct myself in my relationship with others is to be an act of worship, but that is exactly what the Scripture says. I am to imitate God in all my relationships in such a way that the love I express is a "...*fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*" (*Ephesians 5:1*) In other words, the way I treat others either brings honor or dishonor to God.

Because of God's love for me as his dearly loved child, I am to imitate His love for all the rest of His children. My words and my actions toward all people are to be holy, a praise offering to God. This should be my greatest motivation for loving others as God loves me. Following are five ways Scripture tells us we can be imitators of God and offer our love for others to glorify God:

### **1. Glorify God through reconciliation**

Jesus taught that reconciling with brothers or sisters from who we are alienated is more important than any other sacrifice we could offer to God. Reconciliation always is to come first because relationships always come first with God. The God of reconciliation wants us to be people of reconciliation. We are to glorify God first by taking the initiative to make peace with our brothers or sisters no matter what the issue or who might be at fault.

Matthew 5:23-24

<sup>23</sup> "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there in front of the altar. **First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.** (Bold added)

## 2. Glorifying God through acceptance

When we accept our brothers and sisters in Christ we bring praise to God. Scripture tells us that Jesus brought praise to God by accepting us and we are to bring praise to God by accepting others. By following the example of Jesus we can glorify God with our relationships. Paul says,

Romans 15:7

<sup>7</sup> **Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.** (Bold added)

Accepting another believer requires us to extend the grace of God to him, accepting him with his flaws as God has accepted us with our flaws. We are not to pass judgment on our weaker brothers and sisters. (Romans 14:1; 15:1-3)

## 3. Glorifying God through forgiveness

Forgiveness is the basic Christian attitude which comes as a result of being forgiven in Christ. Because the debt we owe as a result of our sins has been forgiven, and therefore erased by the sacrifice of Jesus, we are to forgive others when they "sin" against us. Paul exhorts the believers in Ephesus to forgive in this way. He says,

Ephesians 4:32

<sup>32</sup> **Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.** (Bold added)

Scripture clearly states in many places that forgiveness is not optional. No matter what the offense we are to glorify God by forgiving one another following the example of the Father and the Son. Jesus makes it clear that forgiveness is not an option. It is required of all believers. (Matthew 6:14-15)

## 4. Glorifying God through kindness

Paul includes kindness when encouraging the believers in Ephesus to forgive as God forgave them. He says,

Ephesians 4:32

<sup>32</sup> **Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**

Forgiveness must always accompany statements of love or acts of kindness. Forgiveness demonstrates that what we say and do are real acts of love. We are to forgive as God has forgiven us—unconditionally!

## 5. Glorifying God through compassion

Paul also says that forgiveness and acts of kindness are to include a spirit of compassion; "Be compassionate to one another..." (Ephesians 4:32) Compassion is the willingness and grace to look beyond people's weaknesses and to be willing to meet their needs whatever they may be. Jesus continually demonstrated

this compassion during His ministry on earth (*Mark 1:41; Matthew 9:36*). The Psalmist gives us an example of what compassion is all about when he explains how our heavenly Father has compassion on us.

*Psalms 103:13-14*

<sup>13</sup> *As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; <sup>14</sup> for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.*

## ALL WE DO IS TO BRING GLORY TO GOD

It is fitting that we conclude learning how to glorify God 24/7/ with an all-inclusive principle. Paul says we are to **glorify God in whatever we do**.

*1 Corinthians 10:31*

<sup>31</sup> *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

“...Do it all for the glory of God...” pretty well sums it up. It is the unifying truth that governs Paul’s discussion on freedom in Christ. He tells the believers in Corinth that while eating meat sacrificed to idols was not in itself a sin, there is a higher principle by which they are to live. Their personal freedom was to be subjected to what would bring the most glory to God. If, by eating meat sacrificed to idols fellow believers might stumble, then they should live by the all-inclusive principle: “...whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God...”

This higher, all-inclusive principle reminds us that our purpose in life is to glorify God. The question then, must always be, “Will this choice bring the **most** possible glory to God?” Will it set the best example and strengthen weaker believers? Will my choice encourage the unsaved to receive Christ? Because of this choice will I best represent the name of Jesus?” God’s Word says,

*Colossians 3:17*

<sup>17</sup> *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Whatever we do “...in word or deed...” is to be done in the name of Jesus and will result in bringing glory to God. This includes all of our words and deeds in our work, play, resources, and relationships. The question then is, “Will this choice of word or deed bring glory and thanks to the Father?” We conclude with this prayer:

*Lord, help me to prioritize my life so that all my choices and use of resources bring glory to you.*





## SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

Read and study *1 Corinthians 10: 23-33* and answer the following questions about glorifying God.

### OBSERVATION: (What does it say?)

- What is the background of this passage? To whom was Paul speaking? What was the purpose of this letter?
- What key words and phrases do you find in this passage? (Underline in your Bible)

### INTERPRETATION: (What does it mean?)

- What is the primary issue that Paul is addressing?
- What are the cultural challenges?
- What is the main principle that Paul stresses? What proofs does he give for its validity?
- What is the key verse and what implications does it have for how we glorify God?

### APPLICATION: (What does it say to me?)

- In your own words summarize what Paul is saying in this passage.
- What does passage say to you about glorifying God in everything you do?



## **DROP ANCHOR**

Following you will find practical ways in which you can drop the anchor of the holiness of God:

### **Anchored for action**

1. Choose one way you will glorify God in your obedience.
2. Choose one way you will glorify you God in your example.
3. Choose one way you will glorify God in your relationships.
4. Make a conscious effort each day to set apart Christ in your heart.

**My plan to drop anchor** (Write one thing you will do to drop anchor)

### **ACCOUNTABIITY**

Review the accountability questions in Session I and be prepared to share your answers with the group.

# ANCHOR #5

## THE WORD OF GOD

### ANCHOR POINT A: God's Word is My Sole and Absolute Authority

#### ANCHOR TRUTH

John 8:31-32

<sup>31</sup> To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

<sup>32</sup> Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

### ANCHOR POINT B: God's Word Destroys Strongholds

#### ANCHOR TRUTH

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

<sup>3</sup> For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup> The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup> We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

### ANCHOR POINT C: God's Word Reveals God's Will

#### ANCHOR TRUTH

Romans 12:1-2

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

#### ANCHOR ACTION

*Sovereign Lord, your word is my sole authority and only standard for truth therefore I will obey you in all things. I will always use your Word to destroy strongholds and discern your will.*

# SESSION 16

## ANCHOR POINT A / GOD'S WORD IS MY SOLE AND ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY

*“Sovereign Lord, your word is my sole authority and only standard for truth therefore I will obey you in all things. I will always use your Word to destroy strongholds and discern your will.”*

### GETTING STARTED

Memorize the anchor truths and action and answer the questions that follow. Review all previous memory assignments. To get started today read *John 8:31-42*.

### ANCHOR TRUTHS (memorize)

*John 8:31-32*

<sup>31</sup> *To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.*

<sup>32</sup> *Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

1. What does it mean to “hold” to the teachings of Jesus?
2. In what ways does holding to the truth set one free?
3. What was the core issue with the Jews to whom He was speaking?
4. What does the memory verse for this anchor point say to you?

### ANCHOR ACTION (memorize)

*Sovereign Lord, your word is my sole authority and only standard for truth therefore I will obey you in all things. I will always use your Word to destroy strongholds and discern your will.*



## EXPLORING THE ANCHOR

The Anchor of the Word of God answers the question of “what is truth” and gives us an authoritative standard for right and wrong. The anchor of truth satisfies our need for understanding what life is all about, and provides wisdom for living a life anchored in love, peace and joy. The Bible itself claims to be the very words of God and therefore the only and absolute source of truth and authority. Because of this, what God says must also be obeyed.

### THE ASSAULT ON ABSOLUTE TRUTH

What is your first reaction when you see the words “sole truth”, “absolute truth”, “authority”, and “obey”? If there is something within you that is uncomfortable with these words or if you find yourself strongly opposed to what those words imply there are some good reasons. Something inside each of us rebels against a sole and absolute authority in our life that is the source of all truth. We are not that eager to obey anyone. We don’t want anyone, even God, telling us what to do. We want to be the masters of our souls. It is in our old nature and our culture promotes these attitudes. There are growing cultural currents that are weakening our anchor of the authority of God’s Word. The Barna Research Group reports the following:

*“Over the past 20 years we have seen the nation’s theological views slowly become less aligned with the Bible. Americans still revere the Bible and like to think of themselves a Bible-believing people, but the evidence suggests otherwise. Christians have increasingly been adopting spiritual views that come from Islam, Wicca, secular humanism, the eastern religions and other sources. Because we remain a largely Bible illiterate society, few are alarmed or even aware of the slide toward syncretism—a belief system that blindly combines beliefs from many different faith perspectives.” (The Barna Update, October 8, 2002, p.3)*

In our culture there is an increasingly aggressive attack on absolute truth. First we will look at how the current of syncretism is impacting culture in the following ways:

**The current of syncretism:** *Satisfies our desire to define our own truth.*

There is a strong cultural current of syncretism that is making tremendous inroads in America today. Syncretism is a philosophy that combines beliefs from many different faith perspectives and considers them equally valid. This philosophy constitutes a direct attack on the foundational anchor of the Word of God as our sole and absolute authority for truth. It is obvious that Christians are increasingly vulnerable to cultural currents. The Apostle Paul warned Timothy about a time when people would have **itching** ears; a time when many would listen to false teachers and replace true anchors with false anchors.

#### 2 Timothy 4:3-4

<sup>3</sup> *For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. <sup>4</sup> They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.*

I am concerned about the growing influence of false teachers who say what people want them to say. These false teachers who are touted as the new wave of “spiritual innovators” write books that have a growing

audience of “itching ears.” Three of the top ten books on the Los Angeles Times bestseller list some time back teach a syncretic brand of false “spirituality” that directly opposes the true anchors of God. At number four on the list of the top ten hardbacks was *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne. At number one and two on the paperback list was “*A New Earth*” by Eckhart Tolle and *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert. **(Los Angeles Times Book Review, March 23, 2008)**

These books are highly touted by Oprah Winfrey, a passionate advocate of new age spirituality. A feature article in USA TODAY titled *The World is Oprah’s Classroom* outlines Oprah’s new adventure into teaching her brand of “truth.” She offers online courses based on Eckhart Tolle’s *A New Earth*. More than 3.5 million copies have been shipped since Winfrey announced her selection. It is No. 1 on USA TODAY’s Best-Selling Books list. The article goes on to say:

*“Winfrey calls the book ‘a wakeup call for the entire planet, one reader at a time. It helps us to distance ourselves from our egos, which, of course, we all have, and to open ourselves to a higher self, which he calls consciousness. It helps us to stop creating our own suffering and obsessing over the past and what the future might be, and to put ourselves in the now.’”(World is Oprah’s Classroom, Bob Minzeheimer, USA TODAY, Life Section, p. 1,2, March 3 2008)*

Eckhart Tolle proposes to teach people how to awaken their life purpose. He advocates a new kind of consciousness. Tolle says that the inspiration for the book came from a Bible prophecy about the new heaven and the new earth. Listen to what he says:

*“The arising of a new heaven and by implication a new earth are not future events that are going to make us free. Nothing is going to make us free because only the present moment can make us free. That realization is the Awakening...a new heaven and a new earth are arising within you at that moment. (A New Earth, Eckhart Tolle, 105 Plume, Published by Penguin Group, p. 308)*

Tolle says his philosophy, which includes Buddhist, Christian and Islamic influences, is merely uncovering what is already in you but at a deeper level. It seems then the only truth, according to Tolle, is this “awakening” or a transformed state of consciousness that is “within you”. And it is only this awakening at this moment that will make you free. Of course this allows each person to set their own standard for truth and believe what they want to believe, “in the moment.” Kind of scary, isn’t it? Jesus warned people about the origin of the lies they believed. To the Jews who claimed to believe in Him He said:

John 8:44

*<sup>44</sup>You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

Syncretism and relativism (there is no absolute truth, all truth is relative) come from Satan himself, the father of all lies. These lies will always result in people becoming enslaved to their beliefs. What I’m convinced people will wake up to is not the freedom that Winfrey and Tolle promise, but the bondage of believing a lie. Jesus not only warned people about believing lies but about the freedom that they would experience by holding to the truth.

John 8:31-32

<sup>31</sup> To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.  
<sup>32</sup> Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

We must remember that cultural currents affect Christians if they are not firmly anchored. There is evidence that this syncretistic view of truth is seeping into the life of believers. At the core of our problem are three desires of our sinful nature that distort truth. The Apostle Paul warns about these desires in his letter to the believers in Rome:

Romans 8:5-8

<sup>5</sup> Those who live according to the sinful nature have **their minds set on what that nature desires**; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. <sup>6</sup> The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; <sup>7</sup> **the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.** <sup>8</sup> Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. (Bold added)

**Three human desires**

The problem we face is not the cultural currents as much as it is our own natural desires. When we have our minds set on what our sinful natures desire we are vulnerable to believing the lies of Satan. We will not be able to discern between the truth and lies. There are three human desires that all believers must guard against.

**1. The desire to define our own truth.**

First is the desire to define our own truth. We are vulnerable to having our "...minds set on what that (sinful) nature desires." (Romans 8:5) We have a tendency to believe what we want to believe. We want truth that does not conflict with what our sinful nature desires. We want convenient truth--truth that does not interfere with our lifestyles

**2. The desire to set our own standards of obedience.**

People naturally search for truth that will allow them to do what their sinful nature desires. We are all vulnerable to setting our own standard for obedience. Paul reminds the believers in Rome that, "*the sinful mind is hostile to God...*" because it produces evil behavior. (Romans 8:7a) This evil behavior causes us to be alienated from God in our minds. We look for convenient truth that will support our desires. Our thinking shapes our behavior, but our behavior can also shape our thinking. Paul explains this to the believers in Colosse:

Colossians 1:21

<sup>21</sup> Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

Elizabeth Gilbert, in her best-selling book, "*Eat, Pray, love*", tells about her journey to find balance in her life. On this quest she travels through Italy, India, and Indonesia, learning from her guru and other spiritual teachers. On one occasion she met with a Balinese medicine man and was allowed to ask him one question. Here is what she said:

*"I want to have a lasting experience of God" I told him. "Sometimes I feel like I understand the divinity of this world, but then I lose it because I get distracted by my petty desires and fears. I want to be with God all the time. But I don't want to be a monk or totally give up worldly pleasures. I guess I want to learn how to live in this world and enjoy its delights but also devote myself to God" (Penguin Books, 2006, p.26, 27)*

Gilbert is looking for a balance that people throughout the centuries have desired. "I want God but I want Him on my terms. I do not want experiencing God to interfere with my desires. **I want to set my own standard for obedience.**" In other words, to quote a well-worn saying, "I want to have my cake and eat it too."

I'm sure by now some of you are wondering why I am using these seemingly "way out on the fringe" books on spirituality to illustrate the danger of "itching ears." What has this to do with Bible believing Christians who are reading this book? Let me tell you why. I first heard of *Eat, Pray, Love* when I saw the book on a table in my daughter's home. The title looked interesting so I started reading it. It took only a few pages for me to realize that this book was all about new age spirituality. My daughter is an avid reader, but she is also firmly anchored so I was shocked to find it in her house. When I asked her where it came from she said, "Oh, a friend of mine gave it to me to read. She said she really enjoyed it. I haven't looked at it yet." Then next question I asked was, "Is your friend a Christian?" The answer was, "yes".

That is why I'm alarmed. I realize that the action of one person is not proof of a trend, but I do wonder how many Christians are being influenced by books like this that may be interesting or entertaining but are based on false teaching. How many believers are being introduced to a syncretistic view of truth by the new age mindset of people like Oprah Winfrey? We have already seen how the three phases of cultural currents erode the anchors of God.

### 3. The desire to control our own lives

The desire to control our own lives is a summary of all three desires. It was this desire that Satan capitalized on in the garden when He tempted Eve. Satan promised Eve that she really didn't need God and could control her own life. He said,

Genesis 3:5

*<sup>5</sup>"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

Well guess what? The lie doesn't work any better now than it did then. When we try to control our own lives we eventually spin out of control. When we try to become masters of our own lives we end up being mastered by our own evil desires. As Paul says, when our sinful minds are hostile to God we will not submit to Him. When we are controlled by our sinful nature we will never please God.

Romans 8:7-8

*<sup>7</sup> the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. <sup>8</sup> Those controlled by the sinful nature **cannot please God.** (Bold added)*

I want to use a third book to illustrate the futile desire to of trying to control our own lives. "*The Secret*" by Rhonda Byrne is an enormously popular book that has been on the New York Times Booksellers list for over a year. In this book Byrne teaches that, "*You are the master of the universe, and that the genie (Law of Attraction) is there to serve you.*" (p.46)

The key is in "*The Secret.*" According to the book "*The Secret will give you everything you want: happiness, health, and wealth...We all work with infinite power. We all guide ourselves by exactly the same laws...We're all working with one power. One law. It's Attraction!*" (p.37)

Through the law of attraction, the book says, “Everything that is coming into your life you are attracting into your life by virtue of the images you are holding in your mind. It’s what you are thinking. Whatever is going on in your mind you’re attracting to you”. (**The Secret, Rhonda Byrne, Atria Books 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 2006, Production Limited Liability Co. p. 4**)

It is interesting to note that Byrne claims that the creative process used in *The Secret* was taken from the *New Testament*. The three simple steps are: ask, believe and receive. Notice the merging of truth with lies. The truth is that Jesus said we are to ask, believe and receive but what we receive comes from our heavenly Father (*Matt. 7:7-12*). Our asking and receiving has nothing to do with a law of attraction. We do not control what God gives us. We only ask in faith. This godless philosophy is much like the health and wealth gospel that is promoted on religious television, usually to raise funds.

## **MAKE GOD’S WORD YOUR SOLE AND ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY FOR TRUTH**

We do not have to succumb to the three desires that distort truth. If we are firmly anchored in God’s Word as our sole and absolute authority, we will not be pulled off course by the cultural current of lies that is the basis of the three desires. The antidote that prevents these lies from contaminating our lives is being anchored by the anchor of truth. Can you say for certain that the Anchor Action for this week is true of you?

*Sovereign Lord, your word is my sole authority and only standard for truth therefore I will obey you in all things. I will always use your Word to destroy strongholds and discern your will.*

I want us to take a close look at four principles of this anchor:

### **1. Sole truth**

There is no doubt that we are told in the Bible that God’s Word is to be our sole truth. Truth belongs exclusively to God and to no one else. He alone defines what truth is. The only pure truth is what God has spoken. The eternal God has always had sole possession of truth and it was by the Word of His mouth that the heavens and the earth were created.

*Psalms 33:4,6,9*

*<sup>4</sup> For the word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does...<sup>6</sup> By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth...<sup>9</sup> For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.*

The God who spoke the heavens and earth into being is also the creator of all truth. The Son sustains creation with His all-powerful Word.

*Hebrews 1:3*

*<sup>3</sup> The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word...*

Jesus, the Son came to earth so that we could see truth in the flesh—truth in action. John says,

John 1:1-4

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

Jesus made it clear that He was truth, and that there is no other truth. He was not part truth. He did not say that people could find truth in many places or there were many ways to God. He emphatically stated that He was the sole truth. Jesus said of Himself:

John 14:6

<sup>6</sup> Jesus answered, "I am the way and **the truth** and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (Bold added)

There is no syncretism here. Jesus does not say that truth can be found in many religions or that there are many ways to the Father. There is no doubt that Jesus says "I am the only standard for truth. I am **sole** truth. There is no room for compromise."

❖ **Truth alert**

The first sin in the Garden of Eden occurred because Eve considered Satan's lie that truth did not belong exclusively to God. Satan, contradicting God said, "You will not surely die..." (Genesis 3:4) Satan's strategy has not changed. He wants you to believe that truth can be found in many places. Is the Word of God your sole truth? Do you look to the Word of God alone for what you believe and what you do? Do red flags go up when you hear the cultural current of syncretism?

**2. Absolute truth**

When something is absolute it means that it is pure—that it is free from contamination. The Bible is absolute because it is 100% accurate. There are no errors. It is the perfect, pure Word of God. David says,

Psalms 19:7

<sup>7</sup> The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

God has given us truth that we can depend on 100% of the time. It is perfectly trustworthy and will make us wise. God has provided us with this truth so that we can know Him and know how to live wisely. The Psalmist says,

Psalms 119:144

<sup>144</sup> Your statutes are forever right; give me understanding that I may live.

❖ **Truth alert**

Eve also believed Satan's lie that truth was not absolute. There was wiggle room. Not only did God not have sole possession of truth but perhaps He really didn't mean what He said. In fact, maybe He didn't really say it. Satan's first words to Eve in the garden were, "Did God **really say** 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" Genesis 3:1 (Bold added)

We have a tendency to put words in God's mouth. We treat His Word like it is not absolute, but change it slightly to fit our own beliefs or desires. There is an example of this that I have heard many times over

the years. I have heard Christians who want out of their marriages with no Biblical grounds for divorce say, "God understands. He would not want me to be unhappy in this relationship." "Did God really say that divorce without Biblical grounds is sin?" Of course God is both grace and truth but we have no right to change truth. It is absolute.

### 3. Authority of truth

Previously in *The Disciple's Journey* resources we discussed how everyone has some source of authority that forms the basis for what they think and do. There are only four basic sources of authority from which to choose. I want to briefly review them and how they affect the authority on which we base our beliefs.

First, many people use their own **intellect** or reason as their source of authority. People determine their own truth based upon what they think or believe is right and wrong. Second is **experience/emotions**. There are people who have as their source of authority what they feel or what they have experienced. Third there is **tradition**. Some people and some religions use tradition as their source authority. A tradition is a human pattern of thought or action that is handed down through the generations. A fourth source of authority is the **Word or truth of God**. For the Christian this is the only source of authority that can serve as a reliable anchor. Our sole source of authority is the very Word of God.

The Bible clearly states that God and His Word are to be our only source of authority but God does not force us to submit to this authority. He does not use force to compel us to obey Him. He makes it clear that *He is the way, the truth and the life*, but gives us the **choice** to follow Him of our own free will. He comes to us as both *grace and truth*. God wants us to respond to the authority of His Word out of love, not duty alone. God wants us to obey Him because we know that what He asks us to do in His Word is an expression of His love and is always what is best for us.

#### ❖ Truth Alert

Eve believed that God's truth was not the final authority. She could be the master of her own universe and spin her own truth. Of course the consequence of her choice of authority was a disaster. She and her husband were expelled from the Garden of Eden and alienated from God. It is wise to remember that we all have this tendency to be our own authority for truth. We all are vulnerable to wanting to be masters of our own universe. We need to be on the alert for anything that would cause us to drift from the Word of God as our sole, absolute and final **authority**.

### 4. Total Obedience

Have you ever wondered why Eve wasn't given a second chance? After all it was just her first sin. But God did not accept any excuses when Adam and Eve dishonored Him by believing a lie and rebelling against His word. Nowhere in the Bible does God ever give us an excuse for our sin. Understanding and compassion, yes. Forgiveness, yes. Excuse for sin, no. God's standard for us is always total obedience. The Psalmist understood this when he said,

*Psalms 119:4-5*

<sup>4</sup> *You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed.* <sup>5</sup> *Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees!*





## SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

Read and study *Romans 8: 5-8* and answer the following questions about the truth of God's Word.

### OBSERVATION: (What does it say?)

- What is the background of this passage? To whom was Paul speaking? What was the purpose of this letter?
- What key words and phrases do you find in this passage? (Underline in your Bible)

### INTERPRETATION: (What does it mean?)

- What does it mean to have our "*minds set on what that nature desires*"?
- In what ways are believers vulnerable to what the sinful nature desires?
- What is the antidote for a mind that is set on what the sinful nature desires?

### APPLICATION: (What does it say to me?)

- Is your mind controlled by the Spirit? Do you live in accordance with the Spirit? Explain.
- To what degree do you have the life and peace promised to those who have their minds set on what the Spirit desires?
- What one thing will you do to always have your mind set on what the Spirit desires?



## **DROP ANCHOR**

Following you will find practical ways in which you can drop the anchor of the holiness of God:

### **Anchored for action**

1. Each day make a commitment to set your mind on what the Spirit desires.
2. Guard against the cultural current of syncretism. Be careful what you watch and read.
3. Make a commitment to review the truth and action at least five days a week.
4. Ask God to enable you through the power of His Spirit to live in accordance with the Spirit.

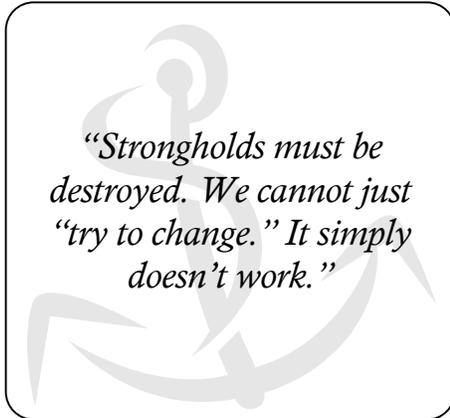
**My Plan to drop anchor** (Write one thing you will do to drop anchor)

### **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Review the accountability questions in Session I and be prepared to share your answers with the group.

# SESSION 17

## ANCHOR POINT B / GOD'S WORD DESTROYS STRONGHOLDS



### GETTING STARTED

Memorize the anchor truths and action and answer the questions that follow. Review all previous memory assignments.

#### ANCHOR TRUTHS (memorize)

##### 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

<sup>3</sup>For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup>The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup>We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

1. What does Paul mean when he says we do not wage war as the world does? What are the differences?
2. What are the divine weapons that enable us to destroy strongholds?
3. What are some of the arguments and pretensions that set themselves up against the knowledge of God?
4. How can you take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ?

#### ANCHOR ACTION (memorize)

*Sovereign Lord, Your Word is my sole authority and only standard for truth, therefore I will obey you in all things. I will always use your Word to destroy strongholds and discern your will.*



## EXPLORING THE ANCHOR

Strongholds are fortresses of lies and corresponding actions that Satan wants to build in our lives to enslave us. If you went through *Spiritual Boot Camp* you will already have had training in this area. Some of this will be a review for you. We will deal specifically with the stronghold of immorality. Even if you do not have strongholds in your life, the principles in this session will help you prepare in advance for all kinds of temptations.

### PART 1: THE DESTRUCTION OF STRONGHOLDS

#### THE BUILDING OF STRONGHOLDS

The term “stronghold” is used only once in the New Testament. Paul uses it in a letter he sent to the believers in Corinth. He defines what a stronghold is and how it can be destroyed:

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

<sup>3</sup> *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup> The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup> We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

#### A foundation of lies

The Greek word Paul uses here for strongholds, *ochurooma*, is used to describe the foundation of incorrect beliefs and sinful attitudes that Satan builds in our minds. Lies are the foundation of a stronghold. They are all false anchors. They are *arguments* and *pretensions* that are set up against the *knowledge of God*. These are lies about who God is and how much He loves us. Satan wants us to believe our needs can be better met outside of the heavenly Father’s provisions. Satan wants us to question God’s perfect faithfulness and love. These tactics of Satan can be seen from the beginning of time. In the Garden of Eden he convinced Eve of this lie of all lies:

Genesis 3:4-5

<sup>4</sup> *“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. <sup>5</sup> “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”*

The goal of Satan is to dethrone God from being the King of our lives. He wants us to believe that we are the masters of our lives—that we can meet our own needs. From these lies come evil desires and evil behaviors. Satan is the father of lies and wants to deceive us. He knows that as a result of believing his lies we will sin. Jesus made that clear when He confronted the unbelieving Jews. He said,

John 8:45

<sup>45</sup> *You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

## **A fortress of disobedience**

The other part of the stronghold is a fortress of disobedience. Satan's lies come in many forms but all with the same intent—to deceive us. He wants us to believe that we can have our needs met outside of God's will. If Satan can convince us to believe his lies he can convince us that sinful behavior is acceptable. Every sinful act starts with a sinful thought. Eve believed Satan's lies and ate of the forbidden fruit. Every lie we believe will eventually result in sinful behavior of some kind.

## **Enslaved!!!**

Satan does not just want to tempt us. His goal is not only to get us to sin; He wants to enslave us. He wants to be our master. He is well aware of the progressive nature of sin. He knows that his lies will put us on a slippery slope that will eventually lead to spiritual death. James describes it this way:

### James 1:13-15

*<sup>13</sup> When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; <sup>14</sup> but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.*

*<sup>15</sup> Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*

Notice the progressive nature of sin. It starts with evil desires. We are dragged away and enticed. When desire is conceived it gives birth to sin, but when it is full grown it gives birth to death. We become a slave of our sinful behavior. We are held captive by our stronghold. Peter says,

### 2 Peter 2:19

*<sup>19</sup> They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.*

Within the structure of every stronghold is a promise of freedom. But freedom from moral restraint is not freedom at all. It is bondage. Satan enticed Adam and Eve with the promise of being masters of their own destinies but they ended up being mastered by their disobedience. A stronghold is whatever masters you—whatever controls you. It is a habitual way of thinking and acting that opposes the truth of Scripture. There is not any "one size fits all" stronghold. While sin is sin, strongholds do come in different size and shapes. Satan is the master designer of strongholds who makes sure there are fortresses of lies that will accommodate us for all occasions. Here is a list of just a few things that can become strongholds in our lives.

## **Potential strongholds**

Sports, exercise, hobbies, leisure activities, sexual immorality, critical attitude, internet, work, people, activity, bitterness/anger, overly sensitive, money, materialism, substance abuse, rigidity, pride, worry, perfectionism.

## **Some are hidden from us — some we hide from others**

There are some strongholds that we are very much aware of and some not so much or not at all. Some we try to hide from others. Some we don't see. A Psalm of David speaks of these two faces of strongholds.

### Psalm 19:12-14

<sup>12</sup>Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults. <sup>13</sup>Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression. <sup>14</sup>May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

### **Hidden faults**

First David refers to “hidden faults” that can be strongholds. Because of our fallen natures we have sins that lurk below our conscious level. We are not aware of them but often others are. We need to be open to the input of others and seek accountability for sins we do not see. We can ask God to reveal these hidden faults (*Psalm 139: 23-24*).

### **Willful sins**

David also refers to “willful sins”. These are sins that we are well aware of but allow to persist in our lives. When we know that we have sins and do little or nothing about correcting them it is open rebellion. These sins will eventually become strongholds. They will have a strong hold on us—an iron grip. Some willful sins have an addictive nature and control us. Substance abuse and pornography fall into this category. We may have made hundreds, if not thousands of attempts to stop, but they always return with a vengeance.

## **THE DESTRUCTION OF STRONGHOLDS**

Strongholds must be destroyed. We cannot just “try to change.” It simply doesn’t work. Paul makes that clear when he says, “*For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.*” (2 Cor. 10:3-5)

We cannot overcome strongholds by our own strength or will-power. They can only be overcome with the “*divine power*” of God. (2 Cor. 10: 4) Only His weapons can truly demolish strongholds. The weapon Paul is speaking about is the Holy Spirit empowered Word of God. God’s truth prevails! It is the truth of God that destroys the lies of Satan. It is the truth of God that destroys all of Satan’s arguments. How does this happen? Strongholds are destroyed *when every thought is taken captive to make it obedient to Christ.* (2 Cor. 10:5)

### **Change your CD**

We resolve to change. We make numerous commitments. We say we will try harder. We change for a while but end up reverting back to the same old attitudes and actions. Sound familiar? We end up trying to change in the same old way that we have already proved beyond all doubt doesn’t work. We are creatures of habit so we just try harder with the same results. Perhaps you can relate to this saying,

*If you always do what you’ve always done,  
You’ll always get what you’ve always got.*

Our problem is we play the same old CD. We listen to the same old lie, respond in the same old way and get the same old results. You know that if you play the same CD you will always hear the same song. It is the same with a stronghold. A stronghold is a fortress of lies. When you replay the same old lie you will always end up with the same old actions. The stronghold will remain in place.

The only way a stronghold can be destroyed is by changing the CD that was used to construct the stronghold in the first place. I want to introduce you to a way you can use God’s divine weapons to destroy the strongholds in your life by changing your CD. This simple little acronym will help you remember and apply

the two essential Biblical principles for destroying strongholds. By now you are very familiar with these two principles. They are the truth and action of every anchor and anchor point.

**C**hange the way you think  
**D**evelop new actions

## **CHANGE THE WAY YOU THINK**

Every sinful action starts with a sinful desire that produces a sinful thought. One of the mistakes we make is trying to change our behavior without changing our desires and beliefs as well. When we change our actions without changing our thought patterns, the stronghold will stay in place. Jesus said,

*"...If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." - John 8:31-32*

It is only the truth of God's Word that totally sets us free from the fortress of lies. It is only when we **hold** firmly to the truth of God's Word by allowing it to renew our minds that strongholds are destroyed. All other attempts at change will fall short. For the stronghold to be totally destroyed we must learn to change the way we think. Our minds must be renewed by the Word of God.

## **DEVELOP NEW ACTIONS**

Actions changed because of good intentions or pressure and not accompanied by a change in thinking, will revert back to the previous state. A true change of thinking will result in developing new actions. Actions follow truth. In Romans Paul says,

Romans 12:2

*<sup>2</sup> Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

Our actions are transformed when our minds are renewed by God's truth. Transformation always includes truth and action. (*John 3:16-18*)

### **The destruction of Jeremiahs' stronghold**

Let's look at a prophet of God to see how a stronghold of despair was destroyed. Even though Jeremiah heard directly from God, he allowed circumstances to overwhelm him. A fortress of lies was constructed in his mind and his thinking became severely distorted. Jeremiah prophesized during very troubling times. The Kingdom of Judah had rebelled against God and was on the verge of being taken into exile by the evil Babylonian empire. Jeremiah let the dire circumstances distort his thinking. Listen to the fortress of lies that came to hold him captive:

Lamentations 3:17-20

*<sup>17</sup> I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is. <sup>18</sup>So I say, "My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the LORD." <sup>19</sup>I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. <sup>20</sup> I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me.*

Without a doubt Jeremiah had forgotten who God was and what God could do. In his thinking the prophet had replaced the truth of God with the lies of Satan. He had been taken captive by arguments and pretensions raised up against the nature of God. Jeremiah became paralyzed because of his thoughts. The prophet was deeply depressed because he believed the lie that it was his circumstances that were causing him anguish. If God would only change the circumstances everything would be all right. If not, his life was hopeless and without meaning.

But watch what happens next. At the depth of Jeremiah's despair when he thought there was no hope, the stronghold of lies was destroyed. From the divine arsenal of God Word's came a "smart bomb" so precise that it utterly destroyed the stronghold that held Jeremiah captive. Jeremiah recalled the truth of God's Word. He remembered that it was not the circumstances that needed to change but his thinking. Notice what happens when Jeremiah recalls God's Word.

Lamentations 3:21-25

*<sup>21</sup> Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: <sup>22</sup> Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. <sup>23</sup> They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. <sup>24</sup> I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." <sup>25</sup> The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him;*

At the very moment Jeremiah recalled the truth about who God is and what He does, his mind was renewed, and his life transformed. He recalled that God's love is forever, His compassion new each day and that His faithfulness is great. Jeremiah no longer despaired about his circumstances. His hope was restored, enabling him to return to his work as a prophet with great confidence. Because he changed his thinking, he also developed new actions. The stronghold was destroyed as total transformation took place.

**Destroy your stronghold**

Do you have a stronghold that you are willing to have God's divine weapons destroy? Following is a helpful tool in destroying strongholds.

• **Discovering the stronghold**

1. What is the stronghold?

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2. What behaviors are associated with the stronghold?

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3. What lies are behind the behavior?

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• **Destroying the stronghold**

1. Pray the following prayer of commitment:

Lord, I pray that you will demolish the stronghold of “\_\_\_\_\_” in my life by the supernatural power of Your Word. I will do my part by taking every thought captive and making every action obedient to you.

2. I will develop new actions in the following ways:

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3. I will change the way I think in the following ways: (Find specific Scriptures to replace the lies that you have believed).

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Hebrews 4:12

<sup>12</sup> For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

## PART 2: PREPARING TO PREVENT STRONGHOLDS

The best strategy is to prevent strongholds from being built in the first place. We don't want to give Satan the slightest advantage in our lives. The truth of God's Word tells us:

1 Peter 1:13-16

<sup>13</sup> Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. <sup>15</sup> But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; <sup>16</sup> for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

This is a passage that pretty well defines what *anchoring* is all about. It is about preparing our minds in advance by memorizing and meditating on a specific truth from God's Word. It is about preparing how we will act in certain situations. Anchoring means that we are prepared to "drop anchor" when we face troubled waters. It is about not getting blindsided by Satan. We are to be,

1 Peter 5:8

<sup>8</sup> ...self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

### THE STRONGHOLD OF SEXUAL IMMORALITY

One of the three greatest temptations is the "lust of the flesh" (1 John 2:15-17). Moral purity, especially among men, is a huge issue in our culture today. As documented in chapter two we live in an increasingly sexualized culture. I struggle, as do most men, to stay above reproach in thoughts and actions. My goal is not to have even a hint of sexually immorality and to honor God with my body as a temple of His Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:3; 1 Cor. 6: 18-20).

When I first used this material with a group, one of the women commented that it seemed to be for the men only. I do agree that it is from my perspective and I am a male. It will probably be more helpful to men than to women. There are principles, however, that apply to everyone. Women as well as men face sexual temptations. Affairs involve both men and women. I acknowledge that there are certain male/female differences when it comes to sexual temptations and affairs but there are also similarities. So to the women doing this study, I say focus on the Biblical principles. They are written for everyone. Apply the Biblical principles to your life. You know yourself best!

### **How I prepare**

What I offer you now is very personal. It is what I do almost every day. There are very few times during a year that I miss going through the Scriptures that follow. What I will give you here is just a basic outline. It will be mostly prayers of commitment and key Scriptures. I will not be making a lot of comments about issues. I will mostly let the Word of truth speak for itself. It is the truth of God that destroys strongholds, not the insights of men.

- **Prepare your heart**

To accomplish the goal of moral purity I prepare my heart, mind, eyes, and body each day by reviewing some anchoring Scriptures. To help you become anchored in moral purity I am going to give you the Scriptures and prayers of commitment that I review daily to help me remain sexually pure. Of course you will want to make the prayers your own. Make it a goal to return to this section and memorize these anchor points.

#### Anchor action (For single people)

*Lord, I am resolved, like Daniel to be morally pure by not defiling myself with any inappropriate thoughts or actions.*

#### Anchor action (For married people)

*Lord I am resolved, like Daniel to be morally pure by not defiling myself with any inappropriate thoughts or actions. I will honor You, marriage, and my wife/husband by keeping the marriage bed pure. (Hebrews 13:4)*

#### Anchor truths

##### Daniel 1:8

*<sup>8</sup> But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.*

##### 2 Timothy 2:20-22

*<sup>20</sup> In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. <sup>21</sup> If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work. <sup>22</sup> Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

Ephesians 5:3

<sup>3</sup> *But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.*

Hebrews 13:4

<sup>4</sup> *Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.*

- **Prepare your mind**

Anchoring actions

*Lord, I will renew my mind by reviewing Scriptures on sexual purity daily and rejecting any impure thoughts immediately.*

Anchor truths

Ephesians 4:22-24

<sup>22</sup> *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup> to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Psalms 119:9-11

<sup>9</sup> *How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. <sup>10</sup> I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. <sup>11</sup> I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*

Matthew 5:27-28

<sup>27</sup> *"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' <sup>28</sup> But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

- **Prepare your eyes**

Anchor actions

*Lord, I will immediately avert my eyes from looking lustfully at a person's body and remove any sexually stimulating materials from my presence.*

Anchor truths

Job 31:1

<sup>1</sup> *"I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl.*

Matthew 5:29

<sup>29</sup> *If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.*

- **Prepare your body**

Anchor action

*Lord, I will flee sexually compromising situations and honor you at all times by keeping my body sexually pure. I will avoid the slightest compromise and control my body.*

Anchor truths

1 Corinthians 6:18-20

*<sup>18</sup> Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. <sup>19</sup> Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; <sup>20</sup> you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.*

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, 7

*<sup>3</sup> It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; <sup>4</sup> that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, <sup>5</sup> not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; <sup>7</sup> For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.*

- **Prepare for accountability**

Anchor action

*Lord, I will be accountable to you for these promises regularly and will also be accountable to a prayer partner.*

Anchor truths

James 5:16

*<sup>16</sup> Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*

Hebrews 3:13

*<sup>13</sup> But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.*

## A FINAL WORD ABOUT ACCOUNTABILITY

Up to this point it may seem that I am saying strongholds are destroyed immediately and completely. I have not found this to be true in my life. The fortresses of lies in my life that have been divinely destroyed by God's Word have not fallen easily. They have stubbornly resisted the smart bombs of God's Word of truth. And once I think that the stronghold has been destroyed, I see traces of the old lies emerging and evidence of new construction going on.

This is why we need encouragement and accountability. Out of the ashes rise the ruins of past beliefs and behaviors. Thoughts that we have rehearsed literally thousands of times are not replaced easily by the truth. Actions that have become part of who we are do not submit to our new identity and new directions without

resistance. To help prevent us from falling into patterns of past thoughts and behavior, God has given us a support system. He has provided us with a family that includes spiritual brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers. In the family of God we can find encouragement and accountability to help strongholds be permanently destroyed.

### **Encouragement**

Encouragement is vital to overcoming strongholds and living Godly lives. God's Word consistently reminds us of the importance of encouraging one another. The writer of Hebrews says,

Hebrews 3:13

*<sup>13</sup> But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.*

Satan is deceitful. Sin is deceitful and we are easily deceived. Because of this we need people in our lives to pray for us daily and encourage us to live godly lives. An accountability partner and encourager is necessary if we are to employ God's weapons to permanently destroy strongholds.

### **Accountability**

*Accountability turns good intentions into godly disciplines*

This catchy reminder is worth remembering: *Accountability turns good intentions into godly disciplines*. We all do better with accountability. Accountability is closely associated with encouragement. We need people to encourage us to be faithful to our commitments—people to whom we have agreed to be accountable. We need people who will still love us and accept us when we fall short of our commitments.

Accountability means that we have chosen someone to whom we are willing to give an account for our thoughts and actions. Strongholds are of such a nature that to overcome them we need to employ all the resources that God has made available to us. Without intentional accountability our chances of permanently destroying strongholds are slim. God's Word encourages us to do this: James says,

James 5:16

*<sup>16</sup> Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*

### **Choose an accountability partner**

Ask God to lead you to someone to whom you can be accountable. This should be a mature believer, a righteous man or woman, who will not only encourage you and pray for you but will also hold you accountable by asking you the hard questions about your commitment. I suggest you be accountable to this person for specific changes that you believe God wants you to make. Make contact with this person at least once a week. For some the contact will need to be daily.



## DIG DEEPER

Dig deeper into the Truth of God by answering the following questions about what you have just read. (Review the Scriptures in your Bible and underline important words and phrases).

1. **Review *2 Corinthians 10:3-5* and how a foundation of lies and a fortress of disobedience are the building blocks of strongholds.**
  - In your own words explain how you see these two building blocks working together.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - Read *2 Peter 2:19*. In what ways do the lies that are the foundation of strongholds promise freedom but end up enslaving the person?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. **Read *Psalms 19:12-14* in your own Bible and answer the following questions:**
  - Give an example of a “hidden fault?” Why do so many of our faults remain hidden? What is our responsibility?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - What are “willful sins?” In what ways do they rule over us? Are there any willful sins in your life? Explain.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Did you discover a stronghold or a potential stronghold? If so what was it and how do you plan to use the weapons of God to destroy it?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What did you learn from the section on preparing to prevent or destroy strongholds?



## SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

Read and study *Lamentations 3:17-25* in your own Bible and answer the questions that follow:

### OBSERVATION: (What does it say?)

- What is the background of this passage? To whom was Jeremiah speaking?
- What are some of the complaints he makes earlier in the chapter? What are his conclusions in verses 17-20?
- What key words and phrases do you find in this passage? (Underline in your Bible)

### INTERPRETATION: (What does it mean?)

- What was Jeremiah's old **CD**? What specific lies had he come to believe?
- What was his new **CD**? What truths did Jeremiah now embrace?
- When Jeremiah says to himself, "*...the Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for Him*" to what was he referring? What key principle had he learned?

### APPLICATION: (What does it say to me?)

- What is the most important truth you will remember as a result of this study?
- How will you use what Jeremiah learned about changing his **CD** to changing a **CD** in your own life?
- What specific thoughts and actions will you change?



## DROP ANCHOR

Following you will find practical ways in which you can drop the anchor of the truth of God:

**Anchored for action** (Write one thing you will do to drop anchor)

1. If you discovered a stronghold be diligent in changing your **CD**
2. Be alert for any foundation of lies or fortress of behaviors that Satan wants to build in your life.
3. Begin the process of preparing every day to be morally pure.
4. Spend time in prayer asking God to empower you to destroy any strongholds or potential strongholds in your life.

**My Plan to drop anchor**

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Review the accountability questions in Session I and be prepared to share your answers with the group.

# SESSION 18

## ANCHOR POINT C / GOD'S WORD REVEALS HIS WILL

*“God’s Word contains His will for us. It is crystal clear about right and wrong. It gives us clear information about the ways and will of God. While we may miss the road signs, it is not because they are not clearly marked.”*

### GETTING STARTED

Memorize the anchor truths and action and answer the questions that follow. Review all previous memory assignments.

#### ANCHOR TRUTH (memorize)

##### Romans 12:1-2

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

1. What does offering your bodies as living sacrifices have to do with discerning God’s perfect will?
2. What does it mean to renew your mind? In what ways does a renewed mind help us discern the perfect will of God?
3. What does it mean to “test and approve” God’s will?
4. What does this Scripture say to you?

#### ANCHOR ACTION (memorize)

*Sovereign Lord, your Word is my sole authority and only standard for truth, therefore I will obey you in all things. I will always use your Word to destroy strongholds and discern your will.*



## EXPLORING THE ANCHOR OF TRUTH

### GOD WANTS US TO KNOW HIS WILL

We know that God wants us to know His will. He has painstakingly and lovingly recorded His thoughts for us in His Word. Our heavenly Father wants His children to experience His love and live in His will. He expects us to hear His voice and He communicates with us clearly to make this possible. God promises,

*Jeremiah 33:3*

*<sup>3</sup> 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.'*

God tells us He will answer us with unsearchable things we do not know, but he does not guarantee that His will will be immediately clear to us. To help us understand this I want us to look at what I will refer to as the "two roads of God's will".

### THERE ARE TWO ROADS THAT LEAD TO GOD'S WILL

Usually when a person says they want to know God's will it is for a specific situation. They are facing a crossroad in their life. The direction they should take is not clear so they want specific direction from God as to what to do. This is a road that is often not clearly seen. A second road is one that is clearly seen. That road leads to His will for our daily lives. It involves our values, decisions and actions as we navigate each day. We will look at a travel guide for both roads. The first road is based on His Word and is empowered by His Holy Spirit. It is a road that is clearly seen.

#### **The road clearly seen**

The road clearly seen is the road of God's truth which is clearly marked. This road is based on His Word and is empowered by His Holy Spirit. It is a road that in most instances is clearly seen. We simply must obey the road signs of truth. These signs clearly point to what is truth and how we should obey. Scripture includes admonitions to, "do this", and, "don't do this." While God's Word includes specific commands it is not just a rule book that we must follow religiously to somehow gain His approval. The road signs are given to us for our good. They are to keep us on the straight and narrow road that will result in joy and peace. Every principle and command is to bring us into a closer relationship with God. It is when we trust Him rather than ourselves that we can see the road clearly marked and God makes our paths straight. Proverbs says,

*Proverbs 3:5-6*

*<sup>5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; <sup>6</sup> in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.*

God's Word contains His will for us. It is crystal clear about right and wrong. It gives us clear information about the ways and will of God. While we may miss the road signs, it is not because they are not clearly marked. It is because our spiritual vision is impaired. Our spiritual vision is impaired if we ignore God's clear signs or have never studied the guide book to know what they are. If we ignore the signs we will take the wrong road. Proverbs gives the warning:

Proverbs 14:12

<sup>12</sup> *There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.*

God's Word cautions us to be careful about how we live. We are to be wise, but to be wise we must rely on the source of all wisdom. It is only then that we will understand what the Lord's will is. Paul says,

Ephesians 5:15-17

<sup>15</sup> *Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.*

### **The road not clearly seen**

There is another road leading to God's will that is often not clearly seen. We all face major decisions in life where we want to know God's will. These are special circumstances for which there is not a clear right and wrong from Scripture. We would like specific directions in those instances. These could involve decisions such as:

- Should we buy this house?
- What should I do about this relationship?
- Should we move?
- Should I take this new job?
- Is the Lord calling me into "full time" ministry?

I'm sure that you have faced decisions where you sought God's direction on a road that was not clearly seen. These times can be frustrating and confusing. We wonder if God is really going to show us His will. We wonder if what we think we are hearing is really His will or just our own desires. We are afraid of making a mistake and suffering the consequences. James lays out some of the sticky issues with the road not clearly seen. He warns:

James 4:13-17

<sup>13</sup> *Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." <sup>14</sup> Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. <sup>15</sup> **Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."** <sup>16</sup> As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. <sup>17</sup> Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins. (Bold added)*

There are personal issues that can prevent us from discerning God's will on the road not clearly seen. One of these is self-reliance and pride. We are always to travel the road not clearly seen by humbly saying, "...if it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." (James 4:15) The road not clearly seen is the most difficult to navigate. In this study you will learn principles that will help you successfully navigate both roads. First I want us to look at three kinds of wisdom that are available to us.

### **THE THREE SENSES OF WISDOM**

There are three different kinds of wisdom that people commonly use to make decisions. As you know, not all sources of wisdom are equal. In fact some are downright dangerous. It is important for us to discern the

kind of wisdom that will enable us to know God's will. I refer to these different kinds of wisdom as "the three senses of wisdom."

### 1. There is "uncommon sense"

Uncommon sense is actually much more than uncommon; it is divine — supernatural sense. I am speaking of the wisdom of God revealed in the Bible. The Bible refers to this uncommon sense of God as "God breathed." That is, God "breathed" into certain people His words to be recorded and passed on to man in the Bible. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

There is a level of wisdom that is available only to believers. It is the wisdom from above that cannot be compared to any other kind of wisdom. It is this uncommon, divine sense of God that Paul speaks of in Romans:

#### Romans 11:33-36

*<sup>33</sup> Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! <sup>34</sup> "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" <sup>35</sup> "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" <sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.*

Only a person who has received Jesus and has the Holy Spirit can fully understand the uncommon sense of God. Others can read it. Others can study it. But only the heavenly Father's children can understand his voice. It is, as Paul explains, spiritually discerned.

#### 1 Corinthians 2:14

*<sup>14</sup> The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

We must be careful not to be influenced by the nonsense of the world. We must be careful to not rely on our common sense to discern the will of God. It is not our common sense but the uncommon sense of God that enables us to know the will of God. We know the uncommon sense of God through our intimate fellowship with Him and by being strongly anchored in His Word.

The uncommon sense of God is the foundation for all we think and do. The uncommon sense of God helps us make sense out of everything else and discern nonsense. It is only through the uncommon sense of God that we discern His will. The Bible is the source of all truth and the basis for all wisdom. A Proverb says:

#### Proverbs 2:6

*<sup>6</sup> For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.*

### 2. There is "common sense"

Common sense is the practical application of the uncommon sense of God. Common sense is the wisdom of God applied in practical ways. Common sense is always consistent with the principles found in the Bible and never contradicts the uncommon sense of God.

Psalm 111:10

<sup>10</sup> *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.*

Psalm 112:1

<sup>1</sup> *Praise the LORD. Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who finds great delight in his commands.*

Our common sense should be completely dependent on the uncommon, divine sense of God based on the perfect word and will of God.

### 3. **There is “nonsense”**

When people deny or disregard the uncommon sense of God and the common sense that is based on the truth of the Bible they often end up with nonsense or no sense at all. The Bible says:

1 Corinthians 1:19-20

<sup>19</sup> *For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”* <sup>20</sup> *Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?*

These questions are answered in the Bible. If God created the vast expanse of the universe and created us with our incredible bodies, then He must be the source of all knowledge. If He is the source of all knowledge and wisdom then it stands to reason that whatever opposes or disregards that essence of wisdom will result in nonsense. When examined in the light of God’s wisdom, knowledge, principles and opinions that deny and disregard the Bible will make no sense at all. When closely scrutinized they will lack coherent meaning. As the Apostle Paul said, “...*Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?*” (1 Cor. 1:20) “Nonsense” is what happens when people choose to disregard God and become wise in their own eyes live by the authority of their own truth.

We must be careful not to be influenced by the nonsense of the world. We must be careful to not rely on our common sense to discern the will of God. It is not our common sense but this uncommon sense of God that enables us to know the will of God. We know the uncommon sense of God by our intimate fellowship with Him and by being strongly anchored in His Word.

## **TRAVELING THE ROAD CLEARLY SEEN**

We will now take a trip on the two roads of God’s will. First we travel “the road clearly seen.” This is the road where God has placed clear signs. Where He wants us to go on this road is not confusing. It is straight and narrow. There are some distinguishing characteristics of the road clearly seen.

### **It is the highway of God**

To travel this road successfully we must first understand that it is the “highway of God”. All wisdom comes from above. The road clearly seen has its origin with God Himself. Wisdom begins and ends with God who created the universe. The Psalmist says,

Psalm 119:89-91

<sup>89</sup> Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. <sup>90</sup> Your faithfulness continues through all generations; you established the earth, and it endures. <sup>91</sup> Your laws endure to this day, for all things serve you.

The prophet Isaiah spoke of the eternal Word of God:

Isaiah 40:8

<sup>8</sup>The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.”

Isaiah records the Lord as saying the following about the “highway” of His Word:

Isaiah 55:8-11

<sup>8</sup> “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. <sup>9</sup> “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. <sup>10</sup> As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, <sup>11</sup> so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

To be willing to follow the signs on the road clearly seen we must acknowledge that God’s wisdom is higher than our wisdom and that His Word will always accomplish what He desires. We will not be willing to follow God’s clear road signs until we are in awe of His perfect wisdom.

**The directions are clear**

It is a well-marked highway. There are clearly marked sign posts pointing to your destination. God has made His wisdom crystal clear to us. He has also made His will clear to us. The Psalmist says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path” (Psalms 119:105). When it comes to how we live our lives, there is no doubt about what God wants us to do. Paul says,

2 Timothy 3:16-17

<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The directions are clear but we must be willing to follow them. We must have a heartfelt desire to do God’s will no matter how difficult it might seem. Our attitude is to be like David’s who prayed,

Psalm 40:8

<sup>8</sup> I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”

When we have a heartfelt desire to do God’s will we will be able to say,

Psalm 119:104

<sup>104</sup> I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.

## There is the signpost of transformation

### Romans 12:2

*2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be **transformed** by the **renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what **God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will**. (Bold added)*

There is a signpost on the road clearly seen that is marked "transformation." It happens when our minds are renewed by the Word and we respond with obedience. It is then that we clearly see the perfect will of God for our lives. It is then that the fog caused by the values of the world is lifted and we can see with great clarity what God wants us to be and do.

## The signpost of relinquishment

To see the perfect will of God we must give up our own view of where the road should take us. We must put our personal maps aside and take our direction from the GPS from above. (God's Positioning System) From His place in heaven God sees all and directs all. The Psalms say,

### Psalms 33:13-15

*<sup>13</sup> From heaven the LORD looks down and sees all mankind; <sup>14</sup> from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth--<sup>15</sup> he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do.*

For the GPS from above to direct us we must relinquish the compulsion to direct our own lives. Jesus showed us the way to relinquishment by His own example.

### John 12:27-28

*<sup>27</sup> "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. <sup>28</sup> Father, glorify your name! "Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again."*

When our hearts are troubled we are often tempted to try and "save" ourselves from our own troubles rather than putting ourselves in the hands of the Father. We are only saved from ourselves by following the signpost of relinquishment and saying as Jesus did, "Father, glorify your name."

## The signpost of prayer

Wherever we go on the road clearly seen we can observe the signpost of prayer. We see Jesus praying for God's will as He faced his final hours on earth. In the Garden of Gethsemane He prays,

### Mark 14:36

*<sup>36</sup> "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."*

The Apostle Paul knew that it was only through the power of prayer that believers could discern the will of God for their lives. This is evident in his prayer for the believers in Colosse. He prayed:

### Colossians 1:9-10

*<sup>9</sup> For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and **asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will** through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. <sup>10</sup>*

*And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, (Bold added)*

Paul asks God to fill the believers with knowledge of His will. It is through the power of God that His wisdom and will are released in our lives. It is through spiritual wisdom and understanding that comes from God that we are able to discern His will and lead lives that are pleasing to Him. It is through the power of prayer that God empowers us to stay on course when we are on His highway--to follow His directions. God further promises us that if we pray for wisdom, He will always answer that prayer with **generous** amounts of wisdom.

James 1:5

*<sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.*

## **TRAVELING THE ROAD NOT CLEARLY SEEN**

How do we know God's will in special circumstances—when there seem to be no clear signs, marking the way God wants us to go? There are times we are not even sure about the final destination. There are two ways to prepare for travel on the road not clearly seen:

### **First be sure to travel the road clearly seen.**

The road clearly seen illuminates the road not clearly seen. When we learn to navigate the road with the clear signs of God's will, the road of special circumstances not clearly seen becomes less difficult. Our first step is to be fully prepared by learning to follow the signs that are clear. This will open our eyes to see what appears to be hidden from sight.

### **Prepare by removing your own obstructions**

Sometimes the problem is not that God has not given us clear signs but we place obstacles on the road that obstruct our view of God's will.

#### **The obstruction of our pride and desires**

We miss the signs of what God wants us to do because what we want to do obstructs our vision. All we can see is our own desires. We are blinded by our pride and what we view as desirable, rather than acknowledging God's sovereignty and what He desires for us. When we travel the road not clearly seen we should always begin our journey with humility, relinquishing our will to God's sovereign will and praying, "If it is the Lord's will we will do this or that." (James 4:13-17)

#### **The obstruction of our needs**

We tend to be needy people. God wants to be the provider of our needs, but we have a tendency to look elsewhere to fill our emptiness. Our needs obstruct our vision of God's will for our lives. When we are needy we can easily think our will is God's will. When we go outside of God's desires for us, what we want for ourselves often ends up in disaster.

I witnessed an example of this when a woman I knew went through a devastating divorce. After many years of marriage her husband left her for another woman. The divorce so damaged her fragile identity that she got stuck in grief, unable to recover and move on. Her need for identity and value and significance, was so profound that it obstructed her vision. She was so blinded by her needs that she

married a man who she believed God had divinely brought into her life. Many of her friends considered her choice a desperate attempt to fill a deep vacuum that only God could fill. To one degree or another we are all vulnerable to such obstructions. Remember this: **Deep needs often lead to desperate measures.**

### **The obstruction of our emotions**

Closely associated with our needs are our emotions. Emotions are produced by our thoughts and our thoughts are often driven by our desires and needs. We feel desperate so we miss God's will for our lives and come up with our own desperate answers. We feel anxious so we make emotional decisions that we later regret. The greater the pain, the more stressful the situation, the greater tendency we have to turn from God and follow the unreliable signposts of our emotions. God's Word warns against this tendency. Paul admonished,

#### *Philippians 4:4-7*

*<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

### **Prepare by remembering, "I CAN"**

By now you are familiar with my fondness for acronyms that can help you remember and apply biblical principles. So here goes one more. This acronym helps me when I am trying to discern the Lord's will for special circumstances in my life. The acronym is "I CAN". To see how the principles in this acronym can help us discern God's will in special circumstances we will follow the footsteps of Nehemiah as he rebuilt the wall around Jerusalem. "I CAN" stands for:

**I**mpressed by the Spirit

**C**onfirmed though God's Word

**A**ffirmed by godly people

**N**avigated through open doors

### **IMPRESSED BY THE SPIRIT**

Nehemiah was a captive in Persia during the reign of King Artaxerxes. He had risen to the important position of cupbearer to the king. His primary duty was to choose and taste the king's wine to assure the quality and make sure it had not been poisoned. It is during this time in exile that Nehemiah was visited by some men from a remnant of Israelites that had returned from exile to Jerusalem. Nehemiah asked how the remnant now residing in Jerusalem was doing. The men's reply distressed him greatly. They replied that the people were living in disgrace and the walls and gates of Jerusalem lay in ruins. Observe Nehemiah's response:

#### *Nehemiah 1:4*

*<sup>4</sup> When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.*

“Some days” turned into four months of seeking the Lord in prayer before we see what God impressed on Nehemiah’s heart. At the end of this time he asks the king for permission to return to Jerusalem with resources to rebuild the wall. Nehemiah asked,

Nehemiah 2:5

...“If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it.”

In this conversation we see clearly what the Spirit of God had impressed on Nehemiah’s heart. We know that he had no doubt that God had impressed on his heart to rebuild the walls. Later he reports:

Nehemiah 2:12

12 I set out during the night with a few men. I had not told anyone **what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem**. There were no mounts with me except the one I was riding on. (Bold added)

There are three things we can learn from Nehemiah about how God impresses His will on our hearts:

**First** we see that Nehemiah was already abiding in God. His immediate response of heartfelt grief which he demonstrated by prayer and fasting, showed that he had an intimate relationship with God. His heart was already sensitive to God’s will. We will hear God’s will most clearly in special circumstances when we continually abide in the “true vine” of Jesus. (John 15:1-5)

**Second** Nehemiah immediately sought God’s will in prayer. He did not immediately start making plans on his own. The fact that his first response was prayer showed that he had complete trust that God would reveal His will. There was no hesitation. It is obvious that Nehemiah believed that the answer to the great distress in Judah would come from God through prayer.

We see a similar situation in the book of Acts. While the leaders were worshiping and fasting, The Holy Spirit impressed God’s will on their hearts. Luke records:

Acts 13:2-4

<sup>2</sup> While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” <sup>3</sup> So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. <sup>4</sup> The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit...

This first missionary journey was not the result of a planning session, but came from the Holy Spirit impressing God’s will on the hearts of people who were abiding in the vine and dependent on Him. Prayer and worship are essential if we are to discern the Spirit’s impression of God’s will in our hearts.

**Third** Nehemiah waited for God’s answer. As we have seen it was four months between the time Nehemiah heard about the broken walls and the time he approached the king. Nehemiah did not ask God to bless his own plans. He did not plan and then pray. He prayed and prayed—for God’s plans. There is no indication that Nehemiah was impatient. He was willing to wait for God’s answer no matter how long it took. He had complete trust that God would answer. For us to discern the impression of the Spirit’s will in our hearts we must trust God, pray and wait patiently for his answer with no Plan B.

## CONFIRMED THROUGH THE WORD

We don't know at what point during that four month period of waiting that God's will was impressed on Nehemiah's heart. It is clear, however, that Nehemiah confirmed through the Word what he believed God had impressed on his heart. He was certain that what he sensed in his heart was aligned with God's will because it was also aligned with His revealed Word. Nehemiah says to God,

Nehemiah 1:8-9

<sup>8</sup> *"Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, <sup>9</sup> but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'* (Bold added)

In reading biographies of great people of God, I have been impressed by how often they have waited for confirmation from God's Word. They expected God to speak through His revealed Word. They would search the Scriptures for God's will in special circumstances. They seemed to have no doubt that God would confirm His will through His Word. They were people who were thoroughly anchored in the Word. They knew the language of God. Through constant renewal of the mind and transformation, God's thoughts had become their thoughts.

How can we know that what we feel God has impressed in our heart is true and not just our feelings? We have already seen how our desires, needs and emotions can cause us to hear what we want to hear rather than what God says. **We can ask God to confirm through His Word what we believe He has impressed in our hearts.** When you are looking for God's will in special circumstances, spend time reading and meditating on the Word. Ask God to confirm His will through a specific Scripture or series of Scriptures. Expect God to speak to you through His Word. I have found that God is always faithful in confirming what He has put in my heart through these times of prayer, fasting and time in the Word.

## **AFFIRMED THROUGH GODLY PEOPLE**

There is still another way to determine whether or not we have discerned the true will of God in special circumstances. We can ask for the input of godly people. After Nehemiah confirmed what he believed was God's will through the Word, it was affirmed by people in two ways. It was first affirmed by the king who was not a godly person but someone used by God to accomplish His will. It was affirmed because the king granted Nehemiah's request for a leave of absence and resources to build the wall. Next, God's will was affirmed by those godly people who were key in helping Nehemiah build the wall. Nehemiah reports,

Nehemiah 2:18

<sup>18</sup> *I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, "**Let us start rebuilding.**" So they began this good work. (Bold added)*

When faced with a difficult decision in special circumstances ask for the input of some godly people in whom you have confidence. This is especially valuable if you ask people who know you well and are willing to tell you the truth, regardless of what they think you want to hear! When seeking counsel ask yourself why you are choosing this person or persons. Is it because they are godly and will give you an honest answer or are you asking people who you know will agree with you? They must be people who are able to be objective.

That is why family and close friends **sometimes** are not the best source of counsel. They are so emotionally invested in our well being that they may miss God's best for us because it involves pain or risk. For example, the Apostle Paul's closest associates were certainly godly people and yet they counseled him not to go to Jerusalem because they knew that he faced persecution and possibly death there. (Acts 21:1-12) When they were not able to convince Paul they gave up saying, "...The Lord's will be done." (Acts 21:1)

Be selective; don't indiscriminately ask a large number of people or you may get a lot of different opinions and end up confused. Remember this is one of the four principles and is only one of the indicators you will use to make your decision.

## NAVIGATED THROUGH OPEN DOORS

Open doors are just **one of the ways** we can discern God's will in special circumstances. Some people want to make it the **only** way! I have observed that people tend to make this the ultimate proof of what God wants them to do. Just because there is an open door or opportunity does not mean that it is God's will or His timing. Doors can open for a variety of reasons. It should not be the sole and absolute evidence of His will. If you believe God has opened a door for you, you should still go through the rest of "**I CAN**". Before you navigate, investigate!!

Before Nehemiah navigated through an open door God first impressed His will for building the wall of Jerusalem on Nehemiah's heart. It was confirmed through the Word and affirmed when the king said, "yes" to Nehemiah's request for permission and resources. Nehemiah tested the door that He believed God was opening with some fear and trembling. (Nehemiah 2:2) He knew that if the king was not pleased with him he would face death. Nehemiah prayed:

### Nehemiah 1:11

*<sup>11</sup> O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man." I was cupbearer to the king.*

God opened the door wide for Nehemiah. When the door opened Nehemiah went through it immediately.

*...And because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests. 9 So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king's letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me.*

Nehemiah walked through that door not knowing what he would face on the other side. He did know that the God of heaven would give him power to accomplish what He had put in his heart to do. (Nehemiah 2:20)

When facing a difficult decision in special circumstances look for doors of opportunity that God may be opening for you. Validate an open door by the impression of the Spirit, confirmation of the Word, and affirmation of godly people. Then navigate through that door with complete faith. Following are some things to remember about open doors:

- **God opens the door and only He can shut it**

You can navigate that door in complete faith. To the church in Philadelphia God says,

Revelation 3:7-8

<sup>7</sup> *These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.* <sup>8</sup> *I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my Word and not denied my name.*

- **We don't know what's behind the door**

You really don't know what is on the other side of the open door. It can be scary. Going through the door is an act of faith. You are putting your life in God's hands. There might be sacrifice and pain, but there will also be peace, joy and victory. Nehemiah faced tremendous difficulties and persecution, but he never faltered in his belief that God had opened the door and would give him success.

- **We do know who is behind the door**

While we do not know what is behind the door we do know who is behind the door. We can be certain that no matter what is behind the door, God will be with us every step of the way. When Nehemiah was building the wall, neighboring nations threatened to attack and the workers were afraid and discouraged. Even his fellow countrymen gave him grief at times. Nehemiah reminded them who was behind the open door that they had gone through:

Nehemiah 4:14

<sup>14</sup> *After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes."*

Remember the Lord is great and awesome. He is with you behind every open door!

- **We may be wrong but we won't go wrong!**

If I go through the wrong door God is still there for me. There is no fool-proof formula for knowing God's will. God's Word is perfect but we are not. I have given you some principles from the Word that can help. There are times when I have been sure that I discerned God's will, but looking back I knew it was my will not His. What I took for open doors were sometimes doors I wanted to be open. There were times I made rash decisions. There have been times when my desires, needs and emotions have blinded me so I could not see God's will.

Here is the good news. When we make mistakes, God will put us back on the road to accomplishing His will. God's will for our life is more than a single event. It is a lifetime journey of seeking and doing His will, of making mistakes and learning about how He works in our life. God will always make something right out of our wrong decision if we are willing to listen to His correction and rebuke. Remember this great promise:

Romans 8:28

<sup>28</sup> *And we know that **in all things** God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Bold added)*

Along the way there will be obstacles. Don't consider obstacles or delays as a sign that you are misreading God's will. God is sovereign. He does things in unique ways. His timing is not our timing. God is never early but He is never late. God is more interested in building our character than following our timeline.

What seem like detours and dead ends often are only new doors of opportunity. God's sovereign will ultimately will be accomplished.

You will not always hear God's voice as clearly as you would like. Don't expect God to reveal every step or remove every obstacle. We are asked to walk by faith not by sight. Often we want absolute assurance that we are not making a mistake. But if we make a mistake I think God says, "So what? Of course you're going to make mistakes, but make no mistake about it-I will turn your mistakes into my will!" No matter what happens we can be assured of this:

Philippians 1:6

*<sup>6</sup>being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*



## DIG DEEPER

Dig deeper into the Truth of God by answering the following questions about what you have just read. (Review the Scriptures in your Bible and underline important words and phrases).

### 1. Explore “The road clearly seen” and answer the following questions:

- Review the Scriptures that apply to the road most clearly seen. Which of these speak most clearly to you about following this road?
- Read *Isaiah 55:8-11* in your own Bible. What principles do you find in this passage that can help you stay on the road clearly seen?
- What signposts on this road do you need to pay special attention to?

### 2. Explore “The road not clearly seen” and answer the following questions:

- Which of the Scriptures about the road not clearly seen are most important for you to remember?
- What obstacles on this road do you often face?

### 3. Write down some of your thoughts about the three kinds of sense. How do you see these senses in action?

### 4. Review the four principles of “I CAN” and answer the following questions:

- What has been your experience in discerning the Lord’s will in special circumstances? What are some of your “successes” and “failures”?
- Which of the four principles do you most often rely on?
- Which of the Scriptures speak most directly to you and why?
- How could applying the principles of “I CAN” affect your approach to discerning the Lord’s will in special circumstances?



## SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

Read and study *Romans 11: 33-36* in your own Bible and answer the questions that follow:

### OBSERVATION: (What does it say?)

- What is the background of this passage? From where and to whom is Paul writing?
- What is the main point that Paul is making?
- What key words and phrases do you find in this passage? (Underline in your Bible)

### INTERPRETATION: (What does it mean?)

- Why do you believe that Paul inserts this “doxology” at this point in his letter? What is the importance of what he says? (Read what comes before and after).
- What Old Testament Scripture does Paul quote? What is the significance of this quotation?
- Comment on verse 36. What impact can remembering this verse have on us?

### APPLICATION: (What does it say to me?)

- What is the most important truth you will remember as a result of this study?



## **DROP ANCHOR**

Following you will find practical ways in which you can drop the anchor of the truth of God:

### **Anchored for action**

1. Do you regularly avoid the obstacles on the road clearly seen? Is there an obstacle you need to remove? Decide how you will remove it.
2. What will you need to do differently if you are to consistently use "I CAN" when facing special circumstances?
3. Are you seeking God's will in any particular area of your life right now? If so spend some time using the principles that you have learned in this session.
4. Ask God to renew your mind and transform you actions in the area of discerning His will.

**My plan to drop anchor** (Write one thing you will do to drop anchor)

### **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Review the accountability questions on page 17 and be prepared to share your answers with the group.

# ANCHOR # 6

## THE LOVE OF GOD

### ANCHOR POINT A: God's Love Flows to Me

#### ANCHOR TRUTH

1 John 3:16-18 (NIV)

<sup>16</sup> This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. <sup>17</sup> If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? <sup>18</sup> Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

### ANCHOR POINT B: God's Love Overflows Through Me to My Marriage and Family

#### ANCHOR TRUTH

Romans 5:5 (NIV)

<sup>5</sup> And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. (Bold added)

1 Thessalonians 3:12

<sup>12</sup> May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.

### ANCHOR POINT C: God's Love Overflows Through Me to the Family of God

#### ANCHOR TRUTH

Hebrews 12:14-15

<sup>14</sup> Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. <sup>15</sup> See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

#### ANCHOR ACTION

Lord I love you with all of my heart and will allow your love to overflow from me into my marriage, family and the family of God. I will love others as you love me by laying down my life for them.

# SESSION 19

## ANCHOR POINT A / GOD'S LOVE FLOWS TO ME

*“... streams and rivers of living waters came rushing from God to believers ...*

*The flood gates of the reservoir were opened when Jesus died and rose again.*

*All who put their trust in God were able to receive streams of living water.”*

### GETTING STARTED

Memorize the anchor truths and action and answer the questions that follow. Review all previous memory assignments.

#### ANCHOR TRUTH (memorize)

##### 1 John 3:16-18

*<sup>16</sup> This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. <sup>17</sup> If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? <sup>18</sup> Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

1. Based on 1 John 3: 16-18 alone write a definition of love that could be an anchor for your life.
2. What is the clear proof that we love others as Jesus loves us?
3. What does it mean to love “with actions and in truth”? Give an example.
4. How do you measure up to this definition of love?

#### ANCHOR ACTION (memorize)

*Lord I love you with all of my heart and will allow your love to overflow through me into my marriage, family and the family of God. I will love others as you love me by laying down my life for them.*



## EXPLORING THE ANCHOR OF LOVE

We complete this anchoring study with the anchors of God's love and faithfulness. These two anchors are often mentioned together because they are inseparable. Without God's great love His faithfulness would mean little. Without His faithfulness we would not be able to depend on His love. We would be constantly wondering if God really loves us and be anxious about when and how that love would be expressed. However that is not the case. God assures us in His Word that His love endures forever and His faithfulness endures through all generations.

### THE RESERVIOR OF GOD'S RESOURCES

#### Old Testament springs and streams

Throughout the Bible water is a symbol of God's resources. In the Old Testament God's resources are often depicted as springs and streams. They symbolize the abundance of God's blessings flowing to His people. It is a symbol of the essence of life. This picture of the abundance of water available to God's people demonstrates His desire to give abundantly of His love to His children. For example Isaiah says,

Isaiah 58:11-12

*<sup>11</sup>The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. <sup>12</sup>Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.*

This is a promise to people in captivity that God's resources will flow to them so they will be able to rebuild their nation. It is a promise of being restored to their homeland as a blessed nation. It is a promise of hope. There is a condition that God's people must fulfill if they are to receive the flow of resources from God's reservoirs. They must put their trust in God. They must go to the stream to receive the pure water of the stream. The prophet Jeremiah says,

Jeremiah 17:7-10

*<sup>7</sup> "But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. <sup>8</sup>He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."*

#### Broken cisterns

God's chosen people were constantly forsaking God's springs and streams. They had a destructive habit of not trusting God and putting their confidence in their own strength or idols. Jeremiah said,

Jeremiah 2:11-13

*<sup>11</sup> Has a nation ever changed its gods? (Yet they are not gods at all.) But my people have exchanged their Glory for worthless idols. <sup>12</sup> Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror," declares the LORD. <sup>13</sup> "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.*

Israel suffered the consequences of not trusting Him to supply their needs. The cisterns they dug for themselves never could hold water. Their own resources were contaminated and always disappointed. When they trusted in their own strength they ended up broken and empty. They traded God's springs of living waters for resources that ended up polluting their lives. Jeremiah at a later time stressed the dire effects of not trusting in God's resources.

Jeremiah 17:5-6

<sup>5</sup> *This is what the LORD says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. <sup>6</sup> He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives.*

**New Testament streams and rivers**

My grandson Colby, a graduate student at MIT, recently took my wife and me for a tour of this outstanding institution. We walked by a drinking fountain that had an authentic fire hose and nozzle attached to it. Above it was a plaque with a quote from a former president of MIT. It said, "Education at MIT is like trying to take a drink from a fire hose." I think that is a pretty accurate description of the resources that God has made available to believers. God's spiritual blessings flow to us in infinite quantities and with supernatural force – more than we will ever be able to absorb. The New Testament depicts God's resources as surging rivers flowing from the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to believers.

When Jesus met an immoral Samaritan woman at a well He told her about this supernatural source which He called "living water". When she asked about the source of this living water Jesus explained,

John 4:13-14

<sup>13</sup> "...Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

With the coming of Jesus and a new covenant, the full force of "living water" was released. Now streams and rivers of living waters came rushing from God to believers through the Holy Spirit. The flood gates of the reservoir were opened when Jesus died and rose again. All who put their trust in God were able to receive streams of living water. In the book of Revelation the water is called "water of life...flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb".

Revelation 22:1-2

<sup>1</sup> *Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.*

The source of this river was the blood of the Lamb. It represented the washing of every believer in the blood of Jesus. **It represented God's sacrificial love.** Every believer was made righteous for heaven by the cleansing blood of Jesus.

Revelation 22:14

<sup>14</sup> "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

## GOD'S LOVE FLOWS TO US

The river of life represents God's love which is the greatest blessing in His reservoir of resources. It is the essential ingredient in the needs of mankind. No one can have true joy and peace without the pure water of God's love and grace. God wants to fill us with His love through the river of life. It is this river of love of which Paul spoke in the beginning of his letter to the church at Ephesus.

Ephesians 1:3-5

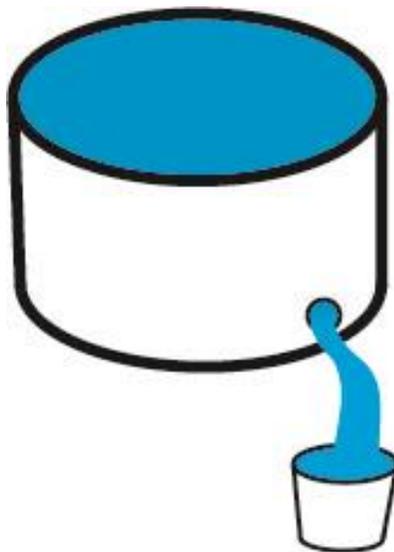
<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. **In love** <sup>5</sup> he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will — (bold added)

Every spiritual blessing in Christ flows to us because we are His adopted children. It was "in love" that we were adopted. From the time of our adoption every spiritual blessing in Christ included our value, significance and identity. This is the living water of love. The Apostle Paul pictures God pouring His love into our lives through the Holy Spirit. He says,

Romans 5:5 (NIV)

<sup>5</sup> And hope does not disappoint us, because God has **poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.** (Bold added)

The following illustration will help us picture how God's love flows to us through rivers of living water from His reservoir of vast resources. Picture God filling the bucket of your soul with His streams of living water. He is pouring His love into your heart so you will never thirst for substitutes for His love. You will never need to look outside of His provisions for your identity, value and significance.



There is a cycle of love that we must understand if we are to love others as God loves us. Biblical love is not something we can achieve on our own. It is not merely a matter of determination and hard work, although love certainly includes that. God has “poured out his love into our hearts” through the Holy Spirit. That happened the very moment we were saved. God gave us the full extent of His love at that moment. What we do with that love and how we pass it on to others is another matter. To pass it on we must first be able to grasp it.

### Grasping God’s love

God has poured His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. That is final and complete. The question is, do we grasp it? Are we able to firmly hold the bucket so that we can receive all the love that God has to offer? We are to experience it in such a way that it flows to others. Only when we grasp the dimensions of God’s love are we able extend that love to others. Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus about this issue. He said,

#### Ephesians 3:16-19

*<sup>16</sup> I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the saints, **to grasp** how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Bold added)*

Notice that there is an element in the flow of living water (*his glorious riches*) that is there to strengthen us. It is through the power of the Spirit that enables Christ to “dwell” in our hearts through faith. It is only when Christ dwells or takes up permanent residency in our hearts that our hearts are able to receive the full flow of God’s love. This means that we must open our entire lives to the presence of God. We must invite Him to reside in every part of our life. We must appropriate the power. We must connect to the source. No room in our hearts must be off limits. We must abide in Jesus and let Jesus abide in us.

This constitutes a decision on our part to make Jesus Lord of our hearts. He is on the throne of our hearts, not us. It is clear that this is not done by our power alone, but by the power of God. It means, however, that we submit our wills to God. In that way we have the perfect condition for spiritual growth: our will + God’s power=will power. We subject our wills to the will of God and He supplies the power for will power.

It takes the power of God to experience the full dimensions of God’s love. While God’s loves love for us is unfailing, while God loves us unconditionally, we only **grasp** His love when we truly understand the divine dimensions of that love. This love is so great that it surpasses our human understanding and can only be understood through the power of the Holy Spirit. When we “*know this love that surpasses knowledge*”, we are “*filled to the measure of all the fullness of God*”. Following are some practical ways we are to “*know*” and experience the flow of the love of God:

- **Grasp the dimensions of God’s love**

#### Psalms 103:11-13

*<sup>11</sup>For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; <sup>12</sup>as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. <sup>13</sup>As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;*

This Psalm of David gives us a glimpse of the great love of God. This is as close as human words can come to describing the infinite dimensions of His love. His love is as high as the heavens. Our sins have been removed as far as the east is from the west. The heavenly Father's love helps us personalize His love for us. He loves us like a father—a perfect father who understands His children's weaknesses and His great compassion for them. This only touches the surface of God's great love for us. The entire Bible illustrates in detail the love of the Father for His children.

- **Grasp how much we are loved**

Love originates in the heart of God, The flow starts in the heart of God where “streams of living water” originate. Everything we know about love comes from God. He reveals it in His Word and demonstrates it in our lives. Jesus came to earth as the incarnation of that love. Every characteristic of the heavenly Father's love was revealed to us in the life of His Son and we have that life. The Apostle John says,

1 John 3:16

<sup>16</sup> *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*

1 John 4:16

<sup>16</sup> *And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. **God is love...** Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. (Bold added)*

- **Love God with all our hearts**

When Jesus was asked which commandment was the greatest, He gave us this two part answer.

Matthew 22:37-38 (NIV)

<sup>37</sup> ... “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment.

The Jews who questioned Jesus would have been familiar with the first part of His answer. The great commandment had its roots in an ancient commandment. Here Jesus uses the *Shema*, which became the Jewish confession of faith to teach them a new truth. The *Shema*, Hebrew for “hear” became the Jewish confession of faith, recited daily by pious Jews.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NIV)

<sup>4</sup> Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>5</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. <sup>6</sup> These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. <sup>7</sup> Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. <sup>8</sup> Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>9</sup> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

But Jesus did not stop with the *Shema*. There was much more that these supposedly religious people needed to understand. There was part 2 to the great commandment. They were to love others as they loved themselves. And they really loved themselves!

- **Love our neighbor as ourselves**

Matthew 22:39-40

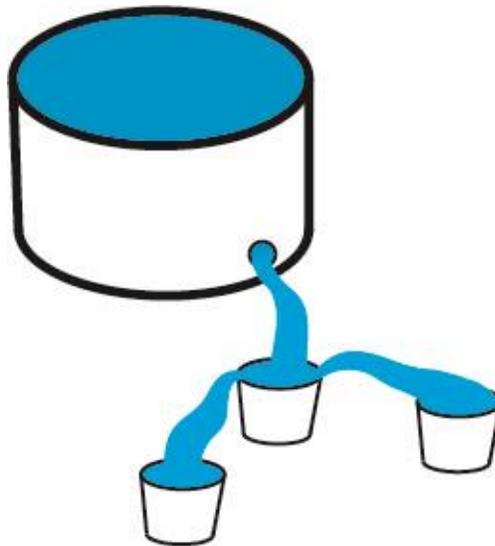
<sup>39</sup> *And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'* <sup>40</sup> *All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*

The cycle of God's love starts with the river of His living waters flowing into our lives and we learn to love Him with all of our hearts. The cycle of love is complete when the river of God's love overflows through our lives to others. Paul says,

1 Thessalonians 3:12

<sup>12</sup> *May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.*

The following illustration shows how this happens.



Notice first that it is the Lord who makes our love increase and overflow. The flow or overflowing does not start with us. It starts in the heart of God, flows to us and overflows into the lives of others. It is not natural but supernatural. When we love with the heart of God it is Him loving others through us. It is impossible for us to truly love others with His love until we understand this. It is an essential ingredient in the "love that surpasses knowledge" (Eph.3:19). We must note that Paul follows the admonition to grasp God's love by reminding believers that His power to make this happen is beyond our ability to comprehend.

Ephesians 3:20-21

<sup>20</sup> *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,* <sup>21</sup> *to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*



## DIG DEEPER

Dig deeper into the Love of God by answering the following questions about what you have just read. (Review the Scriptures in your Bible and underline important words and phrases).

**1. Read *Jeremiah 17: 5-9* in your own Bible and answer the following questions:**

- In verses 5-6 what is the root issue with the man who God describes?
- What are the consequences of his condition? How could these verses be applied to people in our culture today?
- What is the distinguishing mark of the man described in verses 7-8? In what ways is he like the tree that is described? What kind of fruit is produced?

**2. Read *Jeremiah 2:11-13* in your Bible and answer the following questions**

- What do verses 11-12 say that people have done that is so appalling?
- What are the two sins that the people committed? In what ways do you think they dug their own cisterns? In what ways do we have a tendency to do that today in our culture? What are the consequences?

3. What are some of the differences between Old Testament springs and streams and New Testament streams and rivers?

4. Read *Romans 5:5*. How does God pour His love into our hearts? What is our responsibility?

5. Read *Ephesians 3:16-19* and answer the following questions:

- How does the power of the Holy Spirit strengthen our inner being? How does this relate to us grasping the love of God?
  
- How does grasping the dimensions of God's love enable us to *be filled to the measure of the fullness of God*? What does this passage say to you?



### SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

Read and study *John 4:1-26* and answer the questions that follow:

**OBSERVATION:** (What does it say?)

- What is the background of this passage? Where does this encounter take place? What is the significance of where this takes place and the person Jesus encounters?

**INTERPRETATION:**

- What are the key issues in this story?
  
- What is "*the gift of God*" that Jesus refers to in verse 10?
  
- In verses 13-14 what are the characteristics of the water that Jesus offers? What does "*a spring of water welling up to eternal life mean*"?
  
- What is the true worship of which Jesus speaks in verse 21-24? What does this have to do with the living water of Jesus?
  
- What is the main point of the story?

**APPLICATION:** (What does it say to me?)

- What does this passage say to you? What do you want to remember?
- How will you apply this passage to your life?



## **DROP ANCHOR**

Following you will find practical ways in which you can drop the anchor of the love of God:

### **Anchored for action**

1. Spend some time in prayer asking God to strengthen your inner being so that Christ will truly dwell in your heart.
2. Think of some of the dimensions of God's love that you will grasp more securely.
3. Is there any obstruction to God's love flowing into your heart that you need to remove?
4. Select one of the Scriptures in this study and spend some time in worship, praising God for His great love.

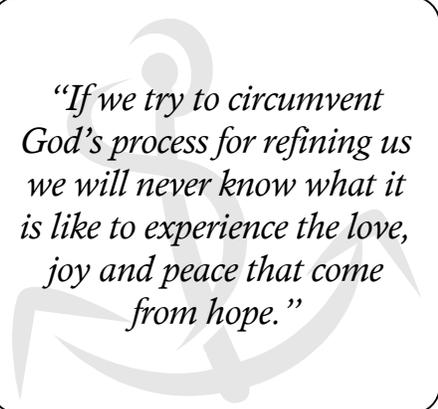
**My plan to drop anchor** (Write one thing you will do to drop anchor)

### **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Review the accountability questions in Session I and be prepared to share your answers with the group.

# SESSION 20

## ANCHOR POINT B / GOD'S LOVE OVERFLOWS THROUGH ME TO MY MARRIAGE AND FAMILY



*“If we try to circumvent God’s process for refining us we will never know what it is like to experience the love, joy and peace that come from hope.”*

### GETTING STARTED

Memorize the anchor truths and action and answer the questions that follow. Review all previous memory assignments.

#### ANCHOR TRUTHS (memorize)

Romans 5:5 (NIV)

<sup>5</sup> *And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.*

1 Thessalonians 3:12

<sup>12</sup> *May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.*

1. What is your biblical definition of hope?
2. In what ways is this hope the only thing we can count on to not disappoint us?
3. How does the Lord make our love increase and overflow for each other?
4. What is our part in receiving the flow of God’s love and having it overflow into the lives of others?

#### ANCHOR ACTION (memorize)

*Lord I love you with all of my heart and will allow your love to overflow from me into my marriage, family and the family of God. I will love others as you love me by laying down my life for them.*



## EXPLORING THE ANCHOR OF LOVE IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

### THE PROBLEM OF MARRED POTS AND EMPTY BUCKETS

Now that we understand how God's love flows to us and overflows into other relationships we must deal with the painful subject of marred pots and empty or leaky buckets. If God's love is to flow through us to others we must be able to receive it and contain it. That's where the image of pots and buckets is helpful. For a few minutes try to picture yourself as a bucket, or a pot. It is the condition of this pot that will determine how well you are able to grasp the love of God and have it flow through you to others.

We all go into our marriage with some degree of marred pots. Perhaps our buckets are not empty but they certainly have some leaks in them. We all bring some brokenness with us into marriage relationships. Some people are relatively healthy, others not so healthy at all. Most of us are not aware of how marred our pots are until we get married. We are still in the "romance phase" of our relationship and have not yet arrived at the "reality phase". When reality hits we see each other as we really are—two imperfect people in need of God's grace.

Often we think we have found the perfect match and will have a perfect marriage. But guess what? Two marred pots or leaky buckets don't somehow magically change into something beautiful because of marriage. We often think that will happen. We hope, but we put our hope in the wrong place. Instead of looking to God to fill our bucket with His love we put our hope in our spouse.

#### **Knights and Princesses**

Often a woman will get married with the expectation that her "knight in shining armor" will fill her bucket. Then she will be satisfied. Then she will feel good about herself. Good luck! A man looks for his "princess" expecting that she will worship and serve him forever, meeting his every need. Good luck because you will need a Genie in a lamp for that to happen. When what we expect from one another doesn't happen, things can get ugly. We can get ugly. We can become angry and resentful and begin to demand that the other person fill our bucket.

When our bucket is marred, it develops holes and can't hold water; it leaks. The love does not overflow from God's reservoir to our spouse because we are not able to contain His love. The only way to correct this is if both pots choose to stay in the potter's hand to be shaped by Him as He thinks best. This is the way God's love flows to you and overflows to your spouse and family.

#### **The Refiner's fire – The Potter's hand**

All this is to say that marriage and family are often where God does His most significant work in our lives. It is the "refiner's fire" that proves what our faith is like. Listen to how God refines His people. The prophet Malachi told the rebellious Israelites,

Malachi 3:2-3 (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> ...For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. <sup>3</sup> He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness,

Through the prophet Jeremiah the Lord used another vivid picture of how He refines us and transforms our character.

Jeremiah 18:4-6 (NIV)

<sup>4</sup> But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. <sup>5</sup> Then the word of the Lord came to me: <sup>6</sup> "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?" declares the Lord. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.

God will shape our character into His likeness. If we stay in the potter's hand He will take the marred and broken pieces and shape us into what seems best to Him. He transforms our unrighteousness into His righteousness. They key is to stay in the refiner's fire—to not try to escape the potter's hand. There is pain but there also is great gain.

What I have experienced in my family is a combination of joy, peace, pain and suffering. My wife and I have suffered pain in our marriage and pain in our family. We were far from perfect. But it was through trials, pain and suffering that we learned perseverance. God developed perseverance in us and through perseverance our character was developed. Paul writes to the believers in Rome about this dynamic:

Romans 5:3-5 (NIV)

<sup>3</sup> Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

If we opt out of painful circumstances we are choosing to remove ourselves from the refiner's fire and the potter's hand. The pot will never be what God intended. If we try to circumvent God's process for refining us we will never know what it is like to experience the love, joy and peace that come from hope. There has been nothing in life that has caused more knots in my stomach, more anxiety, more anger, more frustration, more joy, more fulfillment, more pleasure than my family. I wouldn't trade them for anything although there were a few times I would have given them away.

**Our story**

I want to share how we experienced the potter's hand in our marriage and family. I hope this will be an encouragement for you to do the same. Janet and I had some major struggles in the first ten years of our marriage. During the first five years I was not a believer. During the next five years I was a believer, but had not yet learned to stay in the potter's hand to be shaped as He saw fit. I kept trying to fix myself as I saw fit and it was not working very well. Both of us had come into the marriage not very spiritually mature or emotionally healthy. I acted like I knew it all but really didn't. That worked for a while until Janet finally caught on. I needed to learn how to be a godly husband and get my priorities right. Janet had her own issues to deal with including chronic depression and a low sense of her own value in God's eyes.

In those years we certainly could have concluded as many do, that we had married the wrong person. We could have decided that the best solution was to move on and find someone with whom we were really compatible, someone who would truly love and accept us. But we were committed to the marriage and stuck it out. We did learn to stay in the potter's hand, although rather uncooperative at times, to be shaped as He saw fit. We learned to receive God's love rather than to expect our needs to be met entirely by each another. It was only then that our love could overflow to one another and to others. As a result of God's refining work in our marriage and family we have wonderful children and grandchildren and will celebrate our 52nd wedding anniversary next week. Not bad for two people who came into their marriage with leaky buckets!

### Your story

You might have a similar story. I hope you have stayed in the potter's hand and he has shaped you as He sees best. I hope that His love overflows through you to your spouse. If this is not the case it is never too late to write a new story of how God's has shaped your pot to receive His love and how it overflows to your spouse.

## THE SURE FOUNDATION OF MARRIAGE

Now I want to discuss a sure foundation and four pillars that can anchor your marriage. It has been my experience that most difficulties in a marriage, which includes my own, can be traced to a crack in the foundation and one or more of these pillars not being in place. Since there are always events in a marriage that will shake the foundation and put stress on the pillars, it is essential that the foundation is solid and the pillars strong.

### The sure foundation: Christ is the cornerstone

Before we learn about the four pillars of marriage I want us to examine the sure foundation upon which these pillars are built. The sure foundation is anchored in Christ. The Apostle Peter, in his letter to the churches stressed the importance of building on this sure foundation of Christ as the precious cornerstone. He quoted from *Isaiah 28:16* which says,

1 Peter 2:6 (NIV)

*<sup>6</sup> For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."*

Jesus is the precious cornerstone that insures a firm foundation upon which to build our marriages and families. In ancient times the cornerstone of a building determined the design and orientation of the building. It was the key to the entire building being built to last. The integrity or the unity of the entire building depended on the cornerstone being made out of the right materials and correctly placed to plumb. If the foundation was off the integrity of the entire building would be jeopardized. The sure foundation enables the building to be built to plumb. The passage to which Peter refers says:

Isaiah 28:16-17 (NIV)

*<sup>16</sup> So this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, **a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation**; the one who trusts will never be dismayed. <sup>17</sup> I will make justice **the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line**; hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding place. (Bold added)*

## God's Word is the plumb line

A plumb line is a tool that builders use to make sure the walls were constructed straight up and down. It consists of a cord with a lead weight. A plumb line was also used to test existing walls to see whether they had settled and tilted, needing to be torn down. In Scripture a plumb line is used to illustrate how God measures whether a nation or a person has been built "true to plumb". In the Old Testament that plumb line was represented by the law and its requirements. (*Amos 7:3, 5-6*)

These are the two truths that anchor today's study on marriage and family. These are essential for building godly marriages and families:

1. The only sure foundation upon which to build a godly marriage and family is the precious cornerstone of Christ. This will ensure unity.
2. The principles upon which we build our marriages and families must be built to plumb by the Word of God. These "pillars" will ensure obedience.

## THE FOUR PILLARS OF MARRIAGE

The four pillars of marriage come from a passage in *Philippians 2* that I have just about worn out in the Disciple's Journey. It contains not only the essential principles of servant leadership but the key to all successful relationships in the body of Christ and in marriage. If a husband and wife will put the four pillars into practice I firmly believe their marriage will thrive. If you have been following the Disciple's Journey resources from the beginning you will already have a basic knowledge of these four pillars. I first introduced them in *Spiritual Boot Camp*. If you are faithfully reviewing all previous Disciple's Journey memory projects then you are reviewing the four pillars of marriage. We will expand on those four pillars in this study. You will gain new insights on how these pillars are an essential element of building a successful marriage on the sure foundation of Christ. The first verse refers to the firm foundation of being united in Christ and verses 2-11 describe the four pillars of godly relationships.

### *Philippians 2:1-11*

<sup>1</sup> If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, <sup>2</sup> then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup> who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

### Pillar # 1: Be one

Philippians 2:2

<sup>2</sup> "...being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose."

Paul starts this profound teaching on relationships with an emphasis on unity. He urges believers to be one in mind, love, spirit and purpose. This may be the most neglected of the four pillars of marriage relationships. I believe Paul starts here because he understands that without unity the marriage will never be what God intended. From the first mention of marriage in the Bible unity was stressed.

Genesis 2:24

<sup>24</sup> For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

Being united and becoming one flesh has great implications for marriage. It is a pronouncement from God that what God has created to be one should always be one. The term "one flesh" denoted not only a physical union between a husband and wife but also a spiritual and emotional oneness. Unity is to pervade the marriage relationship. In referring to the sacred nature of this unity Jesus said the following when questioned about divorce:

Matthew 19:4-6

<sup>4</sup> "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' <sup>5</sup> and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? <sup>6</sup> So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Being one is supernatural but we are natural. God joins us together in marriage. Because of man's fallen nature he is vulnerable to disunity and breaks the bonds of marriage. That is because of our defaults of self-centeredness and pride. Disunity occurs when our focus is on what we want and what we think. This is what the world in which we live promotes. John says,

1 John 2:15-17

<sup>15</sup> Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. <sup>17</sup> The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

When, because of our love of the world we focus on what we want and what we think, we will always default to self-centeredness and pride. The world turns things upside down. The world says "be #1" rather than "be one". We are encouraged to **compete** with one another. God says, "become one", but unfortunately we ask "which one?" Instead of **completing** one another in unity as God intended we compete with one another which results in disunity. We want our spouse to become one like us. We believe, like the professor in the play My Fair Lady, that the issues of differences would be solved if the other person became like us. So he asks, "Why can't a woman be more like a man?"

When we focus on ourselves we will experience a spirit of disunity in our marriage. When we focus on what God wants for us—His will, His Word and what He thinks--we will experience a spirit of unity in our marriage. Paul makes this clear to the believers in Rome.

Romans 15:5-6

<sup>5</sup> *May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

It is God who gives us a spirit of unity. It is by the power of His Spirit that we are drawn together in love. This happens when we follow Christ. Unity with others comes from being united with Him. Unity without Christ at the center is not unity but peaceful co-existence. Unity, love and peace are supernatural.

- **Be one in mind**

Paul says we are to be like-minded. What is the common mind we are to have? It is simply the mind of Christ; a mind that has been renewed by the Word and the Spirit. It is minds anchored in the truth of God's Word. This unity will be the blueprint for everything else that will be built. To encourage this oneness of mind Paul reminded the believers in Corinth,

1 Corinthians 2:16

<sup>16</sup> *"For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" but we have the mind of Christ.*

To be one in mind in your marriage means to be thoroughly anchored in God's Word. That is what this book is all about. In a marriage the more we have had our minds truly renewed by the Word, the greater foundation for unity we will have. It is impossible to be transformed by the renewing of our minds and tolerate disunity in our marriage (*Romans 12: 2*).

➤ To what degree are you and your spouse "one in mind"?

- **Be one in love**

What kind of love are we to have? This could not be clearer in this passage. We are to love with the same love by which Christ loves us. We are to be servants who lay down our lives for our marriages and families. This is obedient, sacrificial love. This is how the Apostle John defined love:

1 John 3:16

<sup>16</sup> *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*

It was this sacrificial, obedient, servant love of which Paul spoke in his instructions on marriage.

Ephesians 5:25

<sup>25</sup> *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*

➤ To what degree are you and your spouse "one in love"?

- **Be one in spirit**

There is only one Spirit that unites us and that is the Spirit of Christ. We are to carry out our relationships in a way that reflects the unity of the Holy Spirit that each of us has been given as members of the household of God. We are to be filled with the Holy Spirit, overflowing with love into the lives of our spouses and children.

➤ To what degree are you and your spouse one in spirit?

- **Be one in purpose**

We have only one purpose in life and that is to glorify God in all we say and all we do. One of the best ways to stay united is to **stay on purpose**. When we focus on a common purpose we are drawn together with great power. We have little time to think of petty differences or minor grievances. Our common purpose in life is to glorify God by carrying out His mission on earth. This focus allows us to overlook less important things. It promotes and preserves unity.

When we lose sight of our purpose of glorifying God, we begin seeing differences in one another. This can cause division and we can quickly lose our unity. There is an old saying that applies here: “When the fishermen stop fishing they start fighting”. How true of all of us. When we stop focusing on our purpose we start focusing on our differences.

➤ To what degree are you and your spouse one in purpose?

- **Becoming one**

There are many ways to work on becoming one in our marriages, but I will share with you just one practical idea. One of the best things Janet and I ever did to build unity and become one in our marriage was to institute a weekly husband-wife together time. We have done this for over forty years. One day a week we sit down for about a half hour to an hour and have a time of discussion of the Word and prayer. We have used a variety of resources and study guides for our study time. In fact we are doing this Anchoring study together right now. We also use this time to go over our calendar and discuss any family business we might have. This is quality time that keeps us spiritually on the same page. We share what’s going on with us and how we can minister together. I would strongly suggest that you have a regular husband-wife together time as well. I’m sure you will discover that it will build great unity in your marriage.

## Pillar #2: Be selfless

The next two pillars that Paul mentions are specific **actions** that we are to take. These actions are antidotes for two character flaws that all of us possess. We are all, to some degree, selfish and prideful. This is reflected in how we often want our own way and usually think we are right. The first action we are to take is to be selfless in our relationships. Paul says:

*Philippians 2:3*

<sup>3</sup>*Do nothing out of selfish ambition...* <sup>4</sup>*Each of you should **look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*** (Bold added)

The following five actions will help you live in a selfless way with your spouse:

1. Ask yourself, “What are the specific needs of my spouse”?
2. Ask yourself, “What are the interests of my spouse”?
3. Ask yourself, “Is there something I am doing that conflicts with the needs and interests of my spouse?”
4. Every day pray, “Lord, help me be a servant to my spouse today”.

5. Choose one thing that you can do for your spouse that you know she/he would greatly appreciate and do it regularly.

### **Pillar #3: Be humble**

The second action God's Word asks us to take is to be humble. It addresses the second natural tendency which is to default to prideful attitudes and actions. We want to be right!

#### Philippians 2:3

<sup>3</sup>*Do nothing out of... vain conceit, but **in humility consider others better than yourselves.***  
(Bold added)

Wow, this is a tall order isn't it? If we were entirely honest and open most of us would have to admit that we position ourselves above our spouses. We really do think that we know a little more and that our way of doing things is superior to our spouse's way.

The following five actions will help you live in a humble way with your spouse:

1. Are there any ways in which I act superior to my spouse?
2. Do I always have to be right?
3. Are there any ways in which I communicate that my way of thinking or doing things is better than my spouse's way?
4. Do I accept my spouse just the way he/she is?
5. Do I honor differences in personality and gender as gifts from God to enhance my marriage rather than things to change or resent in my spouse?

### **Pillar #4: Be a servant**

Next we have two attitudes of Christ which serve as strong pillars for our marriage and other relationships. One attitude is about serving and the other about sacrifice. First we are to have the attitude of a servant. Paul goes on to explain:

#### Philippians 2:5-7

<sup>5</sup>*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup>Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>**but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*** (Bold added)

To have the attitude of a servant we must first voluntarily empty ourselves. This is a tall order for all of us who are so full of ourselves. Notice that we must intentionally choose to have this attitude. We are to "make ourselves nothing", so we can be everything God wants us to be to our spouse. Nothing less than a servant will do. A servant is committed to meeting the needs of those he serves above all else. Jesus modeled this for His disciples. When he wanted to show the "...full extent of his love..."(John 13:1) he washed their feet and said:

John 13:14-15

*<sup>14</sup>Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup>I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*

When we have the attitude of a servant we also have the actions of a servant. We will serve our spouse's needs no matter how important or unimportant they seem to us. We will try to anticipate our spouse's most important needs so we can intentionally meet them.

The following five actions will help you empty yourself and become a servant to your spouse:

1. Be honest with yourself. What are the things I do or do not do that indicate whether or not I have the attitude of a servant toward my spouse?
2. What one thing would I have to empty myself of to truly be a servant to my spouse?
3. What is one need that my spouse has expressed that I either ignore or intentionally do not serve? Make a commitment to consistently meet that need.
4. What is the single biggest obstacle preventing me from being a humble servant to my spouse?
5. Make a commitment right now to be a servant to your spouse. Take a moment each day to reaffirm this commitment and ask God to help you serve your spouse.

**SUMMARY**

*Philippians 2:1-11* is one of the most powerful and practical passages on building successful, godly relationships in the Bible. In the following section you will be able to apply this Scripture to your marriage and family relationships.



## DIG DEEPER

Dig deeper into the Love of God by answering the following questions about what you have just read. (Review the Scriptures in your Bible and underline important words and phrases).

**1. Read *Jeremiah 18:4-6 (NIV)* in your own Bible and answer the following questions:**

- What about your “pot”? How can you see that God has shaped you through the refining fire of your marriage?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - Are there any ways that God is currently shaping your “pot” so that His love can more effectively overflow from you to your spouse and family? Explain.
2. Review Pillar # 1: “Be One”. How would you rate the unity in your marriage? Do you need to take one of the actions to strengthen this area of your marriage?
3. Review Pillar #2: “Be Selfless”. Are you a selfless servant in your marriage? Do you need to take one of the actions to strengthen this area of your marriage?
4. Review Pillar #3: “Be Humble”. Are you a humble servant in your marriage? Do you need to take one of the actions to strengthen this area of your marriage?
5. Review Pillar #4: “Be a servant”. Are you an obedient servant, willing to lay down your life for your spouse and other family members? Do you need to take one of the actions to strengthen this area of your marriage and family?



## SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

Read and study *Isaiah 28:16-17* and answer the questions that follow:

### OBSERVATION: (What does it say?)

- What is the background of this passage? Who is the author and to whom was it written?
- Underline the key words and phrases.

### INTERPRETATION: (What does it mean?)

- What is the main point?
- What is the precious cornerstone in verse 16? In what way is this passage connected to the New Testament? What New Testament verses help explain this passage?
- What is the plumb line in verse 17? Why is this important in the foundation for godly relationships?
- What is the significance of hail and water in verse 17? How can negative elements overflow into our relationships if Christ is not our foundation and the Word not our plumb line?

### APPLICATION: (What does it say to me?)

- What does this passage say to you about the foundation of your relationships?

- How will you apply this passage to your life?



## **DROP ANCHOR**

Following you will find practical ways in which you can drop the anchor of the love of God:

### **Anchored for action**

1. Spend some time in prayer asking God to reveal any areas of your marriage and other family relationships that need to be strengthened.
2. Chose one of the pillars of marriage relationships to work on this week. What one thing will you focus on? What will you do?
3. Ask your spouse what pillar he or she thinks you need to work on most. Ask what is most important for you to change in that area.
4. Pray again!!

**My plan to drop anchor** (Write one thing you will do to drop anchor)

### **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Review the accountability questions on page 17 and be prepared to share your answers with the group.

# SESSION 21

## ANCHOR POINT C / GOD'S LOVE OVERFLOWS THROUGH ME TO THE FAMILY OF GOD

*“Peace was first offered to us when God removed the barrier of sin by giving his Son as a peace offering on the cross. We are now reconciled to God because of that peace offering.”*

### GETTING STARTED

Memorize and meditate on the anchor truths and action and answer the questions that follow. Review all previous memory assignments.

#### ANCHOR TRUTH (memorize)

Hebrews 12:14-15

*14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.*

1. Reflect on what it means to *“make every effort to live in peace with all men.”* What steps of action do you think this requires?
2. What does holiness have to do with making every effort to live in peace with all men? Why does Paul couple these two principles together?
3. What does it mean to *“miss the grace of God”*? What could cause this to happen?
4. What is a bitter root and how does it cause trouble?

#### ANCHOR ACTION (memorize)

*Lord I love you with all of my heart and will allow your love to overflow through me into my marriage, family and the family of God. I will love others as you love me by laying down my life for them.*



## EXPLORING THE ANCHOR OF LOVE: PURSUING PEACE IN THE FAMILY OF GOD

When God's love flows to us and overflows to the family of God there is peace in the family. Peace is a good way to check our love quotient. If we love as God loves us we will pursue peace with our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. We will not be willing to accept division. Living in peace and unity means that we understand grace. It is impossible for us to be alienated from the household of God when His sacrificial love flows **through** us and not just **to** us. If we do not extend the same grace to others that God extended to us it means we just don't get it. Peace is a result of spiritual maturity (Ephesians 4: 11-13). The writer of Hebrews urges Christians to,

### Hebrews 12:14-15

*<sup>14</sup> Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. <sup>15</sup> See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.*

### WE ARE TO MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO PURSUE PEACE

We are to make "every effort" to live at peace with all men. This is a sign of holiness. If we miss the essential nature of pursuing peace we have missed the essential nature of grace. Grace means God has forgiven and accepted us in spite of our weakness and flaws and because of that we are to offer grace to others in spite of their weakness and flaws.

A major theme in the New Testament is the Christian's responsibility to do everything possible to work towards peace and unity. Paul instructed the Christians at Ephesus to "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." (Ephesians 2:3) This peace and unity was upmost on Jesus' mind when He prayed for His disciples before He was crucified. He prayed that His disciples would be protected so that they would be one (*John 17:11*). Jesus' prayer was not just for his disciples but for us as well. Jesus prayed,

### John 17:20-23

*<sup>20</sup> "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, <sup>21</sup> that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

Unity can only exist when there is peace among believers. Ultimately peace occurs when people pursue it. Since we all have a default towards self-centeredness and pride, conflict and disunity will inevitably occur. For evidence of this just look at the high divorce rate among Christians and the many churches that experience divisions.

### Matthew 5:9 (NIV)

<sup>9</sup> *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.*

## **PURSUING PEACE STARTS WITH THE GOD OF PEACE**

### **What is peace?**

The Bible describes peace as a condition of unity, harmony, or oneness that occurs when whatever has separated people has been removed and there is reconciliation. Peace was first offered to us when God removed the barrier of sin by giving his Son as a peace offering on the cross. We are now reconciled to God because of that peace offering. The Apostle Paul explains,

### Romans 5:1

*1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

Because we have received Christ we partake of His divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). He is in us and we are in Him (Galatians 2:20). God has made us one with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Since we belong to the body of Christ we are expected to **live** at peace with one another. Since we are one we are expected to **behave** like we are one. Because we have been reconciled to God and are new creations we are to be “*agents of reconciliation*” (2 Corinthians 5:17-18). We are required to make every effort to remove all obstacles that could cause discord in the body and prevent us from living at peace with others.

## **WHY PURSUING PEACE IS ESSENTIAL**

Discord grieves the heart of our heavenly Father. Our heavenly Father offered us peace and therefore wants us to offer peace to our brothers and sisters. It grieves His heart when we don't get along. If you are a parent you know how much it hurts when your children fight. You love them so much you want them to show this same love for one another. This alone should be enough for us to pursue peace but there are two more reasons I would like to mention.

### **Pursuing peace is essential to the health of the body**

For the Body of Christ to be healthy there must be peace among its members. We are all part of one another in Christ. Paul explains,

### 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

*<sup>12</sup> The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body...*

Because we belong to one another in Christ Paul goes on to say that, “...*There should be no division in the body...*” We are all equal and part of one another (v25). God Himself has placed us together in his body to live in peace with one another. If there is disunity in any part of the body, the whole body suffers. The whole body is unhealthy. One part affects all the others parts, just as it does in the human body.

### **Pursuing peace enables the world to believe in Jesus**

Jesus prayed that His disciples would be “... *brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me*” (John 17:23). This prayer was for all Christians not just the disciples. The most clear and powerful way to show people how much God loves them is to show them how much we

love one another. This demonstration of love shows that our faith is real and practical. If we claim to love one another and do not make every effort to live at peace with one another, people will not see Jesus in us and will have very little interest in becoming Christians. They will see no compelling evidence that our lives are any better than theirs.

## **ROADBLOCKS TO PEACE AND UNITY**

Much is said in the New Testament about making every effort to make and maintain peace because living in harmony with one another is so difficult. We are all insecure to some degree and therefore easily offended. We don't like to admit it but we all have a tendency to think we are right and want our own way. This mix is a recipe for disunity and disorder.

As I write today's lesson I have had to come face to face with my own shortcomings in this area. There is a person I have distanced myself from because of some injustices I felt had been done to myself and others. While there is very little "observable" hostility or division on my part, there certainly is anger and disunity in my heart. I have put the issue squarely between that person and myself so that it separates us spiritually and emotionally. I may be outwardly congenial, but on the inside there is a cool distance that divides. I am a bit of a phony wouldn't you say? I want you to know that I am asking God to speak to me through today's study and I will be making some specific changes in my attitude and actions so that I can do everything possible to restore peace to the relationship. (Since first writing this some time back I have reconciled with this person and have true peace but I waited far too long).

There are two major roadblocks that cause division and prevent peace in relationships. They are the root cause of all conflict. We looked at these two sins in the session on servanthood and love in marriage, but we will apply them in a slightly different way here. After urging the Christians at Philippi to have total unity in Christ (*Philippians 2:1-2*), Paul immediately strikes at the core of what causes disunity. He warns; "*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit...*" (*Philippians 2:3*)

### **The roadblock of selfish ambition**

We all have a natural tendency to want our own way. When someone or something blocks our goals or expectations we become frustrated and angry and let that goal or expectation cause separation. For example:

- We want things done in a certain way.
- We want people to respond to us in a certain way.
- We see something as a threat to our well-being.
- We perceive someone as not valuing us.

It is not that needs and expectations are wrong. We all have them. The problem comes when we let them become obstacles to peace, and they separate us from one another. When our desires become greater than God's desire for peace, we have succumbed to selfish ambitions. God does not ask us to give up all of our desires. He does, however, ask us to give them up to Him so we can experience peace in the family of God.

### **The roadblock of vain conceit**

The second major ingredient that causes division and prevents peace is pride. Most of us do not think that we have vain conceit but upon close scrutiny we all do. We just camouflage it well. Do you ever think that you are right and everyone else is wrong? You just can't understand why people are so dense that they are not able to see things your way? Do you ever insist on your way as being the only way to do something? Do

you ever act a little self-righteous, criticizing other peoples' behavior while ignoring your own judgmental attitude? Do you ever find yourself unwilling to pursue peace with someone because you don't want to admit that you are wrong or ask for forgiveness, or that they don't deserve it?

Some pride is born because we believe our thoughts or actions are superior to someone else's. Some pride is born of hurt. We erect a wall of pride around us and shut other people out so we will not be hurt again. We let our feelings shape our theology. We allow our pain to cause us to ignore clear Biblical truths about pursuing peace. Some pride is born of insecurity. We must always be right to feel good about ourselves. Following are some prideful issues that can cause division:

- We believe an injustice has been done to us or someone else and we take on their offense.
- We believe we are right about something that is important to us and we allow it to stand between us and another person.
- There is a threat to our reputation so we isolate ourselves from the offending party.
- We have been slighted, ignored, or discounted so we write off that person.

All prideful attitudes and actions have the potential to destroy peace and cause division. They often cause power struggles with each side insisting that they have the only truth. Division happens when our desire to be "the one" is greater than God's desire that we "be one." We may be 100% right about something but also 100% wrong in our attitude and actions. Ask yourself the question, "Would I rather **be** right or make the relationship right?" Which would God prefer?

## **BUILDING BLOCKS OF PEACE AND UNITY**

### **The foundation on which to build peace**

In every successful building there is a solid foundation. The peace offered by God provides us with a solid foundation so that we can live at peace with others. That foundation is the peace of Christ which is to *rule* in our heart. God's Word says:

Colossians 3:15

<sup>15</sup> *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

Whoever or whatever rules in our hearts governs what we do. Whatever rules our hearts is our guiding principle. Is peace your guiding principle? Does peace rule in your heart so that reconciling relationships is one of your highest priorities? Does the "Prince of Peace" rule in your heart?

### **Building blocks of character**

To be peacemakers we must be willing to allow God to transform our character—to make us holy like He is holy. Peacemaking is extremely difficult and is only possible as God makes us like Himself. Jesus said,

Matthew 5:9

<sup>9</sup> *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.*

Peacemakers reflect the character of the heavenly Father in their relationships and are called sons of God. We will look briefly at five characteristics that we need to emulate if we are to be peacemakers. There are some questions to ask yourself that will help you see if you have the attitude of a peacemaker. Four of the

characteristics of a peacemaker are found in Paul's letter to the believers in Ephesus. The fifth we find in his letter to the Roman Christians.

Ephesians 4:2-3 (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Paul includes four characteristics of a peacemaker in this passage. We are to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace by displaying these characteristics.

### 1. Be humble

Ephesians 4:2 (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> Be completely humble...

Are you able to set your pride aside and rather than having to be right, do the right thing in reconciling with others?

### 2. Be gentle

Ephesians 4:2 (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> Be completely...gentle...

This reminds us that everyone is fragile inside, no matter how tough the exterior may appear. We all are insecure in our own unique ways. It is just that we are tender and easily hurt in different ways. Can you put aside your personal anger and hurt, and approach the person with whom you need to make peace with gentle words and actions?

### 3. Be patient

Ephesians 4:2 (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> Be...patient, bearing with one another in love.

Notice it does not say to be bears with one another but to bear with one another. I think you get the point.

### 4. Be persistent

Ephesians 4:2-3 (NIV)

<sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Can you honestly say that you have made **every** effort to work towards peace in **all** your relationships? Are there still some things you could do to restore peace?

### 5. Be selfless

Romans 14:7, 19 (NIV)

<sup>7</sup> For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone.... <sup>19</sup> Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.

When Paul wrote his letter to the believers in Rome, he spent a significant amount of time dealing with peace and unity. In the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters he encourages stronger Christians to be selfless and accepting of weaker Christians. He reminds them that "...none of us lives to himself alone..." The point Paul makes here is that we live to the Lord and for one another. We are not to be rigid in what we think is right when it comes to disputable matters or matters of personal opinion. Differences can divide. If we think we are always right and we insist on having our own way we will never be able to do what leads to peace and mutual edification.

Paul continues by giving some practical advice on how to be selfless. He says,

Romans 15:1-3 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. <sup>2</sup> Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. <sup>3</sup> For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."

The lesson is clear. Be selfless! Don't insist on your own way. Don't try to please yourself, but focus on pleasing others for their good so they can be built up in the Lord. Follow the example of Christ who had every right to insist on His own way but always focused on the very best way of building others up in the faith.

Are you willing to be selfless, putting aside your personal interests and agenda and focusing on what's best for the other person and the relationship? Are you willing to be patient with the other person even if they do not respond as you would hope, recognizing that person is imperfect just like you? One of the most difficult tasks we all face is accepting others just as they are. This is also one of the greatest roadblocks to peace. Paul summed it all up with this principle of peace:

Romans 15:7 (NIV)

<sup>7</sup> Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

Do you bring praise to God by accepting others and pursuing peace?

## PEACEMAKERS SOW IN PEACE

James says that if you want results as a peacemaker you must sow some peaceful seeds. There is a certain kind of godly wisdom that makes this possible.

James 3:17-18 (NIV)

<sup>17</sup> But the *wisdom* that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then *peace-loving*, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. <sup>18</sup> **Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.** (Bold added)

There are some things you must do if you are going to sow in peace and reap the harvest of restored relationships.

- **Initiate peace**

One of the most difficult aspects of being a peacemaker and sowing seeds of peace is making a decision to go directly to a person and make peace. This is often a scary and always a humbling experience. It is also a necessary action. Jesus made it clear that we are to be initiators. He said,

Matthew 5:23-24

<sup>23</sup> "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

We are to go directly to a person when there is an issue. It is of the utmost importance. It takes precedence, even over our worship of God. That is just how much God values our relationships. He wants us to live in peace with one another. It may be that we have an issue with a person that has not been resolved or that someone has an issue with us. Either way the rift will cause disunity. God wants us to restore that relationship.

- **Go in a spirit of peace**

We must make peace in our hearts with any issue we might have with the person before we can go in peace. If we are still angry and only want to vent our frustrations or correct a person we will not be able to sow seeds of peace. As James says, "...man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires." (James 1:20) It's best to ask God to make our hearts right before attempting to make things right with another person. We need to remember Paul's admonition.

Romans 12:17-18

<sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

- **Sow words of reconciliation**

When we go in a spirit of peace our focus should be primarily on reconciliation not on rehashing the issue or trying to solve it or coming to a complete agreement. Remember you are there to remove the obstacle **you** have placed between you self and that person. If you follow God's words to us through the Apostle Peter you will be able to sow words of reconciliation

1 Peter 3:8-11 (NIV)

<sup>8</sup> Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. <sup>9</sup> **Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing**, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. <sup>10</sup> For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must **keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech**. <sup>11</sup> He must turn from evil and do good; **he must seek peace and pursue it.** (Bold added)

Notice this passage starts by instructing believers to go in peace with a spirit of reconciliation; "...live in harmony...love as brothers...be compassionate and humble." (V. 9) People can easily read our spirit when we go to them. They will know if we are there for our good or their good no matter what we might say our intentions are. Hostility and unspoken agendas are not well hidden.

Next, believers are to sow words of reconciliation; Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing...keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. (V. 10)

How we word things is important. We do not sow words of reconciliation if we go in the following ways:

- With a judgmental or critical spirit
- In anger
- In a self-righteous or condescending way
- Only out of duty

We need to go sow seeds of reconciliation with words of peace that combine truth and grace. We are, as Paul says, to “...speak the truth in love...”.

I must say that there are people who seem incapable or unwilling to live at peace. It won't matter to them how you speak or what you say. They simply will destroy the peace process. They are unhealthy spiritually and emotionally and whether they know it or not they have impure motives. God's Word tells us that we can only go so far on our own in the peace process:

Romans 12:18 (NIV)

<sup>18</sup>*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

Even if the person is incapable or unwilling to accept peace we can still live at peace with them. We do not have to be controlled by their behavior. However, we need to check out our own motives and not use other peoples' behavior as an excuse not to attempt reconciliation with them. In all cases no matter what the attitude or the actions of the people might be, we need to respond with grace.

- **Sow acts of reconciliation**

It is clear that no matter what others may say or do we are not respond in kind. We do not let their behavior dictate what we say or do. Finally, James tells believers that they are too sow **acts** of reconciliation

*“He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. (V. 11)*

This is most difficult. Returning good foe evil is quite unnatural to us. Our most natural response from the beginning of time is “eye for eye and tooth for tooth.” If we are hurt we want to lay a hurt on the person who hurt us. We are told by God to do the exact opposite. We are to return good for evil. God's Word says that this is the only way we will have peace and evil will be overcome:

Romans 12:21 (NIV)

<sup>21</sup>*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

- **Step by step**

Going to the person is a significant step in the act of reconciliation. That first step needs to be followed up by further steps of action. If the obstacle to peace is truly removed, you will want to show that person by your actions that the relationship has been restored. Always remember that **acts** of reconciliation bring about **feelings** of reconciliation and the **reality** of reconciliation. You have the promise that:

James 3:18

*Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.*

### **PRAYER OF RECONCILIATION**

Is there a person with whom you need to make peace? Has God made you aware of someone with whom you need to pursue peace? If so, decide on the steps you need to take and pray the following prayer of reconciliation:

*Lord, I do want to be a peacemaker who sows in peace and raises a harvest of righteousness. I admit in my heart there is a troublemaker rather than a peacemaker and I know that is wrong. Oh God, I want your peace to rule in my heart. Show me any person with whom I need to make peace and give me the love and strength to reconcile with that person. In Jesus' name, Amen.*





## SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

Read and study *John 17:20-23* and answer the questions that follow:

### **OBSERVATION:** (What does it say?)

- What is the background of this passage? To whom is Jesus speaking? Who else is listening? What is the significance of this occasion?
- What are the key words and phrases in this passage?

### **INTERPRETATION:** (What does it mean?)

- What are the key issues that Jesus is addressing in this prayer? Why would He be addressing it at this time in His ministry?
- What is the primary focus of His prayer?
- What is the “glory” that Jesus gave to His disciples? What is the significance of that glory?
- What is the “complete unity” that Jesus speaks of in this passage?

### **APPLICATION:** (What does it say to me?)

- What does this passage say to you about pursuing peace? Is your anchor in place?
- Consider how you can always make a priority of pursuing “complete unity” in all your relationships.



## **DROP ANCHOR**

Following you will find practical ways in which you can drop the anchor of the love of God:

### **Anchored for action**

1. Make a commitment to making a priority of pursuing peace for the rest of your life.
2. Are there any roadblocks to peace in your life? Which of the elements that cause division are most troublesome to you? What one thing hit you hardest in this section?
3. Of the five characteristics of a peacemaker which one do you most need to develop? Are you making every effort in your marriage, family, church family, and other relationships? What can you change?
4. Pray the prayer of reconciliation. Ask yourself, "Is there something I must do right now to become a peacemaker?" Write down what you are willing to do.

**My plan to drop anchor** (Write one thing you will do to drop anchor)

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Review the accountability questions in Session I and be prepared to share your answers with the group.

# ANCHOR # 7

## THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD: FROM TRIALS TO TRANSFORMATION

### ANCHOR POINT A: Expression and Cessation - God Faithfully Listens to Us

#### ANCHOR TRUTH

*<sup>2</sup>How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? - Habakkuk 1:2*

*<sup>20</sup> But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him. - Habakkuk 2:20*

### ANCHOR POINT B: Magnification - Seeing Our Trials Through the Faithfulness of God

#### ANCHOR TRUTH

*LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy. <sup>3</sup>God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth. - Habakkuk 3:2-3*

### ANCHOR POINT C: Transformation - God Faithfully Transforms Us

#### ANCHOR TRUTH

*<sup>17</sup>Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, <sup>18</sup>yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. <sup>19</sup>The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights. Habakkuk 3:17-19*

#### ANCHOR ACTION

*Lord, help me to remember that you are perfectly faithful. I will magnify you so that I will see all trials through your hand and be transformed by your power.*

# SESSION 22

## ANCHOR POINT A / EXPRESSION AND CESSATION: God Faithfully Listens to Us

*“The truth about trials is this: it is through times of trouble and pain that God wants to show Himself forever faithful and strengthen our faith in Him.”*

### GETTING STARTED

First read the three chapters in the book of Habakkuk to get an overview of what we will be learning about the faithfulness of God in times of testing. Memorize and meditate on the anchor truths and action and answer the questions that follow. Review all previous memory assignments.

### ANCHOR TRUTHS (memorize)

#### Expression

*<sup>2</sup>How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, “Violence!” but you do not save? - Habakkuk 1:2*

1. Reflect on this verse for a few moments. Can you recall a time when you thought God was not listening? Was there a time when you had a crisis of faith?

#### Cessation

*<sup>20</sup> But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him. - Habakkuk 2:20*

1. What is the significance of this verse when we are facing trials? Why did God suddenly change the subject?
2. After God’s lengthy discussion with Habakkuk about his complaints, what was God wanting him to do? What does it mean to be “silent” before God?

### ANCHOR ACTION (memorize)

*Lord, help me to remember that you are perfectly faithful. I will magnify you so that I will see all trials through your hand and be transformed by your power.*



## EXPLORING THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD: EXPRESSION AND CESSATION

### GOD ALLOWS US TO BE TESTED

It is most difficult to fully trust in our heavenly Father when we are troubled by circumstances or are experiencing deep pain. In times of significant loss our belief in the faithfulness of God can be severely tested. It is at these times that we most often think, “Where are you God? Where are you when I need you? Why is this happening to me? Why is this taking so long?” Our heavenly Father can seem distant and quite removed from our present reality. We wonder if He is really going to intervene on our behalf.

In life there are disappointments, deaths, accidents, illnesses, divorces, anxieties, and abuses. We all, to one degree or another, suffer the effects of a fallen world. God chooses not to remove the consequences of evil from our lives. With free will come the natural consequences of living in a fallen world. But God gives us something better than the pain of the moment. He takes nothing from us and allows nothing to be taken from us without giving us something much better. The process always makes us stronger at the broken places.

#### What is so great about trials?

God’s Word clearly states that trials are of great benefit to us. How can this be? What is so great about trials? The truth about trials is this: it is through times of trouble and pain that God wants to show Himself forever faithful and strengthen our faith in Him. It is at these “moments of truth” that He wants us to learn how to drop the anchor of faithfulness. God does not want to only rescue us from our troubles, but to take us through these trials to total transformation. That is why we are told to consider it “*pure joy*” when we face many kinds of trials:

#### James 1:2-4

*<sup>2</sup> Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. <sup>4</sup> Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

This is one of the most difficult passages in the Bible to act on in times of trouble. We think, tolerance perhaps, but joy never. Are you kidding me? Who, in their right mind, sees trouble and trials as joy? We want to get over it, but God wants to go through it with us so we will be transformed (v. 4). One of the reasons it is so difficult for us to come to a place of joy when we are tested is that we fail to understand the **transformation process** that God uses to mature us. This passage in James assures a process that brings us to a place of joy no matter how difficult or painful the circumstances. The end result is spiritual maturity. Let’s take a closer look at what James has to say. James says we are to “*consider it*” pure joy when we face trials. (*James 1:3*) This does not mean that we will not experience initial feelings of anxiety, anger or grief. To expect that of us would require that we no longer have human emotions. God allows us to go through a wide range of emotions when we face significant loss. To expect a person who has just learned that his spouse has been unfaithful to feel immediate joy would be unreasonable. To suggest that a person who just lost a child in a tragic accident immediately respond with joy would be cruel. But in all cases, given time and reflection on the character of God, a person can still embrace the truth of God’s faithfulness and come to a place of joy. He can **consider** what has happened and conclude God is faithful to all His promises. When we consider who God is, we can,

in spite of our present pain, be confident that God will transform us and that we will indeed experience “pure joy”. Joy is not just happy feelings, but a permanent condition of peace that is a result of knowing that we can trust in the faithfulness of God. Joy is understanding that God will enable us to be “...*more than conquerors*” of any trial we might face (*Romans 8:35-39*).

The Apostle Paul was well acquainted with the process of trials to transformation. While in Asia he was under such enormous pressure that he reports it was “...*far beyond our ability to endure so that we despaired even of life*”. (*2 Corinthians 1:8*) Paul knew that God allowed this to happen so that he would have complete faith in Him alone. Paul continued:

2 Corinthians 1:9

*<sup>9</sup>Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.*

### **The process of transformation**

God’s goal for our lives is that we glorify Him by becoming mature, conforming to the “...*whole measure of the fullness of Christ*.” (*Ephesians 4:13*) God wants to transform us so that we will have Christ-like character. Scripture describes the process through which the Holy Spirit transforms our lives into the image of Christ during times of trials. The process starts with **expression** by lifting up our souls to God. There is a point of **cessation** when we quiet our souls by being still before God. Next is **magnification**. At this point we lift our souls in worship to God, magnifying His name. The final result of this process is **transformation**. As we magnify God, praising who He is and what He has done, He transforms us into His likeness. We will examine a few of the many examples of this process.

### **EXPRESSION: POURING OUT OUR SOULS TO GOD** (*Habakkuk 1:1-4*)

One of the prime examples of someone who when severely tested, expressed his doubts and frustrations to God and was transformed, is Habakkuk. He prophesied during the dark days of Judah before they were taken captive. The book of *Habakkuk* opens with Habakkuk complaining bitterly to God:

Habakkuk 1:1-3 (NIV)

*<sup>1</sup>The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet received. <sup>2</sup>How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, “Violence!” but you do not save? <sup>3</sup>Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds.*

Habakkuk’s complaint is a familiar one: We often question, “Why is this happening to me? How long do I have to go through this? Why do those who do evil seem to prosper and their sins go unpunished? Why do you not respond to my prayers?”

Throughout the book Habakkuk freely expresses emotions and asks God perplexing questions. Even though he does a lot of complaining God patiently answers all of Habakkuk’s questions. It is obvious that one of the reasons God has given us this account is so we can learn how to express **all** of our problems to God, learn that He is faithful and receive answers. We will follow Habakkuk on his journey from expression to transformation and observe how God works in these times of testing.

### **God Wants To Hear Our Complaints**



Expression is lifting up our souls (mind, will, emotions) to God. It is expressing the details of our circumstances, complaints, frustrations, and questions to our heavenly Father in complete honesty.

Sometimes we are reluctant to honestly express what we are thinking and feeling to God. We either feel distant from God or guilty about our emotions. We stuff our thoughts and emotions rather than expressing them to God. This is not spiritually or emotionally healthy as David found out. At a time when he was deeply troubled He said,

Psalm 39:1-3

*<sup>1</sup>I said, "I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will put a muzzle on my mouth as long as the wicked are in my presence." <sup>2</sup>But when I was silent and still, not even saying anything good, my anguish increased. <sup>3</sup>My heart grew hot within me, and as I meditated, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue:*

David's mistake was not expressing to God what was in his soul. He kept things bottled up inside. He was fretting, not expressing. Fretting is negative meditation. It is an internal dialogue with ourselves. Fretting only intensifies our frustration and pain. Things just got worse for David until he started expressing to God what was in his heart. The turning point came when he said, "...then I spoke with my tongue". When David began to ask God for input, things changed dramatically. David was able to say,

Psalm 39:7

*<sup>7</sup> But now, Lord, what do I look for? My hope is in you.*

How can we be certain that God wants to hear all of our complaints? We can be confident because the Bible encourages us to do so. The Psalms contains many examples of how we are to express our souls to God. Here are just a few:

Psalm 62:8

*<sup>8</sup>Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.*

Psalms 143:8

*<sup>8</sup> Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.*

Psalms 143:1

*<sup>1</sup> O LORD, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy; in your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief.*

❖ *God wants us to understand what He is doing while we wait*

One of the most difficult aspects of trials is that they seem to last so long. We want things to be resolved quickly. We want to get over things, not go through them. God wants us to go through trials so we can receive the maximum benefit from our pain. Because of this, God informed Habakkuk of what was happening while he was waiting. We can learn the following from Habakkuk's experience:

### **God Is Preparing The Circumstances**

- **God sets the agenda**

God wanted Habakkuk to understand that during this severe time of testing He was preparing the circumstances. The sovereign God was setting the agenda for what would happen. God's sovereign plan would not be thwarted by anyone or anything. He told Habakkuk,

Habakkuk 1:5

<sup>5</sup> *"Look at the nations and watch — and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told.*

Habakkuk was to watch what God was doing. While he thought God was not listening and not at work, God was preparing the circumstances. He was going to turn the evil Babylonians loose on Judah. All Habakkuk needed to do was see the circumstances through God's eyes. Habakkuk was blind to what God was doing. That was the cause of his frustrations. This is also a major problem for us when we are going through trials. We fail to see our circumstances through God's eyes — though the eyes of faith. The writer of Hebrews says,

Hebrews 11:1

<sup>1</sup> *Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*

Through the eyes of faith, believing is seeing. If we first believe, we will be able to see what God is doing. If we have faith in God we will be able to discern what He is doing because, *"We live by faith, not by sight."* (2 Corinthians 5:7) God is always at work in the unseen spirit world. It takes eyes of faith to trust that He is working to accomplish His will. When we have eyes of faith we do not need to see everything God is doing, but only trust that He is at work.

- **God sets the clock**

God sets the clock. He is sovereign and there is an appointed time for everything including when our trials begin and end. This goes against our nature. We want to set the agenda and the clock for our trials but we can do neither. Only God can set the agenda and the clock. We want quick results, He wants lasting results. We want short term solutions He wants permanent transformation. God is never early but He is never late. His timing is perfect. God told Habakkuk,

Habakkuk 2:3

<sup>3</sup> *For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.*

When we have eyes of faith we trust in God's perfect timing for His perfect agenda. It may seem like the answer to our prayer will never come. It may seem like the trial is lasting forever, but God is in control of all circumstances. He has set an appointed time for the solution to our problems. God has an agenda, a time and a season for all things. Habakkuk learned four important principles about God's timing.

1. Everything has an appointed time to end. (See Eccl. 3:1; James 5:7; Prov. 16; 4, 9)

*"The revelation waits an appointed time; it speaks of the end..." (Hab. 2:3)*

2. The timing and end result will be perfect (See Psalm 33:4; Prov. 16:4, 9)

*"...and will not prove false." (Hab. 2:3)*

3. It will probably linger but our responsibility is to wait for it. (See 2 Peter 3:9)

*"Though it linger wait for it..." (Hab. 2:3)*

4. God has promised that there will be no delay in his perfect agenda and timing.

*"...it will certainly come and will not delay." (Hab. 2:3)*

God's divine timing is not like our timing. He is not limited as we are. He is timeless and His promises are not limited by our concept of time. Peter reminded believers,

2 Peter 3:8-9

*<sup>8</sup> But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

- **God is preparing us**

God is not only setting the agenda and setting the clock while we are waiting for our trial to be over He is preparing us. His desire is to transform us into the image of His Son. There are at least three ways in which He wants to prepare us:

- **God wants to align us with His purposes. (Psalm 138:8)**

God wanted Habakkuk to get on board with His purposes and plans. God took great pains to explain to Habakkuk exactly what He was going to do. God also wants to align us with His purposes for our lives. He wants us to cooperate with Him in what He wants to do in us and through us.

- **God wants to rearrange our priorities. (Matthew 6:33)**

When we are aligned with God's purposes our priorities will change. We will order our lives in such a way that we will put what God desires before our own desires. What God values we will value. What God wants we will want.

- **God wants to shape our character. (Romans 5:3-5)**

God's ultimate goal is to shape our character. This will be the final result as we learn to follow His will when we go through trials. God's Word says,

Romans 8:29

*<sup>29</sup> For those God foreknew he also predestined to be **conformed to the likeness of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Bold added)*

**CESSATION: BEING STILL BEFORE GOD** (Habakkuk 2:20)



The principle of cessation is there is a time to stop expressing and fretting and be still before God. We are to stop focusing on problems and start focusing on God's character. The more we look at the problem the bigger the problem appears.

Expressing ourselves to God in prayer is an essential step toward healing and transformation. As we present our questions, complaints, frustrations and fears to God He patiently assures us of His sovereign power and enduring love. His Spirit speaks to our spirit and we begin to let down our guard, open up our soul and trust Him. The lies we have come to believe are exposed by His truth. Our minds begin to be renewed by the truth of God's Word and we are set free.

There is a time when we are to stop expressing and be silent before God—a time to turn our focus solely on Him. Expression must always lead us to cessation. The Lord said, "Enough now!" to Habakkuk. Habakkuk had sufficiently poured out his soul to God. After God had listened to Habakkuk and patiently answered his questions, He said, "Now be silent." It was time for Habakkuk to be still before God. Listen as God's voice breaks through the heavens to get Habakkuk's attention:

*Habakkuk 2:20 (NIV)*

<sup>20</sup> "But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him."

### **How to be still**

The question is how can we be still when we have been obsessed with the problem and our emotions are a mess? How do we quiet our soul? There is a Psalm that counsels us on how to be still before the Lord.

*Psalms 37:1-8 (NIV)*

<sup>1</sup> Of David. Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong; <sup>2</sup> for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away. <sup>3</sup> Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. <sup>4</sup> Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. <sup>5</sup> Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: <sup>6</sup> He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. <sup>7</sup> Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. <sup>8</sup> Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil.

- **Choose to stop fretting**

First we must make a decision to stop fretting. We must make a conscious choice to stop focusing on a problem. There is a difference between expressing and fretting. **Expressing** is lifting up our souls to God, and trusting He will answer. When we express our frustrations, concerns and questions to God we expose the cancer of our soul to God, allowing Him to renew our minds and bring healing to our hurting emotions. Fretting is very different. **Fretting** is rehearsing old hurts, going over and over the details in our mind. This causes us to experience the pain again, reinforcing old patterns of thought and behavior which often leads to bitterness. While some fretting is normal it is never productive. Habakkuk did some expressing and some fretting. We often do both. The first principle in this Psalm is to stop. David says,

*Psalms 37:1-2, 7-8*

<sup>1</sup> Of David. Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong; <sup>2</sup> for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away...; <sup>7</sup> do not fret when men succeed in their

*ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. <sup>8</sup> Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil.*

Here are some things that happen when we fret—none of them good.

- We replay the scene over and over.
- We rehearse the details.
- We feel hurt and are victimized once again.
- We end up feeling angry and frustrated.
- We have no peace or joy. Nothing is resolved.
- We want revenge.
- We respond in anger

David did a lot of fretting so he knew exactly what he must stop. He was well aware that it required a conscious decision not to fret, even when he was being treated unjustly. He knew what would happen if he continued to fret.

- **Choose to refocus**

It is not enough to merely stop thinking about our issues. We must turn our focus to God alone with no agenda other than to look at Him. We are to stop fretting and develop a totally new frame of reference. This is a difficult transition but an essential one. Until we stop expressing and start focusing on God we will never start healing. David continues his counsel on how to focus on God:

*Psalm 37:3-6*

*<sup>3</sup> **Trust** in the Lord and do good;  **dwell** in the land and **enjoy** safe pasture. <sup>4</sup> **Delight** yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. <sup>5</sup> **Commit** your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: <sup>6</sup> He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. (Bold added)*

There are some key words that will help us refocus. We can **trust** in God. We can reflect on His faithfulness. When we trust God we are able to **dwell**, or remain in our circumstances and still have **joy**. When we refocus on God we will **delight** in who God is and how much He loves us. This allows us to commit our circumstances to the Lord, knowing that He will bring us through every trial victoriously (v. 6).

- **Choose to stay still**

David says,

*Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him (v. 7).*

This is difficult but we must learn to patiently and persistently stay still before the Lord. We need to take a deep breath, breathing in the attributes of His awesome nature. We must not let the pattern of fretting return. It takes discipline to stay still before the Lord when we are tempted to rehearse the hurt or hopelessness of the situation. My tendency is to revisit the hurt. How quickly I sometimes return to fretting. When that happens I have learned to make a conscious choice to refocus. My strategy is to review key Scriptures about the faithfulness of God in my mind, including *Psalm 37*. The key to refocusing and staying still is always to reflect on who God is and what He does.

Psalm 46:10 (NIV)

<sup>10</sup> *“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”*

- ❖ Cessation means we cease looking through our problem at God.
- ❖ Cessation means we start looking through God at our problem.



## DIG DEEPER

Dig deeper into the love of God by answering the following questions about what you have just read. (Review the Scriptures in your Bible and underline important words and phrases).

1. Read *Psalm 39:1-3* in your own Bible. According to these verses what are some of the consequences of putting a “muzzle” on our frustrations, hurts and feelings? What is the “meditation” mentioned in verse 3?
2. In your own words what “healthy” expression of complaints does God want to hear? What is the difference between fretting and true expression?
3. What did you learn about how God prepares the circumstances while we wait? In what ways does waiting shape our character?
4. In your own words describe cessation. What makes cessation so difficult?
5. Read *Psalm 46: 10*. What does it mean to be still?



## SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

Read and study *James 1:2-4* and answer the questions that follow:

### OBSERVATION: (What does it say?)

- What is the background of this passage? Who is James and to whom is he writing? What was the main purpose of this letter?
- What are the key words and phrases in this passage?

### INTERPRETATION: (What does it mean?)

- What is the meaning of “*joy*” in the context of this passage? Cross reference joy with some other Scriptures on this topic.
- What does James mean when he says that we are to “*consider*” it all joy when we face many kinds of trials? Why is the word “*joy*” important for people to understand when they face extreme loss and pain?
- What does “*perseverance*” mean in the context of this passage? How do trials develop perseverance in our lives?
- What does it mean to be “*mature and complete*”? In what ways do trials develop this virtue?

### APPLICATION: (What does it say to me?)

- What one thing did you learn about how God prepares the circumstances and prepares us during times of waiting?
- Think of some ways that you can quiet your soul and “*be still*” before God when facing trials.



## **DROP ANCHOR**

Following you will find practical ways in which you can drop the anchor of the faithfulness of God:

### **Anchored for action**

1. Spend some time in prayer asking God to help you prepare for trials.
2. Memorize and review weekly how God prepares the circumstances as we face trials.
3. Make specific plans on how you will stop fretting and quiet your soul when going through tough times.
4. Is there something that you are currently fretting about? Practice what you have learned.

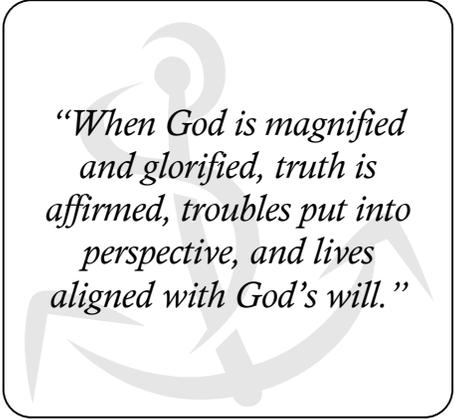
**My plan to drop anchor** (Write one thing you will do to drop anchor)

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Review the accountability questions on page 17 and be prepared to share your answers with the group.

# SESSION 23

## ANCHOR POINT B / MAGNIFICATION: Seeing Our Trials Through the Faithfulness of God



*“When God is magnified and glorified, truth is affirmed, troubles put into perspective, and lives aligned with God’s will.”*

### GETTING STARTED

Memorize and meditate on the anchor truths and action and answer the questions that follow. Review all previous memory assignments.

#### ANCHOR TRUTH (memorize)

*LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy. <sup>3</sup>God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth. - Habakkuk 3:2-3*

1. To what “fame” and what “deeds” do you think Habakkuk was referring?
2. When you think of God’s “fame” and “deeds” of what are you in awe?
3. How does God “renew” and “make known” His fame and deeds in our time? How does God’s glory cover all the earth?
4. How does “hearing” of God’s “fame” and “deeds” enable us to trust in His faithfulness?

#### ANCHOR ACTION (memorize)

*Lord, help me to remember that you are perfectly faithful. I will magnify you so that I will see all trials through your hand and be transformed by your power.*



## EXPLORING THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD: MAGNIFICATION

### MAGNIFICATION

After expression and cessation comes magnification in the transformation process. When we are still before God and begin to exalt and magnify Him everything starts to come into proper focus. We can see our problems for what they are because we see God for who He is. This happened to Habakkuk when he ceased expressing and in silence began to magnify and glorify God. In humble reverence Habakkuk prays:

Habakkuk 3:2-3

<sup>2</sup> LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy. <sup>3</sup>God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Taran. His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth.

Remember how distraught and fearful Habakkuk was when he began pouring out his soul to God. The change we see now is dramatic. We are about to see a frustrated man transformed before our eyes. In Habakkuk's prayer of worship we see Him magnifying and glorifying the Lord. Habakkuk magnifies the greatness of who God is when he prays, "I have **heard** of your **fame**". He glorifies God when he prays, "I stand in **awe** of your **deeds**." In this act of worship Habakkuk begins to know truth and regain hope. As he begins to view the threat of the dreaded Babylonians **through** the attributes of God things change dramatically. A miraculous transformation is about to occur.

The prophet Jeremiah's experience was similar. The book of Lamentations describes his distress. He was an emotional and spiritual mess. He had given up on God and everyone else. He focused only on his problems. He had stopped expressing long ago and only fretted.

Lamentations 3:19-20

<sup>19</sup> I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. <sup>20</sup> I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me.

This time of emotional stress ended when Jeremiah stopped fretting and stilled his soul before God. When he began to magnify God, his trust was renewed and his hope restored. In a dramatic reversal Jeremiah says,

Lamentations 3:21-23

"Yet this I call to mind and therefore have hope; Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new ever morning; great is your faithfulness..."

It is at the point of magnification that Jeremiah regains a spiritual perspective. He recalls to his mind who God is and what He does. How he views his problem changes one hundred and eighty degrees when he remembers these three things about God: God's love is great, His compassions never fail and His faithfulness is great. When Jeremiah remembers these great truths and magnifies God he is transformed.

Job is another example of the principles of expression, cessation, magnification and transformation. No one recorded in the Bible had more trials than Job. He certainly did his share of expressing. But there was a point

when Job ceased expressing, was still before God and magnified Him. In the final chapter of Job we see Job finally put it all together.

Job 42:1-3

<sup>1</sup> Then Job replied to the LORD: <sup>2</sup>“I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.

<sup>3</sup> You asked, ‘Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?’ Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.

Through Job’s great trials he learned a whole new way of looking at God. Before all of his troubles, Job had a relationship with God. In the beginning of the book of Job God tells Satan that Job is a righteous and upright man who fears Him. He was God’s best example of a godly man (*Job 1:8*). But through his trial Job was able to receive an entirely new view of God. Job admits that he had heard of God. He had known God intellectually. He was a devout follower of God but he didn’t really know Him intimately. Job’s trial gave him a whole new perspective of God. He could now see God for who he really was. Job learned, as God wants us all to learn, that faith is not merely an intellectual belief, but includes an unflinching trust in God’s faithful love. Through the process of suffering Job developed new eyes that enabled him to see his problems through the character of God. God wants all of us to see life through His faithfulness so we can also say,

Job 42:5 (NIV)

<sup>5</sup> My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.

### **The view through “the hand of God”**

To illustrate the principle of magnification I want you to hold up your left hand in front of your face. This hand represents your trials. It represents any issue, pain, loss or frustration that is causing you a burden. Now hold up your right hand behind your left hand. Imagine this hand represents the character or attributes of God: His anchors of fatherhood, sovereignty, servanthood, truth, holiness, love, and faithfulness. When you view your problems in this way what happens? Your view of God is obscured by your trials. Your problems are magnified and God is minimized. It is like a fog that prevents you from seeing God clearly. It limits your vision of the Almighty. It makes your problems appear big and God to appear small, distant and distorted.

Now I want you to switch hands. Put your right hand which represents the attributes of God in front of your face. Place your left hand representing your trial behind your right hand. Notice that you are now viewing your problem through the character of God. God is magnified. When God appears big, your problems will begin to appear small. Viewing your trials in this way allows you to walk by faith and not by sight. This will give hope no matter how great the pain or perplexing the circumstances.

### **Gaining new perspectives**

When we view people and circumstances through “the hand of God”, we will see people or circumstances as God sees them. Through this process our minds are being renewed and our lives transformed. We will know the truth and the truth will set us free (*John 8:31-32*). When God is magnified and glorified, truth is affirmed, troubles put into perspective, and lives aligned with God’s will. Here are some examples of what happens when God is magnified and people receive new perspectives through the eyes of faith:

- **When Jesus was troubled and faced death He prayed:**

John 12:27-28 (NIV)

<sup>27</sup> "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? **No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.** <sup>28</sup> **Father, glorify your name!"** (bold added)

- **When David faced Goliath he said:**

1 Samuel 17:45 (NIV)

<sup>45</sup>...*"You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.* (Bold added)

- **When twelve leaders from the twelve tribes explored the Promised Land:**

Here is a dramatic example of the difference between looking at a trial through your own hand or "the hand of God". Twelve leaders were selected to scout out the land of Canaan before following God's command to conquer it. When the spies returned there was a vast difference in the way they viewed the challenge. Ten of the spies reported the following:

Numbers 13:31 (NIV)

<sup>31</sup> *But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are."*

Two of the leaders, while observing the same facts, came to the opposite conclusion:

Numbers 13:30 (NIV)

<sup>30</sup> *Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it."* (Bold added)

The reason for the difference in views is obvious. Caleb and Joshua viewed the test through "the hand of God" while the other ten leaders viewed the test through their own hands. Two men viewed the challenge through the "hand of God" and had absolute faith. Ten men viewed God through the challenge and experienced fear. The test was magnified in their eyes while God was minimized.

### **The miracle of magnification**

Sometimes we are tempted to look at examples of great faith in the Bible and think, "But those people were hand-picked by God. They had a special kind of strength." I admit that these examples are stories of famous Bible people but God has made it clear in Scripture that we are equal opportunity partakers in His power. The full measure of His faithfulness is available to each one of us. The book of James makes this clear when he talks about the power of the prayer of faith.

James 5:16-18

<sup>16</sup> *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.* <sup>17</sup> *Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.* <sup>18</sup> *Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.*

Based on this Scripture alone there can be no doubt that God's power and faithfulness is available to everyone. If Elijah, who won the spectacular battle with the prophets of Baal by calling fire down from

heaven, was a man just like us, we have little to worry about (1 Kings 18). The miracle of magnification works for us all.

Martin and Gracia Burnham experienced the miracle of magnification during their traumatic year of captivity in a jungle in the Philippines. Early in the morning on May 27, 2001, the Burnhams, missionaries with New Tribes Mission, while enjoying a once-in-a-lifetime anniversary getaway at an island resort, were snatched from their room by Abu Sayyaf, a terrorist group with ties to Osama bin Laden. During the year they were held hostage they faced unimaginable terrors. Separated from their three children, they endured seventeen gun battles with government forces, near starvation, cold blooded murder, and some intense questioning of God who it seemed at times had forgotten them. The traumatic events began to take a heavy toll on Gracia:

*“In the constant rumble of the river, it was like I could hear Satan laughing at me, saying, “You trust in the Lord—but you’re still here.” I found myself beginning to believe Satan’s lie. Sometimes Martin would come and sit with me by the river. He said, “I just hate to see you giving up your faith like this.” “Oh, I’m not giving up my faith,” I’d tell him. “I still believe that God made the world, he sent his Son, Jesus, and Jesus died for me. I haven’t given up my faith—I’m just choosing not to believe the part about God loving me. Because God’s not coming through.”*

Gracia goes on to relate how things started to change for her when she was able to be still before God and begin to magnify Him. This happened through singing hymns.

*“Gradually, my singing increased. We knew some of the same hymns and so we sang together. “How Great Thou Art” became our favorite. I’m sure the songwriter wasn’t thinking of the Basilan Island when he penned those words. But living in the jungle under the open sky, we could certainly identify with them. Angie didn’t know the song, so we borrowed a pen and paper and wrote out these words for her:*

*O Lord my God! when I in awesome wonder  
Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made,  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,  
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.*

*Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee:  
How great Thou Art! How great Thou art!*

*The second and third verses expressed our circumstances even better:*

*When through the woods and forest glades I wander  
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,  
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur  
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze,*

*And when I think that God, His Son not sparing,  
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in;  
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,*

*He bled and died to take away my sin.*

*Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee:  
How great Thou art! How great Thou Art!*

*The Abu Sayyaf never hissed at us for singing it. It sounded beautiful, and they liked music. More than once, Martin said to me, 'Maybe God has us here just to praise him in this very dark place.'*

*Gradually, my crisis of faith passed. I realized it would do no good to be angry with God. He had neither inspired the Abu Sayyaf to abduct us nor would he force them against their will to release us. Instead, He would sustain us day by day, night by night, mile by mile, for as long as it took."*

Gracia's faith increased from that point on. The circumstances did not improve but she was able to view circumstances through the hand of God. A perfect ending would be that they were both rescued, but this did not happen. Martin was killed in the final gun battle. Gracia is now stronger at the broken places. God did not spare her this tragedy, but has given her a ministry to thousands of people who hear her story of the power of magnification.





## SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

Read *Hebrews 11* and observe how the principle of magnification enabled people to trust in the faithfulness of God through severe trials. Then answer the following questions:

### OBSERVATION: (What does it say?)

- To whom was this letter written? What was their situation?
- Why the emphasis on the superiority of Christ and an appeal for perseverance through trials?

### INTREPRETATION: (What does it mean?)

- What does *Hebrews 11: 1-2* infer about magnification? How does hope fit in?
- What three tests did Abraham face? How did magnification enable Him to trust in the faithfulness of God?
- What enabled all the people mentioned in this chapter to view their trials through the hand of God? What did this have to do with perseverance?

### APPLICATION: (What does it say to me?)

- Why were all these examples cited? In what way will remembering these people of faith help you remember to magnify God when faced with trials?



## **DROP ANCHOR**

Following you will find practical ways in which you can drop the anchor of the faithfulness of God:

### **Anchored for action**

1. Remember to look at issues and trials through the hand of God.
2. Make a priority of memorizing and reviewing Scriptures on the attributes of God.
3. Is there an issue or a trial that you are going through right now that you need to see through the hand of God? Spend some time seeing this issue or trial through the hand of God. Reflect on God's great attributes.
4. Begin by looking at all trials through the seven great anchors of God.

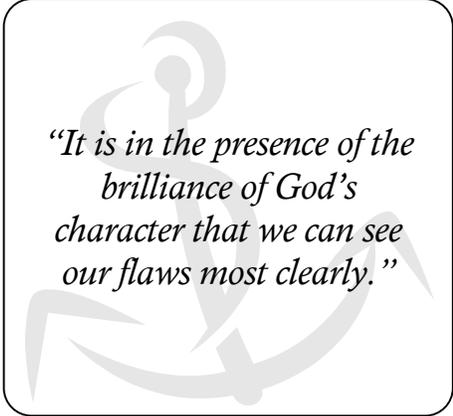
**My plan to drop anchor** (Write one thing you will do to drop anchor)

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Review the accountability questions on page 17 and be prepared to share your answers with the group.

# SESSION 24

## ANCHOR POINT C / TRANSFORMATION: God Faithfully Transforms Us Into His likeness



*“It is in the presence of the brilliance of God’s character that we can see our flaws most clearly.”*

### GETTING STARTED

Memorize and meditate on the anchor truths and action and answer the questions that follow. Review all previous memory assignments. (Read

*Hab. 3:16-19)*

### ANCHOR TRUTH (memorize)

#### Habakkuk 3:17-19

*<sup>17</sup>Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, <sup>18</sup>yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. <sup>19</sup>The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.*

1. What is the main point of this passage?
2. What makes it possible for Habakkuk to rejoice even when everything seems to be failing?
3. What has enabled Habakkuk to believe that the Lord is His strength? According to this passage what is the key to Habakkuk’s transformation from fear to trust?
4. Paraphrase verse 19 in your own words. What does “*The Sovereign Lord is my strength*” mean to you?

### ANCHOR ACTION (memorize)

*Lord, help me to remember that you are perfectly faithful. I will magnify you so that I will see all trials through your hand and be transformed by your power.*



## EXPLORING THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD: TRANSFORMATION

We finish this section on the process of transformation by focusing on Habakkuk's confession of faith which became a confession of faith for Israel. Habakkuk declares his trust in God despite facing the most terrifying of times. The circumstances have not changed. The evil Babylonians will still devastate Israel. The worst of times will still come. But Habakkuk's transformation is truly amazing. No longer do we see a frustrated, fearful, complaining prophet but one of absolute faith. He proclaims:

### Habakkuk 3:16

*<sup>16</sup> I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled. Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us.*

The prophet promises that even though circumstances terrify him he is willing to wait patiently for God's intervention on behalf of Israel. Habakkuk has come to a place in his faith where he is able to say, "Lord, no matter what happens I will trust in your promises and sovereign power. I know that you control all things."

### FROM MAGNIFICATION TO TRANSFORMATION

What a transformation! This is the same man who at the beginning of our story was filled with doubt and questions. We now know the secret. We have been able to eavesdrop on an intimate conversation between a prophet with many questions and a God who answers every complaint. We have witnessed how God painstakingly showed a man with human weaknesses how to watch with eyes of faith, be still before Him and be transformed through magnification. Now Habakkuk can say, "Even if everything that I have depended on fails, I will not lose my joy in you." (*Habakkuk 3: 17-19*)

### Renewal of the mind

Habakkuk's mind was renewed by the truth. It is God who transforms us through the renewing of our minds. Through God's revealed Word we see God's character. We witness His glory. Our minds are renewed as we learn to live by the great anchors of God. We respond to God's truth with action. Paul sums up this final phase of transformation:

### Romans 12:1-2

*<sup>1</sup> Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

Transformation is motivated by God's grace. We respond by offering ourselves to God as living sacrifices, glorifying Him with our lips and our lives. As we magnify Him our minds are renewed by the power of His Word. ***Transformation is being conformed into the likeness of Christ.***

## The miracle of magnification/glorification

Transformation depends on magnification. Transformation grows exponentially during magnification/glorification as in the presence of God we view His glory. It is at this point the miracle of transformation begins to manifest itself. As we praise God for who He is and what He does, the image of Jesus is being formed in us. There is a verse of Scripture that give us that assurance:

### 2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)

*<sup>18</sup> And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

When we magnify God by praising and glorifying Him, like a brilliant mirror He **reflects** His character on us. (*Habakkuk 3; Isaiah 6:1-8; Lamentations 3:21-25*). God is constantly shaping us into the image of His Son. God is most glorified when our lives reflect His glory. Here is how the “mirror” of transformation works:

When we are still before God, worshipping him, God enables us to see Him clearly as if His image was reflected brilliantly in a mirror. In *2 Corinthians* Paul refers to the mirrors of ancient times that were made of burnished material. These mirrors reflected images with great brilliancy and distinctness. God has made Himself available to us in all His brilliant perfection and holiness. The perfect glory of God's holiness is reflected as light from the burnished surface of the mirror of God's character and we are able to see Him in all His brilliance.

Not only do we see the brilliance of God's character, His character is then reflected on us as if from a burnished mirror. In ancient times when a mirror was exposed to intense light, the rays would cast a reflection on the person who was looking in the mirror, brightly illuminating his face. In similar fashion, when we look at the face of God through magnification and glorification, the distinctness and brilliance of His character and holiness is beamed on us. His character is reflected onto our character. His thoughts, attitudes, and actions become our thoughts attitudes and actions. We are molded into His likeness by being in his presence.

When we see God clearly, we also see ourselves clearly. It is in the presence of the brilliance of God's character that we can see our flaws most clearly. Can you recall looking in a high quality mirror in a well-lighted room? Most of us are shocked by what we see. We see marks and blotches on our face that we did not know were there. To our dismay we can see every blemish clearly. When we look at the brilliance of God's character, our character flaws become painfully obvious. We can no longer live in denial. As we face God, we have to face ourselves. Transformation occurs when we **respond in obedience** to what God shows us about our character. Notice how the prophet Isaiah responded when he saw the brilliance of God in a dramatic vision. Isaiah reports,

### Isaiah 6:1,2,3

*<sup>1</sup> "...I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted <sup>2</sup> . . . above him were seraphs <sup>3</sup> ...calling to one another; 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty'."*

Isaiah saw his own true character in the light of God's holy character and said,

Isaiah 6:5

<sup>5</sup> "Woe to me!" I cried. 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD almighty."

A wonderful transformation takes place in Isaiah's life. As he acknowledges God's perfection and his own imperfection God reaches out in love and touches Isaiah with His grace.

Isaiah 6: 6, 7

<sup>6</sup> "Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. <sup>7</sup> With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

The intimate touch of God as he reaches out to us with His grace, releases us to respond to Him in obedience. Ultimately it is magnification--the wonder of God's love and forgiveness that compels us to cooperate with his work as He transforms our lives. We see the proof of Isaiah's transformation when the Lord asks, "...Whom shall I send? And who will go for us...?" Isaiah says "Here am I. Send me." (Isaiah 6:8) As we magnify God, the results will be the same for us. Great joy will flow into our lives as He transforms us and we are able to say in absolute faith, "Here am I, Lord. Send me anywhere—anytime".

### THREE SIGNS OF TRANSFORMATION

#### Habakkuk was transformed in three distinct ways.

##### 1. Habakkuk had absolute faith in God

The first thing we can observe about Habakkuk's transformation is that he had absolute faith in the sovereignty of God. Habakkuk came to a place in his spiritual life where he had total faith when **nothing** seemed to be happening. He was able to confidently say, "As long as it takes, Lord, even if every resource is gone, I will never lose sight of your sovereign power, I will not lose faith in your provisions". He says,

Habakkuk 3:17-18

<sup>17</sup> "Though the fig tree does not bud, and there are no grapes on the vine, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pens and no cattle in the stalls, <sup>18</sup> yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.

Habakkuk's statement of faith showed that he would not revert to "Plan B" even if every resource was exhausted and God still chose not to intervene. To have back up plans would be unthinkable. For Habakkuk there was no other option but to wait for God to complete His plan.

It is important for us never to forget what God is doing during times of waiting. If we have developed eyes of faith we will know that God is preparing the circumstances by setting the agenda and the clock. He is preparing us. God is using the time to align us with His purposes, rearrange our priorities and shape our character. All this will be done in His time and in His way.

##### 2. Habakkuk experienced the joy of the Lord (Habakkuk 3:18)

Faith results in joy. Habakkuk found out that joy is a result of faithfully obeying God. He did not start out with joy, but joy was a fruit of the root of faith. Even though Habakkuk faced a terrifying enemy and the loss of every resource, he was able to say,

*"... yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior."- (Habakkuk 3:18)*

*Joy is a condition, not a feeling.* This Scripture does not say that Habakkuk had happy feelings about his situation. It said he had joy in the midst of fear. This is an important distinction that we need to understand. The Bible never tells us that we are to have constantly happy feelings, but it does tell us that we are to always experience joy. The Apostle Paul said to *"Be joyful always". (1 Thessalonians 5:16)* We can always be joyful because joy does not depend on the emotions of the moment. Happiness does depend on our current circumstances. Joy does not depend on happiness in our current circumstances, but on our relationship with God. Biblical joy is a permanent condition of hope that depends entirely on the character of God.

Faith does not always mean we will **feel** sure about our circumstances. There are times when we will have faith and at the same time have feelings of insecurity. Positive feelings often follow faith actions and do not necessarily precede them. As the root of faith develops, our feelings will match our faith more often. Feelings are not a true measure of our faith. Much more is involved. Habakkuk's feelings did not seem to match his faith. In fact, he expressed some very deep emotions of fear. Habakkuk said that *his heart pounded, his lips quivered and his legs trembled.* That sounds like someone who is scared to death! He did not say his joy was in the terrible circumstances around him (*Habakkuk 3:16*) Habakkuk's joy was in God alone. He did not rejoice in his circumstances but in the Lord. He says, *"...Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior". (Habakkuk 3:18)*

Faith and obedience bring us to a point where we can have joy in God **despite** our circumstances in the worst of times. That is exactly the place where Gracia Burnham ended up. There were few happy feelings in the "death march" in the jungle. There were no happy feelings in watching her husband die. But there was joy in the LORD that came from faith and obedience. There was a point where she could look back at her trial and *"consider it pure joy" (James 2:2-4.)* God does not ask you to have happy feelings when you experience personal tragedy. He does ask you, when you consider or reflect on it, to have joy in Him.

 Happiness depends on the circumstances of the moment. Biblical joy is a permanent condition of hope that depends entirely on the character of God. There is joy and pleasure in God's presence. You will find that worship is not work. It is pure pleasure when we lift up our souls to God in magnification and glorification. If you desire joy and peace, worship is where you will find it. God designed worship not only for His pleasure but for our pleasure. We are told to worship the Lord with joy and gladness. David says:

*Psalm 100:1-2 (NIV)*

*<sup>1</sup> Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. <sup>2</sup> Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.*

David also tells us that when we magnify God we will not only be shown the path of life, but we will also be filled with joy and eternal pleasure in His presence:

Psalm 16:11 (NIV)

<sup>11</sup> *You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

We have a picture here of pure delight as we worship God. We learn to experience great pleasure and joy from this part of the transformation process. Allow God to do His work in you through worship. Come before Him and let Him change you. You will experience great joy in His presence.

### 3. **Habakkuk received the supernatural strength of God** (*Habakkuk 3:19: Isaiah 40:31*)

Habakkuk 3:19

<sup>19</sup> *"The sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights."*

Transformation began with Habakkuk having questions about the sovereignty of God and ended with him affirming God's sovereign strength. The prophet started his prayer by asking, "Lord, what in the world are you doing"? He ends the prayer in worship by praising the sovereign Lord for everything He is doing. He knows that God is in control. He acknowledges that God has given him the strength to not only survive but to thrive. Habakkuk ends this wonderful prayer of worship by exalting God and affirming his dependence on him by saying, "*The sovereign Lord is my strength;*" (*Habakkuk 3:19*)

Habakkuk asked his questions and settled the issue once and for all. He learned to see things from God's perspective and trust Him no matter what the circumstances. God was his strength, final answer! When God asks us to wait, we too are faced with questions about His sovereign will. We are confronted with a life-changing decision; are we going to trust the sovereignty of God or are we going to opt for self-sovereignty? Are we going to look to God for strength or are we going to look for help in other places?

When we affirm the sovereignty of God as Habakkuk did, we open up the floodgates of His power in our lives. We are in a position to receive God's strength rather than experience what little strength we possess drained away because of anxiety, fear and anger. Rather than spending energy trying to strengthen ourselves we depend on the provisions of the Almighty. We take to heart what God said through the prophet Isaiah,

Isaiah 41:10

<sup>10</sup> *"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."*

God's sovereign strength is supernaturally imparted to us. God's strength is not just a propping up of our natural abilities. It is not merely "awaking the giant within" as noted self-help guru Anthony Robbins would have us believe. It is God **placing His strength in us**. It is supernatural because He is supernatural. It is God giving some of His divine power for us to use. David praised God for this gift when he prayed,

1 Chronicles 1:12

<sup>12</sup> *"Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all."*

God not only has the power to give strength to all, he wants all His children to have the strength to endure hardship and experience joy through the worst of times. God wants His children to know that His power is always available. We need only to “plug into” the source of that power.

### **God’s sovereign strength is made perfect in our weakness**

We will never experience the full extent of God’s sovereign strength until we come to the end of our limits. When someone suffers a traumatic loss and doesn’t show strong emotions people will often say “they were so strong”. Usually what they mean is that the person did not show emotion—did not show fear or sorrow. This is usually not strength but control. What is seen as strength is often a person, who as my mother would have said, is “keeping a stiff upper lip”, meaning controlling his emotions. Control is relying on our own strength. Real strength expresses fear, admits weakness and acknowledges that it is only through the Lord’s strength that we will survive.

It was during a time of personal crisis that God taught the Apostle Paul a valuable lesson about strength. God chose not to give Paul what he asked for, but something much better. Paul asked for deliverance from a physical ailment. God gave him more of Himself. God gave him the divine power to depend on His resources. Because of what Paul learned when God said “no”, Paul was able not only to admit his weakness and lack of control, but say that he delighted “...in weakness, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties, for when I am weak then I am strong”. (2 Corinthians 12:10)

### **God’s sovereign strength enables us to rise above all circumstances**

Habakkuk uses the feet of a deer as a picture of how God enables His people to escape danger and survive. Because of specially designed feet a deer is able to avoid dangerous situations. In a similar way God strengthens our minds, emotions and wills and makes them agile giving us the ability to escape danger. We are able to survive the scariest of circumstances. This is possible because our minds have been renewed and we believe in a sovereign God who is in control of everything and loves us so much He will always do what is best for us. Times of crisis give us the opportunity to test drive our faith by learning to trust God and receive strength in new ways. God not only gives us the strength to survive, but to thrive. He gives us the strength to see our circumstances from His perspective—to stay above our circumstances by His power. God has promised:

Isaiah 40:30-31

*<sup>30</sup> Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall <sup>31</sup> but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*

## **ASAPH’S TRANSFORMATION**

I want us to conclude this session by seeing how Asaph, leader of one of David’s Levitical choirs, went from an almost fatal trial of faith to transformation.

### **1. Expression**

Listen to Asaph as He expressed His struggles with God:

Psalm 73:1-4 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> A psalm of Asaph. Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. <sup>2</sup> But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. <sup>3</sup> For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. <sup>4</sup> They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong.

Asaph faced a crisis of faith so severe that he almost lost his foothold. He had probably been fretting for some time about the apparent prosperity of the wicked. This occurred because Asaph looked to God **through** his troubles. His troubles became magnified as God was minimized. He was unable to see the truth of God while being held captive by lies. As a consequence his emotions were a mess. Asaph freely admits this:

Psalm 73:21-22 (NIV)

<sup>21</sup> When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, <sup>22</sup> I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you.

There have been more than a few times when I have felt like Asaph. My emotions were a mess. I felt senseless and ignorant! In the midst of a crisis our emotions can become messy just like Asaph's. This is because our vision of God is blurred as we look at Him through our troubles. We experience frustration, depression, anger, fear and other kinds of debilitating emotions. These are a direct result of our incorrect beliefs. The only way to change these emotions is to change our focus and our thinking. This can happen when we are able to view our problems through God and affirm His truth.

Asaph's emotions were about to change. After his lengthy discussion with God about all the unfairness he perceived, Asaph was ready to cease expressing and fretting and take the next critical step of focusing on God.

## 2. Cessation

There is a clear change as Asaph enters this phase of transformation. There is a dramatic change in his focus. After admitting his heart was grieved and his spirit embittered he said:

Psalm 73:23-24 (NIV)

<sup>23</sup> Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. <sup>24</sup> You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.

Asaph now focuses on God. He is ready to see his problem through God's hand. This can only happen when he becomes still. Cessation always must come before exaltation or magnification. While expression is vitally important there is always a time when we have said enough! There is a time when we need to stop talking and listen to God, acknowledging that He is the sovereign ruler of all. We must be still before we are able to magnify Him and hear His voice.

## 3. Magnification-Glorification

We see Asaph's transformation begin as he starts to magnify and glorify God. God becomes much bigger than his problem. He now sees his problem clearly because he looks at it through the hand of God. God is magnified and his problem is minimized. Listen as Asaph magnifies and glorifies God:

Psalm 73:25-26 (NIV)

<sup>25</sup> *Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.* <sup>26</sup> *My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*

What a great statement of faith. Because he is always with God, Asaph can hear God's counsel. Hope has been restored, his mind renewed and emotions are healed. He now exalts and magnifies God and sees God as all he needs. He is able to say, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you." (V.25)

This is a most critical point in the transformation process. Without magnification and glorification there is little hope of real transformation. Our minds will not be renewed by the truth of God until we magnify, exalt, and glorify Him in all His glory and splendor. When we lift God up in worship, we receive a true vision of who He is and how He relates to us during our trials.

#### **4. Transformation**

Our transformation begins with expression when we lift up our souls to God. It continues when we are still before God. When we magnify and glorify the Lord He continues to shape our character. Through this act of worship, we will see God as all we need and be transformed. Like Asaph we will be able to say,

Psalm 73:28 (NIV)

<sup>28</sup> *But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.*

Remember where Asaph began. He experienced an almost fatal trial of faith. He was changed from a mess to a miracle of transformation. This miraculous transformation of character will always happen when we magnify and glorify God's character.





## SEARCH THE WORD STUDY GUIDE

Read and study *Romans 12:1-2* and answer the questions that follow:

### OBSERVATION: (What does it say?)

- To whom was this letter written? What was its purpose?
- What are the key words and phrases in this passage?

### INTREPRETATION: (What does it mean?)

- Why does Paul use the term “*living sacrifices*”? How would the believers in Rome understand the use of this analogy? In what way does being a “*living sacrifice*” prepare us for transformation?
- What is our “*spiritual act of worship*”?
- Do a word study of “*transformed*”. What does it mean in the context of what Paul is saying?
- How does being transformed by the renewing our mind enable us to test and know God’s “*...good, pleasing and perfect will*”?

### APPLICATION: (What does it say to me?)

- What is the most important principle you will take away from the study of this passage?
- How will you apply this principle to your life?



## **DROP ANCHOR**

Following you will find practical ways in which you can drop the anchor of the faithfulness of God:

### **Anchored for action**

1. Spend some time in prayer praising God for His transforming work in your life.
2. Think back over the trials in your life. In what way has God transformed you through those trials?
3. Make a commitment to always view every trial though “the hand of God”.
4. Make a commitment to offer yourself as a “living sacrifice” to God.

**My plan to drop anchor** (Write one thing you will do to drop anchor)

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Review the accountability questions in Session I and be prepared to share your answers with the group.

# LEADERS GUIDE

## LEADERS GUIDE FOR “THE CHOOSING STAGE” ANCHORING, SECTION 1

*Anchoring is the resource for “The Choosing Stage” and “The Sending Stages.” The training manual is divided into two sections. Section 1 is for “The Choosing Stage” and prepares disciples for “The Sending Stage” (Section 2). In the Gospels these two stages are closely related. There is a seamless thread from one to the other.*

*Anchoring differs from the other courses in several ways. First the content is structured differently. Unlike the first two courses this book is not designed for five days of study. It is up to the individual to decide how much material he will study each day in order to complete the assignments for the week. There are five parts to each week’s assignment. Not all take the same amount of time.*

I still recommend that you encourage people to spend at least five days a week doing this study. This will help disciples overcome the temptation to procrastinate and try to do too much at one time. Spending some time each day for five days a week or more will help people maintain the discipline of daily appointments with God. The weekly assignments are as follows:

### 1. Anchor point truth and anchor point action

There are 7 Anchors each with three anchor points. There is a total of 21 weeks that will be spent on these anchors.

#### ❖ Anchor point truth

Each anchor has two or more verses of Scripture to memorize and study. Encourage disciples to spend some time each day memorizing the anchor point truths for the week and reviewing Scriptures they have already memorized. This should include memory assignments from previous *Disciple’s Journey* courses. People will also spend time memorizing and reviewing the anchor point action.

#### ❖ Anchor point action

The anchor point action is in the form of a prayer that is a commitment to live by that anchor. The prayer summarizes the main points of the anchor and will help people remember it.

### 2. Explore the anchor

The “Exploring the Anchor” section is a segment of teaching that explores various aspects of the anchor point. Encourage disciples to read this section carefully and think deeply about the Scriptures cited and the thoughts presented.

### 3. Dig deeper

There is a “Dig Deeper” project each week that will help people know and apply the anchor point more thoroughly by studying a key passage of Scripture. They will answer key study and application questions. Be sure that they write all of their answers in the space provided. Have them share some of their answers in group sessions.

### 4. Search the Word Study Guide

In each session there is a “Search the Word Study Guide.” Here they will study a major passage of Scripture using the tools of observation, interpretation and application. Encourage people to set aside quality time for this project as it is time intensive.

## 5. Drop Anchor

The “Drop Anchor” application section will help people take all they have learned and apply it to their lives in a practical way. There are suggestions for application each week but encourage people to make personal application.

## 6. Accountability questions

Just as the bar for study is raised at these two stages so is the bar for accountability. The questions dig deeper as disciples are learning to trust one another and share more openly critical areas of their lives. Again if you have a group of men and women make sure you keep these groups separate for the accountability time. Following are the accountability questions: Following are some areas for which you will be mutually accountable during the weekly group session:

- Have you been faithful this week to your *Disciple's Journey* Covenant?
- Do you have any sins or shortcomings to confess?
- Have you been a humble servant to your wife and children?
- Have you been a godly example to non-believers and looked for opportunities to share your faith?
- Have you been pure and holy in all your relationships?
- Is there a specific area in which you would like prayer and encouragement?
- Is there an area of your life for which you would like specific accountability for next week's session?

## Prepare 4X6 Memory Review Cards

People on The Disciple's Journey should already be in the habit of using their spiral bound memory review cards. These cards will be a tool to help people retain the Anchors and other Scriptures memorized during The Disciple's Journey. Have people write the anchor truths on one side of the card and the anchor action and other memory assignments, key insights and Scripture references on the other side

## Preparation Time

Preparation time will be approximately 2½ to 3½ hours a week. Some weeks will take more time, some less. I suggest that people keep a specific time each day for an appointment with God. Encourage people to schedule that time and write it on their calendars.

## Serving Together

During “The Calling Stage” the focus was on doctrine and outreach--learning to effectively present “The Bridge Illustration,” praying for the lost, building relationships with non-believers, and sharing faith when given an opportunity. During “The Choosing Stage” disciples will continue this emphasis plus doing other kinds of servant outreach projects. You will decide as a group how you will serve together.

## The Disciple's Journey Covenant

The Covenant people will be asked to sign is a reminder of their commitment to faithfully complete all assignments and other related commitments so they will continue to grow in the character of Christ.

1. I will faithfully complete all assignments each week and be ready to participate fully in my group (2 *Timothy 4:2*).
2. I will deny myself, taking up my cross daily and following in the footsteps of Jesus (*Luke 9:23*).
3. I will make becoming a fully devoted disciple of Jesus a priority and not allow distractions of this world to keep me from time in the Word, prayer, and my group (*Mark 1:35; Luke 9:57-62*).
4. I will be accountable to others in the group, always being completely honest and open about my weaknesses as well as my strengths (*James 5:16-20; Hebrews 3:13*).
5. I am willing to pass on the discipleship baton and reproduce myself in others by leading them through the five stages of discipleship (*Matthew 28:28-30; 2 Timothy 2:1-2*).

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Together On The Journey**

The structure I suggest for group time is similar to the one I gave for *7 Great Doctrines of the Bible*. I only use this as a suggestion as to how to structure your group. Feel free to adapt the group session to fit your style and the needs of the group.

#### **1. The warm up**

I have found that it is good to have a warm up time when the group first gets together. The groups I have led have been in my home so I have coffee and sometimes pastry when people arrive. We spend some informal time just chatting. This lasts about fifteen minutes. I suggest that the entire group session last two hours.

#### **2. Enter God's presence**

I know of no better way to start a group session than to enter God's presence with praise and thanksgiving (*Psalms 100*). Jesus taught His Disciples to pray, "...Father, hallowed by your name, your kingdom come." (*Luke 11:2*). Spend some time in praise and thanksgiving. Then transition into a time of praying for God's Kingdom and His will. Pray for one another. Pray for God to open doors for your group to do Kingdom building.

#### **3. Accountability**

This is a very important time. It is not just a check up to see if people have been faithful to complete assignments and other commitments but to openly share their lives with one another. It is a time to honestly talk about what's going on in each person's life using the accountability questions as a guide. It is a time to share what's happening on your journey.

#### **4. Memory and meditation project**

The regular memory assignments are the "Anchor Truth" and "Anchor Action." Review these each week with the entire group or in twos. Review some memory projects from previous weeks and other courses regularly. This reminds people that to complete The Disciple's Journey they are responsible to know all of the memory projects.

**5. Discuss some of the “Dig Deeper” questions**

You will not have time to discuss all of these questions but choose a few to discuss in your group time. Ask the group which of the questions they would like to discuss.

**6. Have people share the results of their “Search the Word Study Guide”**

This should be an important part of your study. People will have spent a significant amount of time on this study and will want to share their insights.

**7. Drop anchor**

This is a good way to end the session with people sharing what new thoughts and attitudes God has placed in their hearts. You could again pray for one another as you conclude the session.

**8. Disciple’s Journey Adventures**

Remember the “50-50 Principle.” Be sure to plan regular Disciple’s Journey adventures doing outreach together.

**LEADERS GUIDE FOR “THE SENDING STAGE” ANCHORING--SECTION 2**

**Together On The Journey**

The format for group time is basically the same for “The Sending Stage” as it was for “The Choosing Stage.” There are three differences.

**1. Shared leadership**

During this stage I suggest that you rotate leadership for group time. Each week have a different person lead. This will prepare them for leading their own groups. You will be able to give them input on their skill in leading a group.

**2. Sending out two by two**

You will need to spend some group time discussing “sending” assignments and feedback on those assignments. Remember that you have complete freedom on the frequency and nature of those assignments.

**3. Passing the baton**

At the end of this stage you pass the baton to your disciples. You will need to take time in group time preparing people to launch *Spiritual Boot Camp* groups.