

CHANGE DIRECTION: BEGIN THE JOURNEY TO CHOOSE THE LIFE

Session 1: How I Got To This Point



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FOOLISH WISDOM: THE CALL TO BE IRRELEVANT AND UNNECESSARY

For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

1 Corinthians 1:25

To **choose the life** is to commit to a way or pattern of life. Its basis is humility and it is a life of self-denial and submission to others. We choose it because Christ chose it for himself. The essence of faith is to take up our cross daily and follow him.

We don't just amble our way into this pattern; it is a conscious decision to live by faith. It is fundamentally about giving up the right to run your own life. It is the life Jesus lived, the life to which he has called every disciple. It means to be as unnecessary and irrelevant to our culture as he was to his. And just as we are never more alive as when we deny ourselves, we are never more relevant and necessary than when we choose his life.

The life that Jesus lived and prescribed for us is different than the one being offered by many churches. His servant leadership was radically distinct from what is extolled by secular society and even too bold for what is modeled in the Christian community. What will we choose? Will we surrender to the powerful forces of our culture and simply try to be successful for Jesus? Or will we choose the life that Jesus chose, and commit to follow him regardless of where he leads?

Will we be willing to lay aside our own personal agendas and live for others?

Will we have the courage to be different than the culture?

What can we say to a world that has lost its soul to consumption if we practice consumer Christianity?

Can we find our way back to a distinctive life where we will no longer be marginalized and ignored?



Because we come out of a divine nature, which chooses to be divine, we must choose to be divine, to be of God, to be one with God, loving and living as he loves and lives...Man cannot originate this life; it must be shown him, and he must choose it...We are not and cannot become true sons without our will willing his will, our doing following his making. He was not the Son of God because he could not help it, but because he willed to be...²

George MacDonald

“Every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you into something different than it was before...each of us at that moment is progressing to one state or another.”³

C.S. Lewis

If you choose the life, the pattern of a revolutionary life that will transform you and those around you, it will take more than desire, it will take more than standing and pumping your fist into the air and saying, "Yeah, count me in." You must choose to establish a disciplined pattern.

Choice > Spiritual exercise > New habits > Character

Christ was a man for others, therefore, as his disciples we are to live for others. And that is what makes us Good News.

"The long painful history of the Church is people ever and again tempted to choose power over love, control over the cross, being a leader over being led."¹

Henri Nouwen

"Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ."



The ills of the church and of the individual almost totally derive from the simple failure to just do what Jesus told us to do in the Great Commission. That is what it means to **choose the life**. There is no excuse whatsoever for not doing it, and every rationalization is simply a wound to our own soul, and injury to our group, and an insult to the Christ who told us what to do.

Dallas Willard

How I Got to This Point

THE PROCESS

1. Unmasked

2. Something is wrong, religious activity without transformation

3. Discipleship was superficial

4. Preaching was losing to environment

5. Competence had failed

6. Deeper issues
 - a. hooked on results
 - b. addicted to control
 - c. addicted to recognition⁵
 - d. a product of the times⁶

7. "Don't run, I'm going to break you."
 - a. rejection
 - b. # 50
 - c. love as Jesus loved
 - d. humility



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Session 2: ChooseThe Life Its Secrets and Principles



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CHOOSE THE LIFE

I sit down alone,
Only God is here;
In His presence I open,
I read His books;
And what I thus learn,
I teach

John Wesley

“American culture is stubbornly resistant to the way of Jesus.”

Eugene Peterson

- ✦ Competence before prayer
- ✦ Individualism before congregation
- ✦ Impatience rather than endurance
- ✦ Celebrity over humility

1. Foolish Wisdom: The call to be irrelevant and unnecessary, or, how to lead with humility and weakness.

“For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength.” I Corinthians 1:25

2. Choose: Intentionality

We are not disciples simply because we choose not to be. We battle daily between discipleship and non-discipleship Christianity. We cannot change by simply desiring change, it must be a decision to submit to a new way of life. And as we practice the spiritual disciplines, the law of indirect effect begins to work.



3. The life: A pattern of life, the life that Jesus lived

- To believe what Jesus believed [transformed mind]
- To live as Jesus lived [transformed character]
- To love as Jesus loved [transformed relationships]
- To train as Jesus trained [transformed habits]
- To minister as Jesus ministered [transformed service]
- To lead as Jesus led [transformed influence]

4. The nature of faith

Faith that follows, that takes action Hebrews 12:1-3

5. Rejection of the forgiveness only gospel

6. The nature of grace

Cheap Grace is a tepid response Romans 6:14

Grace is not passive Ephesians 2:8-10

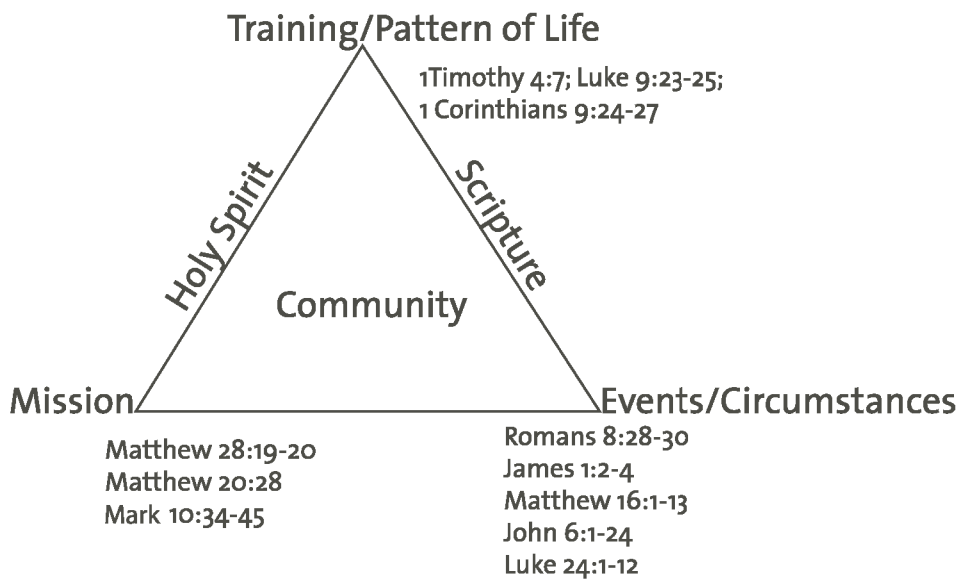
Effort is good Colossians 1:28,29

Don't try to be Godly—train to be Godly 1 Timothy 4:7



7. Transformational Triangle

Transformation Triangle



“Obedience is the only sound objective of a Christian Spirituality”

Dallas Willard



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Session 3: The Call to The Life



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THE CALL TO THE LIFE

My life is an answer: The answer of the one loved to the one who has loved them—I can't answer someone else's call—I dare not answer another's call—but when he does call, "If anyone would come after me..." the words of George MacDonald ring true,

"Instead of asking yourself whether you believe or not, ask yourself whether you have this day done one thing because he said, Do it, or once abstained because he said, Do not do it. It is simply absurd to say you believe, or even want to believe in him, if you do not do anything he tells you."

My life is the answer to his call. And if he calls me to walk on water, or serve a homeless person, he will give me the grace, the divine enabling to do it. When I answer with my life, I make myself his disciple at once. This is why Bonhoeffer said "only those who are obedient believe and only those who believe are obedient. That faith is only real in obedience." So when God calls a person, he invites them to come and die. And ironically they will never be more alive.

1. ANYONE CAN DO IT: LUKE 9:23A

We must go beyond temperaments and learning styles: "...come after me."

2. SELF-DENIAL IS ESSENTIAL: LUKE 9:23B

Deny yourself a ten-year plan that you have worked out with a battery of psychological tests and a financial planner. The only reason we say no to self is in order to say yes to God.



We fail to be disciples only because we do not decide to be. We do not intend to be disciples. It is the power of decision and the intention over our life that is missing.

Dallas Willard

3. TAKE UP YOUR MISSION: LUKE 9:23C

- ✦ The cross is a symbol of mission
- ✦ We must identify ours

4. GAINING YOUR LIFE: LUKE 9:24,25

“For I am already being poured out like a drink offering and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge will award to me on that day.” 2 Timothy 4:6-8



“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. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?”

Luke 9:23-25

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Session 4: Habits and The Life



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THE HABITS AND THE LIFE

The disciplines have no value in and of themselves

The disciplines are indirect, yet vitally necessary to the forming of character

The disciplines are tools used by the Holy Spirit to form character

Abstinence:

Designed to free us

Engagement:

Designed to reconnect us

1. THE GOAL IS GODLINESS

1TIMOTHY 4:7-8

2. THE PROCESS IS PRACTICE

HEBREWS 5:11-14

3. PERSEVERANCE YIELDS A HARVEST

GALATIANS 6:7-9



Widespread transformation of character through wisely disciplined discipleship to Christ can transform our world. It can disarm the structural evils that have always dominated humankind and now threaten to destroy the world.

Dallas Willard

Christianity has not so much been tried and found wanting, as it has been found difficult and not tried.

G.K. Chesterton

Discipleship/spiritual formation has not so much been tried and found wanting, as it has been found difficult and not tried.

Bill Hull

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Session 5: Ancient-Future Disciples



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FIRST CENTURY DISCIPLES

WHAT DID IT MEAN TO BE A DISCIPLE DURING THE TIME OF JESUS?

1. A decision to follow a teacher/Rabbi
2. A commitment to memorize the teacher's words
3. A commitment to learn a teacher's way of doing ministry
4. A commitment to imitate the teacher's life and character
5. A commitment to raise up your own disciples

JESUS BUILDS A BRIDGE FROM THE 1ST CENTURY TO THE 21ST CENTURY

1. A Disciple submits to a teacher who teaches him/her how to follow Jesus
2. A disciple learns all the words of Jesus
3. A disciple learns Jesus' way of doing ministry
4. A disciple imitates Jesus' life and character
5. A disciple finds and develops other disciples of Jesus



MATTHEW 23

1 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples:
2 "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. 3 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. 4 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. 5 "Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; 6 they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues;

7 they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.' 8 "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. 9 And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. 10 Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. 11 The greatest among you will be your servant. 12 For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.