

Capturing God's Heart

Volumes 31 - 40



"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up,
just as you have been doing." 1 Thessalonians 5:11

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TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
31. Rules for Living	2
32. Worship	6
33. Choose Christ	11
34. Money	13
35. Simple Sermons	18
36. Love	22
37. Identified with Christ	25
38. Sabbath	30
39. Peace	33
40. Disciples	36

Volume 31 - Rules for Living

It is easy to want rules for living. Something that tells us “do this” and “don’t do that” removes us from the need to walk in true relationship with God. If we can just figure out what he wants then we simply have to follow a to-do list.

But the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the work of The Kingdom is much more than what we are doing or not doing. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is about relationship, about nuance, about principles for living (not rules), and about our manner of being woven throughout everything.

If I was to give anyone rules for living the Christian life I would direct them to the book of Micah.

“O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you, to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8

From what I can tell this sums up life in Christ.

So let’s take a look at it’s parts:

I. DO WHAT IS RIGHT

There are many things that are right. Notice here that we are not instructed to not do what is wrong. Rather the author directs us to the positive. By this it is reinforced that at any given time we all know what is right.

Our consciences tell us what is right. God has hard-wired into each and every human being this knowing system that alerts us to what is right.

We find a similar message in James.

***“So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.”
James 4:17***

This means that sin is a very personal thing. This verse takes us beyond the rules and law and brings us to the reality of conviction.

Conviction is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives in relationship and response to our walk with God. Convictions are the thoughts and compelling of the Spirit of God unto good works, kind words, faithful service, compassionate care, and more.

James makes it very clear that we must follow our convictions, and that to do anything less is in fact sin.

What is God calling you to do today? How might he be compelling you?

To what are you being invited into and are you responding positively or negatively?

This is the crux of ‘Do What is Right’. Follow the Lord’s compelling.

2. TO LOVE MERCY

Mercy understands that we are all the same in our inner being. Mercy gets it that the sins of others could be our very same sins. Mercy does not hold ourselves above others as though we are better than them.

No! Rather, mercy knows that the ground at the foot of the cross is level. We all stand at the same height before our God. All of us.

And mercy understands that to put ourselves above another is to refuse mercy to that person.

In Matthew we find this truth:

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” Matthew 5:7

Thing is, we always receive what we give out. We want to be merciful people. We want to live above the letter of the law and enter into the spirit of the law.

The letter of the law says we are all condemned. If we live under this we then come to think we can condemn others also. We begin to believe that the gospel of Christ is about condemnation. But it's not.

Rather, the Spirit of the law says that Christ came to do away with condemnation and to grant us grace and favour when we least deserved it. Living under this we find mercy and are then able to extend that same mercy to others.

In Exodus we find this mighty declaration of the character of God:

“The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,” Exodus 34:6-7a

Here we find that the heart of God is about compassion, mercy, grace, steadfast love, faithfulness, and forgiveness.

This is the very same things we are called to walk in. This is to be the manner of our being as well.

In Matthew we also find this:

“As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector’s booth. “Follow me and be my disciple,” Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him.

Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with such scum?”

When Jesus heard this, he said, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do.” Then he added, “Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: ‘I want you to show mercy, not

offer sacrifices.’ For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.” Matthew 9:9-13 NLT

Notice at the start of the passage in Vs.9 we find Jesus’ invitation, **“Come follow me and be my disciple.”**

We might wonder what this means. What is it to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Well, the passage goes on to show us.

Jesus ate with tax collectors (a hated despicable people at the time) and with notorious sinners.

We realize, as we look at this passage and many others, that Jesus did not hold himself back from relationship with anyone. And the church leaders at the time were scandalized.

*Notice, Jesus was hated by the church leaders because he kept breaking all the rules:

1. He ate with sinners. **Matthew 9:10**
2. He let the adulterous woman go free. **John 8:2-11**
3. He didn’t wash his hands before eating. **Matthew 15:2 + 20**
4. He healed on the sabbath. **Mark 3:1-6**
5. He worked on the sabbath. **Matthew 12:1-8**
6. He refused to come under their manipulative ways. **Matthew 21:24-27**
7. He spoke with Samaritans. **John 4:9**
8. He forgave sins. **Mark 2:5-11**
9. He let the sinful woman touch him. **Luke 7:37-38**

And the end of this passage in Matthew points out what the gospel is, **“I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.”**

We are drawn down the core of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What does it mean to become a disciple of Jesus Christ?

It is this: Mercy. Given to all. Freely.

“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” John 3:17

To LOVE Mercy. Fall in love with mercy. Receive it unto ourselves. Give it away freely to all. This is the work of the Kingdom. This is what the Lord requires.

3. TO WALK HUMBLY WITH OUR GOD

In Luke we find some practical advice from Jesus regarding humility,

“When Jesus noticed that all who had come to the dinner were trying to sit in the seats of honor near the head of the table, he gave them this advice: “When you are invited to a wedding feast, don’t sit in the seat of honor. What if someone who is more distinguished than you has also been

invited? The host will come and say, 'Give this person your seat.' Then you will be embarrassed, and you will have to take whatever seat is left at the foot of the table!

"Instead, take the lowest place at the foot of the table. Then when your host sees you, he will come and say, 'Friend, we have a better place for you!' Then you will be honored in front of all the other guests. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." Luke 14:7-11

Jesus is wisely advising all of us to never seek after our own honour, but to rather humble ourselves.

Presuming we are great we in fact will find ourselves brought low.

We are rather to live as Christ himself did. In Philippians we find this,

"You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. 6 Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. 7 Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, 8 he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross." Philippians 2:5-8

And in 1st Peter we find,

"And all of you, serve each other in humility, for "God opposes the proud but favors the humble." 6 So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honour." 1 Peter 5:5b-6

This verse, **"God opposes the proud."** should bring us to our senses.

Are we getting this? Do we understand fully and completely that when we are proud (and we all start out this way) that God has no other option than to oppose us?

We may be doing the kingdom work, we may be honestly seeking after what is good and right, but listen and listen well: when we do this in a spirit of pride we are not under the covering of our God.

We are in our flesh.

And in our flesh we are opposed by God and in danger to attack of the enemy.

Humility rather, is of the Spirit, and here in the same manner of Jesus Christ we find we are 100% protected and covered and kept in the Lord.

We must lead in humility. We must humble ourselves or be humbled. We must put aside our pride or we will be opposed by God.

These are powerful and scary truths. One I pray you take to heart today.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ advances through us, or not, depending on how well we are acting out the gospel of Christ.

It does no good to be speaking it and then acting in a different manner.

Rather we go forward in relationship and ministry in the spirit by which Peter writes,

“Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins.” 1 Peter 4:8

What do Disciples know? They know that:

1. God loves them
2. Jesus covers over our wrong
3. The Holy Spirit is alongside us to lead, guide, comfort and convict.

Trust this in your own life, and you can trust this in others lives. Trust the work of the Lord in your own life and you will be able to trust the work of the Lord in other's lives.

Ministry takes on a whole new meaning as we simply learn to Do What is Right, To Love Mercy, and to Walk Humbly with Our God.

“God we come before you today confessing our need of you. We so like our rules and our guidelines, but God I see today that you in fact call me to relationship with you, not with your rules.

You are right, I do know what is right. May I grow in integrity as I commit to doing what is right. May I not push away that still small voice that compels me to do good things for others. May I not ignore your convictions unto compassion and tenderness and grace.

Teach me to love mercy. Enable me to accept your mercy. Please pour your mercy into me and burn away the stuff of condemnation. We are a people desperate for mercy, teach me to give mercy to others, and to become a person of mercy in all of my dealings. My pride I bring to you and I renounce this day in the name and blood of my Lord Jesus Christ. I confess

Father that I cannot remove pride from my own being. And I realize that pride has in fact blinded me to the depths of my pride. I don't even know how bad the problem is. So today I simply bring my whole self to you asking that you do away with my pride and that you teach me humility. Enable me to walk in sober reality of who I am. Please help me.

Thank-You Lord for your heart of justice, of mercy and of humility. Make my heart like your heart today and every day from here on out. I love you. I honour you. I bless you this day. In the name and the blood of my Lord Jesus Christ I simply declare Amen and Amen”

Volume 32 - Worship

Worship is an important part of our lives as believers. Each Sunday around the globe finds multitudes coming together in praise to our Lord.

But what if worship is more than singing and dancing before God? What if worship is intertwined throughout our lives and the manner of our hearts?

I propose that worship is much more than what we think it is; lets take a look and see.

I. THE WORK OF OUR HANDS

In Colossians we find,

“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (3:17)

The work of a craftsman, an artist, a gardener, a builder, is also a way to worship. There is no work that is more pious or sacred than any other work. All that we put our minds and efforts to accomplish is holy unto the Lord as we commit it to him and invite him into it.

Today, be grateful for the work of your hands and give it the honour it deserves, and allow it to usher you into the presence of God as worship.

Today, honour and celebrate the work of other's hands. In this way we also worship our Lord who has equipped each of us for beauty and excellence in everything we do.

2. TRUSTING GOD

The Psalmist writes,

“Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie! You have multiplied, O Lord my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told.” Psalm 40: 4-5

I suggest you read all of Psalm 40. It is a chapter thick with the presence of God when we remain in trust of him. This is of course always the challenge. How do we continue in trusting God when circumstances appear that we must do things on our own?

To remain steadfast and in trust of our God is also worship. It is the refusal to give up on the character and goodness of God in our lives. This will be tested time and again for trust is not easy to have. But for those who remain in him these ones prove their worship.

3. LEAVING REVENGE TO THE LORD

“The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry. The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken. Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned. The Lord redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.” Psalm 34: 15-22

When we are under attack from others we often want to cry out and

- defend our reputation
- declare our innocence
- hurt those who are hurting us

But none of these things are the way of the Lord. In fact, God calls us to a different way. God says, 'leave it with me, trust me.' And when we put our reputation, our innocence and our hurt into the Lord's hands, trusting Him, we are worshipping.

Proving by our actions and our restraint to go after others we enter into another deep layer of trust and rest in the Lord, here our worship is pure and sweet.

4. TREATING OUR ENEMIES WELL

In Matthew we read this one sentence,

“And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.” (5:41)

Jesus was talking in this passage about how we are to treat our enemies. He was speaking to the Jewish people who were under Roman rule. Their very lives were always under scrutiny and oppression. The

Romans were present in the land and a law at the time was this: If you are on the road and a Roman soldier is going the same way as you, that soldier can make you carry his pack (his bag) for one mile.

The people obviously hated this. It would have been like having dust and dirt ground in your face by the one you hate. It would have been humiliating and degrading to carry the pack of your enemy.

So Jesus speaks of a better way. A way above humiliation and degradation, and that way was to bless over and above the required amount. If one mile is required then carry it for two.

As we overcome evil with good we step out of ought and should and law and we enter into love and good deeds that again prove our understanding of God and his ways and in this we enter into profound worship.

5. BEING AN HONOURABLE PERSON

Proverbs says,

“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.” (4:23)

It is up to us to choose what we see and bear in our hearts. We are commanded to keep our hearts with vigilance. This means to take great care about what we put into our hearts and the thoughts and attitudes that come out of our hearts.

We are to be:

- honest and truthful
- patient and gracious
- holy and with a clean heart
- prayerful and trusting
- keeping our word
- gentle and kind

The manner in which we care for our hearts can also be worship. Make good choices without excuses and here we also worship our Lord.

Honour him today and you will be honourable and your worship will be honourable.

6. BEING A PEACE KEEPER

In James we are admonished,

“And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” (3:18)

I suggest you read all of James 3. This entire chapter is speaking about our language, the things we say and the spirit in which we say them.

It is a chapter about being careful with our tongues and our words. The passage finishes off with this verse that speaks of peace. We are told that righteousness is sown by peace.

This is important to know and to remember. Righteousness does not come about by violence or under compulsion. Rather, peace is our method if we are to be in the Lord. Here too, as we seek peace and lead with peace we are worshippers. In peace we honour the heart and ways of the Lord and here we also worship.

7. ENJOYING ORDINARY PEOPLE

Romans tell us,

“Live in harmony with each other. Don’t be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don’t think you know it all!” (12:16) NLT

As leaders and pastors we must leave our importance behind if we are to please the heart of our God.

There is nothing more offensive than Christians who think they are better than everyone else. In fact, arrogance and pride make filthy our worship. When we think we know it all we leave no room for God or others to give us a hand, and this is offensive to the ways of the Lord where we are to be receiving from each other.

As we leave our importance behind, only then can we truly enter into worship. Enjoying ordinary people is our worship.

8. HONOURING PEOPLE

And in Romans we read,

“Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honour.” (12:10)

The love of our God is people. It is for people that Christ came to earth. It is for people that our Holy Spirit remains with us. God is for us and as we are for others we come alongside the Lord. This too is worship.

To be concerned with what concerns God is worship. To take action and advocacy on behalf of others is exactly what Christ did for us and this too is our worship.

In fact, all of our lives can be summarized by how we have loved people. This in fact proves our worship.

We may very well come each and every Sunday to worship, but if our treatment of others is ill-kempt the rest of the week our worship is nullified.

“So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” Matthew 5:23-24

And there is more. Basically, in any way that we agree in words and heart and action with our God, this is worship. For in the heart of worship is acknowledgment and due respect and honour proven by our actions and choices, by words and deeds.

Worship the Lord today and every day.

“God we bring you our very lives and ask that worship would become a part of every day. As we interact with our children, our spouses, our families, our neighbours, remind us that our kindness and care reveals our hearts of worship, or not.

We want to express you through every part of our day. Enable our actions to speak of you. May the work I must do today be unto your glory and honour. I worship you with my work.

Teach us patience, trust, faithfulness, and peace that in all things my manner may worship you. Renew my heart and my attitudes so that you are honoured in all things by my life and mind.

Thank-you God for worship and adoration. May my outer worship on a Sunday morning be supported and proven true by my actions and words and love the rest of the week. With all honour to you Lord, Amen.”

Volume 33 - Choose Christ

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” John 3:16-17

God is always coming towards us, inviting us, wooing us, offering us himself to live by. In our natural state we are against God’s ways. In our humanness we would rather hate than love, condemn than receive.

For instance, our fallen human nature would rather put others down than lift them up. We tell lies where there should be truth and we are jealous where there might be contentment and peace. When we see wrong we condemn instead of giving grace, and we are often demanding with each other rather than living with each other in understanding ways.

We are told, ***“the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”*** Galatians 5:22, and in this it is obvious to see that we need The Spirit of the living God, we need the help of our Lord Jesus Christ if we are to obtain these things in lasting measure.

Whether we have known Jesus Christ a long time or are only just coming to know Him, we can all agree that none of us can manufacture or live these ways of The Spirit of God on our own. These things, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, are beyond our own efforts and ability.

Thankfully we are reminded that ***“God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,”*** 1 Thessalonians 5:9

God has not destined us for wrath – that is the enemies work, yet sometimes we get the condemner and God mixed up. Sometimes in our Christian zeal we take on a spirit of condemnation, of contempt, and of impatience with the lives of others, yet this way, we must remember, is a mark of the enemy and not of our God.

We forget that while ***“the wages of sin is death, the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*** Romans 6:23

While sin extracts death, it always has and it always will, when we carry the mark of God upon our lives we live unto life and not unto death. We want to live in this free gift of God for the alternative is a sin-state that is turned away from the God who IS life. God does not punish us for our sins because sin is in fact the punishment. God’s heart, rather, is always for our good.

“For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live.”
Ezekiel 18:32

While sin, agreement with Satan and not with God, sets our life up for difficulty, disease, despair, danger, and the like, God in his great compassion and love saw our immense difficulty, that we were stuck in these never-ending agreements with Satan and death, and He stepped in to do something about it.

“But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
Romans 5:8

By sending His son Jesus Christ, God made a way for us to turn from our allegiance to sin and to establish new agreements unto God.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9

The question comes down to belief. Do we believe that Jesus Christ died on a cross and then rose the third day? Do we believe that sin has been taken care of by Jesus? Have we allowed His grace to penetrate our hearts and minds and lives?

“Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” Isaiah 55:6-7

The work and blood of Jesus Christ is a covering that we choose to come under. When we choose Christ we come into the compassion of God, we come into pardon. A free gift to each and every one of us when we enter into the blood of Jesus Christ, we accept his work done on our behalf.

“Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” John 11:25-26

We respond, *“Yes Jesus, I realize that I am a sinner. There are many parts of my life and being that I cannot make right on my own. My heart and life reveals striving and self effort, a life apart from your grace, but today I choose to agree with you Jesus and with your work done for me. I enter into your compassion and pardon. I receive you into my life. I receive your life on my behalf.”*

And we are then told,

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.” John 5:24-26

What is profound in all of this is that God never tells us to work for our salvation. We are never instructed to make right our lives, to prove up, to become worthy, to work harder. Never. In fact, just the opposite.

It is when we are trying to work for our salvation, when we put trust in our own good works, when we feel justified in our habits, it is these times that we have in fact missed the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.” Galatians 5:4

For those of us in the ministry of our Lord we must abide, we must remain in the grace of our Lord. We came to Christ in grace, we must remain in grace.

In zeal for what is right and wrong and for what is good and bad we can lose sight of our own sinfulness.

The Pharisees, the church leaders at the time of Christ, had become experts in the law of the Lord, in habits of cleanness, in rituals of worship and scripture and more, but Christ called them whitewashed tombs (Matthew 23:27); they looked good on the outside but were filthy on the inside. They demanded that people act as perfect as they and this is what Jesus said,

***“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.”
Matthew 23:13***

The Kingdom of God is not about how good we are, it is about the goodness of God.

The Kingdom of God is ours only as we recall our impoverished state before the Lord and enter into the saving work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Pharisees, the church leaders remember, refused to enter into the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and in this they missed out on the Kingdom of God.

The gospel message is not just for all those ‘out there’ it is for us, each of us. Every day gives us new opportunity and fresh experience of walking in Christ, of taking him on in our lives, of wearing his manner through our manner.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” 2 Corinthians 5:17

Volume 34 - Money

There is nothing quite like money to test our integrity and our priorities. Through money we can easily see the character of a person, the quality of an organization, and the honesty of a church.

As humans we are quite naturally concerned with our everyday needs. We are concerned with where we live, the food we are eating, the things we must pay for and provide for ourselves and those we are caring for.

While money is necessary for all these things we too easily make money into much more than just the things we need. As humans we distort money. We use it to know our personal value and worth, we use it for status and as a way to prove to others the value of what we are doing. We use money to gain favour with others and to show that we are important people.

But using money like this distorts and defiles both money and God. For we are not to look to money for our needs but we are to look to God. Speaking to our personal and daily needs God says,

“Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” Matthew 6:31-33

He is saying, ‘Seek my ways, do life as I instruct and I will take care of you.’

We live in unceasing struggle and burden to make our lives work but God cuts in and says, 'You can be relieved of your worry if you will entrust your life to me.'

Now this does not mean that all things will be fixed just like that. God doesn't work this way. Rather He slowly bit by bit leads us into greater truths and integrity about who He is and how this impacts and changes our hearts and minds and then lives. And this is true of our relationship with money as with anything else.

Now it is quite possible to gain money outside of God's ways and through dishonest means. People do it all the time. There are those who accept bribes and those who pay bribes. There are those who sell the gospel, tricking people into believing that God can be bought and that this is okay. We can go after big money even while we are sinning with little money.

The writer of Proverbs knew that **"Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it." Proverbs 13:11.**

A primary principle throughout scripture is about being faithful with a little. While it is part of our sin nature to be unsettled in what we have here and now and to go after the much we see all around us, this is not faithfulness, it is not stewardship, it is not trust, and it is not wisdom.

Money matters reveal our hearts. In Hebrews we read,

"Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" Hebrews 13:5

It is very important for each one of us to be content in the here and now. Right now, as things are, can we be content? Are we able to give thanks? Is our heart grateful?

These noble characteristics of our hearts have nothing to do with the amount of money we have. We are tempted to think that if we have more money and all the things money can bring that then, THEN, we will be content. But it just isn't true.

If you are not able to be content with a little you will not be content with much.

Our ability to walk in integrity, to be honest, to refuse bribes, to give freely, has nothing to do with our money. Integrity, honesty, generosity, trust, faithfulness, all has to do with our hearts and the motives hidden there.

What kind of a person are you with money?

Where we get it wrong is that we fail to learn that money belongs to the Lord. My money, your money, our money, all belongs to God.

This means that we do not make decisions about the money we have without consultation and obedience to what the Lord is telling us. We cannot just do with God's money what we want. It is not ours. Rather, we want to be faithful stewards of what belongs to God. We want to become trustworthy in all matters before God including money.

- Do you understand that your money belongs to God?
- How might this change your money decisions?

We do not want to steal from God for then how can God trust us with more? We want to be people who

God can trust with money and this requires a number of disciplines.

1. THE FIRST MONEY DISCIPLINE IS TITHING:

“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.” Malachi 3:10

As we read in Malachi God challenges us to trust him and to test him. Now a tithe is traditionally 10% of what we make. We receive money from a job or a gift and we take 10% of that money and give it back to God. Giving it back to God means that we invite the Lord to tell us where to give that money; it might be to our church, to a neighbour in need, to a school or an orphanage.

Tithing brings us back to who we are trusting. Are we trusting ourselves, our jobs, in donations, or are we trusting in the Lord. Tithing secures our life in God. It is an act of obedience that both tests us and releases us. Tithing is a private thing between ourselves and God. Simply invite the Lord himself to personally lead and guide you in your tithing.

2. THE SECOND MONEY DISCIPLINE IS GENEROSITY:

“The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” 2 Corinthians 9:6

While we tithe a portion of our money we are also instructed to be generous with our other gifts and abilities and in fact with our very lives. Generosity can be expressed in many ways. For someone with land perhaps we make available to someone, a portion of that land.

For someone who sews for a living perhaps a portion of every weeks labor, perhaps a dress or shirt is given to someone in need. Maybe you own a cow and a portion of the milk from that cow can go to someone who needs it more than you. Perhaps you are gifted in writing and reading and maybe you can gift your writing skills to someone who cannot write but needs to get a letter to someone.

While generosity positions us to be blessed by the Lord the mark of purity in giving is revealed in the heart of the giver as one who expects nothing back. Generosity is not about what we will get in return, it is about our heart that freely gives as the Lord has freely given to us. True generosity does not expect to be repaid. True generosity does not give to get.

3. THE THIRD MONEY DISCIPLINE IS FAITHFUL WITH A LITTLE:

“One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.” Luke 16:10

We all begin with a little. In fact, this is the best way to begin. It is therefore important that we learn integrity, truthfulness, honesty, with the little bits of money that we have. We learn to tithe on the little we have. We learn to give with the little that we have. We learn to trust the Lord in the little that we have.

In this our hearts are purified of greed, of hoarding, of possessions, of envy of others, and of coveting what is not ours. The little tests us. How are you in this test?

As in all things God is growing us up into people he can trust. If he cannot trust us to act rightly with a little bit he will never be able to trust us to act rightly with much. Choose today what kind of a person you want to be in regards to money and to God.

Do not be in dismay about your little. Take it as an opportunity to grow in the Lord.

4. THE FOURTH MONEY DISCIPLINE IS GIVE THE GOSPEL AWAY:

“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” Isaiah 55:1

The entire point around the work of our Lord is that it is freely given. Grace, forgiveness, healing, deliverance, freedom, cannot be bought and should therefore not be sold.

“And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.” Matthew 21:12-13

When Jesus came to the temple and began turning the tables of the money changers over in great rage he was responding to the sin of the leaders who were taking advantage of the people's need. The people were travelling from a far ways to come to the temple and to make their yearly sacrifices. Because of this long distance they often did not bring the dove or the lamb that they would be offering to the Lord, rather they planned to buy these things once they got there.

The religious leaders of the day took advantage of this need. It wasn't that they were charging for doves, it was that they were charging exorbitant amounts for doves. They were taking advantage of the people's need for their own gain. This is what had Jesus in such a rage; forgiveness is not for sale, grace is not for sale, healing is not for sale, prophecy is not for sale.

“But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!” Acts 8:20

Perhaps no where else are we to be so careful with money as in the church. It is just so easy to have distortions. Consider some of these possibilities. I once heard it said by a tv evangelist, 'The wealthier you are the holier you are.' I once heard of a pastor paying his congregation to bring people to church, 'For every person you bring you will receive xx number of money.'

These are crazy distortions of the word of God and defile the gospel.

Churches are to be the leaders, the ones showing us how, to tithe, to be generous, to be faithful, to be stewards of God's resources, and to not sell the gospel.

While there are other principles that we could look at in regards to money, but for today I leave it to these four and simply leave off with a few more important verses about money for your own study.

“Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:7

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” Matthew 6:1-4

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:19-21

Most of all settle yourself in greater trust and rest in the provisions of our Lord. Be okay with today. Trust Him for tomorrow. Be content. Present all your requests to the Lord. Wait on Him. Do not rush ahead. Do not lag behind.

In all things, particularly with your money, walk in step with the Lord. Be obedient. Be willing. Receive with thanksgiving, hold with open hands, and give as God directs. And remember,

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah 29:11

“God we come to you today in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We confess that we have not always been good with our money. Too often we do with it what we want, what seems best to us. We have not asked you for direction.

Today we change this, today we turn toward you, we turn our money toward you. Please show us the way free from our money sins. Where we have stolen may we repay. Where we have greedily held money close to us may we be free.

Where we demand from others may we release them. Where we guilt and shame people into giving to us may we stop. And where we do not yet fully trust you please teach us and give us faith.

We declare today in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that my money belongs to you God. I set myself to obedience to you with my money. I invite your leading and your guiding. Make my spirit quick to hear your instructions and wisdom.

I remove from money the authority that only you God are to have. I give you lordship of my life. Amen”

Note, that if you are the pastor of a church that has misused your people in regards to money, that this prayer is for you as a leader and for your church leadership team to set straight before the Lord all that has been wrong, so that all that is right might be yours.

Volume 35 - Simple Guide to Sermons

I write this today to give some practical and simple guidelines to those who are compelled to share the word of God but may struggle with any of the following:

- Do not have a Bible school training
- Do not have opportunity to study the Bible for hours at a time
- Are brand new to the Bible

This simple guide can be used by pastors and by lay persons to prepare a simple sermon, a Bible study class, or to simply share a personal testimony.

***“Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance,”
Proverbs 1:5***

I. READ GOD’S WORD DAILY

The Bible is best when we make it a part of our every day. Bit by bit, reading little by little, we will become familiar with its pages and all that God has to teach us through it.

Reading the Bible on a daily basis is like tithing a tenth of our day to God. It can be hard to take the time to read the Bible, but when we do we by our actions declare our trust of Him over our lives and our desire to honour him each day.

Note: always begin with a simple prayer of invitation for God to teach you. Like this,

“God I come today in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ. I invite your revelation to my mind and heart and spirit. I stand against all confusion of the enemy today. I am dependant on your wisdom God. I welcome you to teach me. Amen”

“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12

2. AS YOU READ MAKE NOTE OF WHAT STANDS OUT TO YOU

Rather than focussing on understanding great long texts at a time, read each day until a thought or verse stands out to you. Sometimes this might be after 20 verses, sometimes it might be after 3 verses.

Remember that the point of Bible reading is to be impacted by the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit can work through many many verses or just a few. Trust God to teach you as you read His word. Do not

gobble it up thinking this makes you a better pastor or person. Take your time and really chew each story and verse.

When a portion of a verse impresses itself upon you, make note of this. Either write in the margin of your Bible where you are reading, or in a journal write out the verse and what has impacted you about it. Both are best.

Writing small notes in your Bible will help you find those places again, and will help you to recall how God has used each part in your life. Writing longer responses (but they don't have to be long) in a notebook will help you later as you glance back at what God has been teaching you.

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17

3. AFTER THREE MONTHS LOOK BACK OVER YOUR NOTES AND SEE WHAT GOD HAS BEEN SPEAKING TO YOU

It is an interesting thing to be noting day after day small thoughts and impressions as given by God, and then to look at all of these impressions at one glance. Very definite patterns emerge and themes of God's instructions and movement in our life become apparent.

At this point take a bit of time to sit before the Lord and invite further direction and revelation, or to simply worship and thank the Lord for what He has been teaching you.

The Bible is the word of God, the voice of God, and in this we are invited to interact with it and through it to interact with God. Our study times simply become conversations with God. So we thank Him and give honour to Him for his voice penetrating our hearts and lives.

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Psalm 119:105

4. BEGIN TO IDENTIFY HOW GOD'S TEACHING IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR HEART AND LIFE

After a few months of daily reading even just a little bit of your Bible you will begin to notice a difference in your thinking and in your hearts response to life. While the changes will begin happening immediately we often cannot notice them right away; mostly because changes that last happen little bit by little bit.

God shifts our thinking in small ways. Our Lord leads us day by day. The Holy Spirit reveals things bit by bit.

Small changes building up over time make for the longest lasting transformations. Small is best when it comes to our walk with the Lord and our interaction with His word. Trust him to be teaching you and in turn take the time to glance back and see the difference in your life.

Remember, we do not study the Bible just to know the Bible. We study the Bible to be changed by the Living God.

Ask yourself: How am I different today than I was three (or six or twelve) months ago?

This becomes a vital part of your story and of the messages the Lord is giving you to share.

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” John 14:26

5. BEGIN TO SHARE WITH OTHERS HOW GOD’S TEACHING IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR YOU

When we begin to share with others about what God is doing in our life, we want to simply give our testimony. We simply declare how God has impacted us. For instance, instead of sharing all of the Bible verses about how we do not need to fear, it is just as powerful to simply give testimony, *“Six months ago I was afraid of many things. But today, after reading His word and seeing how much God loves me and is taking care of me, I am no longer afraid. My courage is building.”*

This simple sharing can be done among small gatherings of friends, when you are walking with your spouse or sitting with your family. It is the place and way for anyone new to this to begin passing on the messages God is giving you.

You do not need to have fancy words or big long sentences to share the Lord’s goodness in your life.

Rest in simple testimony. For the authority with which you speak is based on your personal encounter with the Living God.

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” Romans 10:17

6. AFTER A TIME OF DOING STEPS 1-5 YOU WILL HAVE PLENTY OF MATERIAL FOR A SERMON

All that is left is to organize your thoughts.

- A. Know your main point (what do you want people to go away with?)
- B. 1st point
- C. 2nd point
- D. 3rd point
- E. Add in the verses that God used to teach you these things
- F. Include relevant stories to help tell your point
- G. Have a conclusion

Remember: Share how God is impacting you. What have you learned? How have you changed? What does God’s word say to this or that?

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” Philippians 4:8

7. CLOSE IN PRAYER. BE AUTHENTIC AND SIMPLE

The power of prayer is found in our lives alongside the Lord. As we walk in obedience to God's leading in our lives our prayers become stronger in their power and authority. Big words and long sentences do not make for stronger prayers.

The people you are teaching and leading need to know that they can pray as well. They need to know that prayer is not a big mystery but a simple conversation between us and God. Teach them this. Use your own prayers to model conversation with God.

Thank God for the lessons he is teaching us. Invite Him to give more lessons. Declare blessing over His people. And close with an Amen. It really can be as simple as this.

“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.” Matthew 6:7

And finally, for those of you who are pastors or spiritual leaders in your communities, teach this simple method of study and sharing to others. Also, make room in your church services and as small groups of believers gather for others to share in this way.

We want to be learners of our Lord through each other. The Body of Christ is vital to our well-being and each one can bring a fresh word from our Lord. As leaders we must make room for this. For every one of your people who have a Bible (and for those who don't join up with someone who does), take small bits of time on a regular basis to read and discuss and learn together.

While the Bible is a big book it is best taken in small bites, and after time those small bites add up to full meals and satisfied lives.

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” Joshua 1:8

“God we come together today in the name and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. We confess that the Bible is a big book and many times we are swamped with anxiety about how to share it all. Today we choose to rest in you. Today we settle into your leading and guiding, your wisdom and insight.

We invite you to teach us. We open our hearts and minds to your direction.

Lead us in all things. Most of all help us to make you and your word a priority in our lives. Help us to read even just a little bit of your word on a daily basis. For those of us who do not have Bibles, we ask that you would enable us to have them. For those of us who cannot read we ask that you team us up with those who can. May we simply study together.

All in all we thank you for your movement in our lives and that we are ever changing into the image of our Lord Jesus Christ. We bless you Father God. Amen”

“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:18

Volume 36 - Love

I write these God's Hearts as the Holy Spirit leads me. I don't have an agenda of topics chosen months in advance, I simply write in accord with the Lord's leading. And these last few weeks I've been brought back to the central truth of God's love for us and am compelled to pass that on.

It feels to me that the Lord wants to remind all of us that while we are working and serving alongside the Lord in His kingdom that we must not forget how much we are loved.

The heart of God's love for us is beautifully expressed in Jeremiah 3:17,

“The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.”

Just this one verse alone reveals a depth of the heart of our Lord in regards to each one of us.

1. God is in your midst
2. He is the mighty one who saves
3. He rejoices over you with gladness
4. He quiets you with his love
5. He exults and sings over you

Lets review these one by one.

I. ONE: GOD IN OUR MIDST MEANS THAT WE ARE NOT ALONE.

Though the weight of our work and of life itself may press down on us we can know that God is with us.

Immanuel means 'God with us' and is one of the names given to Jesus.

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” Isaiah 7:14

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14

God with us means that God is working through us. As we rest in the presence and work of Jesus Christ he works through us. We take comfort in this. The work is not all ours to do. Rather we enter into dependance on God and as we invite Jesus Christ into our lives we agree with Him and when we agree with the Lord life takes on new satisfaction.

2. TWO: THE MIGHTY ONE WHO SAVES INDICATES A CONTINUOUS PRESENT TENSE.

God has saved us. God is saving us. God will save us. We experience the truth and presence of God in our past, present, and future.

“And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Acts 2:21

“He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,” Titus 3:5

The love of Father God foreknew us and prepared a way for us. Jesus Christ his Son entered into our present tense and died a sinless death so that you and I might live. Our Holy Spirit remains with us leading and guiding us each and every day.

This work of God never ends. It goes on in our lives and in the lives of every human being on planet earth. God is continually drawing all people unto himself in love and kindness and understanding. This we can count on. This we rest in.

No longer do we need to force God upon each other. No longer must we micro-manage those around us.

No longer must we fear. God is active in all our lives even when we cannot perceive Him.

Because of this we can come to a place of greater understanding alongside our fellow human beings. We are released to just be people alongside people for Jesus is the one working in all our lives.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” Matthew 11:29

3. THREE: HE REJOICES OVER YOU WITH GLADNESS

God’s heart over us works to dispel the lies and condemnations within us. Remember the utter joy of a child born to you? This is the same joy (but bigger yet) that God experiences in regards to you each and every minute of every day.

I ask: How might His joy about you change how you view yourself, God, and this life you are living?

“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” Romans 14:17

“Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure.” Psalm 16:19

Life alongside God brings us to deeper understanding of our lives. We realize that there is another reality to living than just this earthly experience and our earthly struggles.

We learn alongside God that even though there are difficulties God is in the midst.

4. FOUR: HE QUIETS US WITH HIS LOVE IS THE EXACT RESULT OF GOD IN OUR MIDST

We cannot stay stressed when we are aware of the presence of God. In His presence our anxiety, our worry, our concerns fall to the side. We are quieted in our inner person.

“For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name.” Psalm 33:21

“He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed.” Psalm 107:29

While we make our plans and do the work of our lives it takes on a new ease as we allow the Lord's quieting over us. We do the same work but our hearts don't worry the same. We carry on the same tasks but we are more relaxed and okay with God's leading. We do not rush to control or fix things like we once did. God quiets us and we enter into His rest.

5. FIVE: HE EXULTS AND SINGS OVER YOU AND HE EXULTS AND SINGS OVER EACH ONE

In this love of the Lord we realize that he loves everyone to the same extent that he loves us. And as we realize this we begin to take greater care with those around us. We realize that we must treat others as the great loves of God that they are.

As we experience God's love and exulting and singing over us we bring this same spirit and manner over others. We learn too to rejoice in our fellow human beings. We begin to see the beauty of mankind all around us.

God's singing over us changes how we perceive each other. We, all of us, every single person, is precious to God, and we dare not use and abuse them. It is God's love that alerts us to this.

“And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you,” 1 Thessalonians 3:12

“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35

We are reminded today that though we work to understand God more, though we work to bring justice where there is injustice, though we work to teach and guide and lead those depending on us, though we strive to accomplish much good in the countries in which we live, we remember that love and our manner alongside God and others is the most important thing of all.

We remember that how we treat each other matters first and foremost. We remember that God loves us with a deep and abiding love and we are reminded to slow down, to take notice of our fellow human beings, to acknowledge each other in kindness and understanding.

“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all

knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. 13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”
1 Corinthians 3:1-13

Volume 37 - Identified with Christ

Identity is important. Who we know ourselves to be brings stability and confidence to our lives and how we walk out our days.

Because identity is so important we are easily fooled into identifying with the wrong things. We know of course about those who identify themselves with a licentious lifestyle. We know those who identify and live out drugs and partying and drunkenness and we know that these identities will lead us to death and destruction. So we know to avoid this and to find our identity elsewhere.

But we, in our wild swing away from this, often come to find identity in self-righteousness. We preach against drunkenness, we hate the partiers, we despise the drug addict, we scorn the prostitute, we will not spend time with the sinners, and we refuse to get to know those whose lives are different than ours.

We are afraid. And our identity is obviously not very sure if we must define ourselves by what we are not.

We miss the fact that in this response our identity becomes one of hating, despising, scorning, and refusing to be in the presence of those we cannot agree with.

This is the natural result of religion. It was the same identity that the pharisees of Jesus' day had taken on. They prided themselves in their self-righteousness, in their superiority, and as a people who could maintain an outer appearance of godliness.

And yet Christ called them white-washed tombs. Christ could see their hearts and though their outward behaviour was perfect their inner being had become about hating, despising, scorning, and refusing relationship with people. They had become exactly what God is not.

And God confronted them with this.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness.” Matthew 23:27

“Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of at feasts, who devour widows’ houses and for a pretence make long prayers.They will receive the greater condemnation.” Luke 20:46-47

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.” Matthew 23:25

The Pharisees had made a distinction between themselves and the ordinary men and women around them.They set up rules and regulations as a way of excluding common people and they used these rules and regulations to justify their disdain and contempt of others.They grew in their superiority as they hated and rejected others and God said,“Be very careful of such people.” and even called them blind guides. (Matthew 15:14 and it’s surrounding context)

We, as leaders and pastors and teachers in the Kingdom of God do not want to be blind guides.We do not want to define ourselves by what we are doing or not doing. In Matthew 15:1-20 Jesus makes it very clear that it is not our habits or our traditions that make us clean before the Lord. It is the attitudes of our hearts that reveal if we truly know God or not.

Jesus came to give us a new identity. He came to remove from our lives an identity with religion (which is full of rules and regulations and resulting condemnations) and to give us an identity with himself and true godliness.

All we have to do is to look at the life of Jesus Christ to see what this new identity is all about.What did Jesus do? How did he treat people? What characteristics did he model? What was the manner of his speech? In what way did he live his life?

1. JESUS IS GOD

“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.” Hebrews 1:3a

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.” Colossians 1:15

2. JESUS LIVES OUT THE FATHER’S HEART

“I can do nothing on my own.As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.” John 5:30

“Jesus said to them,“My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.” John 4:34

3. JESUS CAME FOR ALL PEOPLE

“And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.” Matthew 4:23

“In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.” 1 John 4:9

4. JESUS SPENDS TIME WITH SINNERS

“The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)” John 4:9

“And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” Matthew 9:10-13

5. JESUS IS COMPASSION

“He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.” Isaiah 40:11

“When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.” Matthew 14:14

6. JESUS IS UNDERSTANDING & PATIENT

“Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.” Isaiah 1:18

“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” 2 Peter 3:9

7. JESUS IS INCLUSIVE

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:28

“The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.” Revelation 22:17

8. JESUS SAVES US

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” John 3:16-17

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” I John 1:9

9. JESUS LOVES THE STRANGER

**“You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”
Leviticus 19:34**

**“Honour everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor.”
I Peter 2:17**

10. JESUS IS JUST

“You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbour.” Leviticus 19:15

“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Micah 6:8

11. JESUS BRINGS US TOGETHER

“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” I Corinthians 12:13

**“Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.”
Romans 15:7**

12. JESUS LOVES OURS ENEMIES AS MUCH AS HE LOVES US

“Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles,” Proverbs 24:17

“But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you” Luke 6:27

13. JESUS IS PEACE

“When a man’s ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” Proverbs 16:7

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” Matthew 5:9

14. JESUS IS LOVE

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.” 1 John 4:7

And there is so much more. Today we go in the strength of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We walk in compassion, loving our enemies, in understanding and with patience. We live out the Father's heart in our lives, coming close to people, extending peace, winning over everyone in love. This is our identity.

Becoming people who live as Christ lived, loved as Jesus loved, embraced as Jesus embraced, accepted as Jesus accepted, honoured as Jesus honoured, healed as Jesus healed, forgave as Jesus forgave – this is to be our identity.

Habits and traditions around worship and church and eating and preaching and gathering together and what it means to be a pastor can all move in response to the spirit when Christ is our identity. Issues of nationalism and politics and matters of law and governance need not be our core identity once we have identified with the person of Jesus Christ.

The traditions of the generations and the cultures of our times need not be our identity once we know identity in Jesus.

Jesus Christ simplifies our lives. We live as he lived. We love as he loved. We choose to be a Jesus kind of people, and after that everything else begins to make sense and fall into line. We walk with God.

“Jesus we come to you today in the power of your name and life given over for us. Thank-you for showing us the way to life, thank-you for being the way to life. We take on your life in our spirits and souls and bodies today in the name and the blood of our living Lord Jesus Christ. Wash us, heal us, make us new. Where we have created distinctions among our fellow people forgive us. Give us eyes to see others as you see them. Give us your compassion so that we might extend your healing to many. May our love be pure and just.

We declare our dependance on you for these deep transformations within the very core of our beings and so we wait, resting in your work in our lives, and we choose this day to act in accord with the model of Jesus, the very perfect image of God himself. We enter into your life Lord. Thank you. Amen and Amen.”

Volume 38 - Sabbath

It is hard taking a day of rest. There is this driving fear that would keep us working, working, working. Bills need to be paid, food needs to be bought; there is just always something that needs to be taken care of.

It is why it is so difficult to understand on a human level God's rhythm, and command even, to take a weekly sabbath.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.” Exodus 20:8-11

God, at the beginning of time, set into place a rhythm for our working and our resting. And while we do not any longer live under the law of the Old Testament, we do want to understand the principle behind this command; we want to know God's heart and intention for us in this admonition to keep a sabbath.

In its simplest understanding a sabbath is a day of rest. It is one day a week that we dedicate to ceasing from our labours and the things that must always be taken care of.

It is a fasting of sorts and an act of trusting God for our work and our livelihoods; by taking a sabbath we act out our trust in God's keeping of our lives. We may be tempted to believe that it is only the wealthy that can afford a day of rest, but in fact as we risk to enter into a day of rest we are then entered into the wealth of God.

“You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock.” Isaiah 26:3-4

I remember years ago when I first began keeping one day of rest a week. It was a fearful thing to do.

There was always work to be done, many things to be attended to, and yet I came to realize that these things would always be there. My work would never be done on this earth and I realized that it is faulty thinking to wait until our work is done before we take a day of rest.

Taking a sabbath is in many ways a simple act of obedience to our Lord. It truly is a way of saying, *“I trust you Lord with my days and with my life.”*

Then, as we grab hold of the courage to take a day of rest we welcome into our lives a greater movement of the Lord on our behalf.

“Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.” Psalm 37:5

Think of it this way. We can either continue trying to maintain our lives by our own hands and effort, or we can make space for the Lord in the keeping of our lives. A sabbath helps to make space for the Lord in our lives.

We intentionally step back from our own keeping, we take our hands off our own care so to speak, and in this space, as we take our hands off, God is invited to put his hands into the mix.

Taking a Sabbath makes space for more of God in our lives.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” Proverbs 3:5-6

Taking a Sabbath comes out of our hearts of worship and trust in our Lord.

Unfortunately, the ancient church leaders had made the sabbath into a weighty and unholy thing for the people. They demanded and shamed and made the sabbath harder and harder to keep, with more and more rules and condemnation for any transgressions.

And so when Jesus arrived on the scene he modelled a healthy view of Sabbath keeping. For instance, we find him,

“On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find a reason to accuse him. But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man with the withered hand, “Come and stand here.” And he rose and stood there. And Jesus said to them, “I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?” And after looking around at them all he said to him, “Stretch out your hand.” And he did so, and his hand was restored.” Luke 6:6-10

He brought us back into balance that the sabbath is a gift to mankind. It is God's rest for those who are living in his trust.

“And he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” Mark 2:27

And so we must walk balanced in our practice of taking a day of rest. For those in Christian service, pastors and lay-leaders within the church, Sundays are generally not a day of rest. Rather, they are days of much preparation, teaching, and leading. For Pastors and Christian leaders and their wives, it is often therefore important to take another day of the week as your sabbath.

“But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” Isaiah 40:31

If you are married it is as husband and wife you will want to decide together what day is going to be a sabbath for you, and you will also need to discern best how to make it a day of rest for both of you.

It is not okay for a man to announce to his wife that he will be resting on this or that day when she must remain cooking over a hot fire that same day. Men, you want to honour the Lord and honour your wife by making room and taking up the inconvenience of giving her a day of rest also.

How might you do this? Think creatively and be generous in your plans towards her. Perhaps she takes a different day as her sabbath and you take care of the home as she rests with the Lord. Perhaps you and your family fasts on the day decided as a sabbath, so that no cooking needs to be done. Or, perhaps you help her to prepare extra food the day before your sabbath and then everyone eats cold food on your day of rest.

Men, I can guarantee you that as you take a sabbath that both honours the Lord, and honours your wife, and teaches your children to do the same, your lives will be blessed and you will experience more of the Lord in all your earthly matters.

**“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,”
Ephesians 5:25**

There is no end of the creativity that can be taken to keep a sabbath day holy unto the Lord. There is no right or wrong in any of this. Remember, God has made the sabbath to be a day of rest for his people. It is a gift from God, and like all gifts the receivers must simply take the gift gratefully and make good use of it.

We do not make a sabbath into law for others, rather we take it as a day personally for ourselves and our family; we live it out in the spirit of a gift as God intended it to be for us.

“So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God” Hebrews 4:9

And finally, we must remember that the Sabbath is not an excuse to neglect people. It is not a day meant to make solid habits of laziness and disregard for responsibility. It is also not a day to make others work harder so that you may take it easy. The Spirit of a Sabbath is about generosity of time and of entering into the rest of the Lord.

“Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates.” Exodus 20:9-10

A rest is for everyone. Facilitate this in your life and the lives of those around you and receive good favour from our Lord. Taking a Sabbath brings us into the blessing of the Lord as children of God.

**“If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honourable; if you honour it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”
Isaiah 58:13-14**

LET'S REVIEW:

1. Sabbath is a healthy rhythm of work and rest for our lives.
2. A Sabbath is like a fast unto the Lord where we act out our trust in Him.
3. Taking a Sabbath is an act of obedience whereby we respond to the Lord's leading.
4. A weekly habit of taking a Sabbath makes more space for God in our lives.

5. A Sabbath can be any day of the week on which we choose to rest in the Lord.
6. As married couples come to agreement about the details of your Sabbath day of rest.
7. Men, use the Sabbath to minister to your wives and children.
8. Remember, to take the Sabbath as a gift for yourself, do not burden others with it.

As you walk with God and learn how to honour him and each other with a Sabbath I pray the Lord's deep peace and joy upon you. May your lives take on a new richness as you trust in Him. Amen and Amen.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” Romans 13:15

Volume 39 - Peace

God has a lot of things to say about peace:

**“Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.”
1 Peter 3:11**

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” Matthew 5:9

“A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” James 3:18

“When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” Proverbs 16:7

Our peace comes from God:

“Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all.” 2 Thessalonians 3:16

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

**“You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.”
Isaiah 26:3**

**“In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.”
Psalm 4:8**

And He commands us to walk in His peace:

“Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.” 1 Peter 3:9-11

“And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.” Colossians 3:15

“So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.” Romans 14:19

Peace is a gauge by which we assess our hearts before and within the Lord. Peace is not something that we impose on others from without, rather, peace is something that flows from the heart of God, through our hearts as we are surrendered to Him, and then out to others.

Yet the peace of the God pouring through our lives is not something that happens automatically. In our flesh-selves we find ourselves striving with each other, demanding of each other, condemning each other. Chaos and strife are our natural bent.

**“A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends.”
Proverbs 16:28**

“But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.” James 3:14-16

“For you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?” 1 Corinthians 3:3

As in all things there is a process in becoming men and women of peace. To be conduits of peace there are a few things that must be accomplished in our own hearts and minds.

1. First, we come to understand that we do not really know His peace. We recognize that there is much to learn about the peace of God and we admit our need and confess the lack of peace in our own hearts and minds. We allow the revelation of the Lord to show us our jealousies and to highlight our contentions and then we confess these things to God. Bringing our lack of peace out into the light makes a space by which God's peace can begin to change and inhabit our lives.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

2. Second, we must bring our ego needs to the Lord. Where we are insecure we must rest in God and what He declares about us. We do not take our sense of self from our outward lives, but rather we settle into self that is settled in the Lord. We come to Him and He wraps us in His peace.

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” Isaiah 41:10

In this, we loose off our demanding of others. The way of peace is the way of walking in forgiveness and understanding.

- Are we contentious in our spirits? We need the peace of the Lord.
- Are we unsettled in joy and faith? We need the peace of the Lord.

- Are we unwilling to set things right with others? We need the peace of the Lord.

“For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” James 1:20

Peace is powerful and active. Sometimes we believe peace is passive and lays down at the first hint of trouble. But peace is far more than just refusing to engage chaos or give voice to dissension, peace is the heart of our Father God and when our hearts are transformed by his peace, our hearts become a conduit of His peace.

Out of this work of the Lord in our own lives, peace flows out of our person to others around us. And when we walk in the peace of the Lord the darkness around us must submit to this spirit of peace carried in the love of the Lord. Peace enters in the kingdom of God just as light illuminates a dark room

Where there are spirits of chaos and destruction, we ignore the spirits of the enemy and instead we pray peace, “God we declare your peace in this place.” Rather than focussing on evil, we focus on God. Instead of going after the enemy, we bring God himself. In this way God’s ways take preeminence – peace does this.

“God, we say yes and amen to your peace over this community.”

“Jesus, we agree with your peace this day over this home.”

“Holy Spirit, bring your peace to our hearts and minds.”

“God, we enter into your peace.”

The enemy cannot stand against peace, for peace is the exact opposite of the nature of the enemy, peace is wholly the nature of God. Most particularly, our own sin nature loses it’s power when brought into the peace of God.

“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.” 1 Peter 2:24

“Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for you are my praise.” Jeremiah 17:14

“Creating the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace, to the far and to the near,” says the Lord, “and I will heal him.” Isaiah 57:19

Where the enemy seeks to destroy, peace seeks to heal. Where our hearts wish to condemn, peace forgives. Where communities are embroiled in dissension, peace brings a balm of the Lord and tensions ease and life increases.

The peace of God changes our lives, transforming our communities. The peace of the Lord begins in our own hearts and spreads from there. May we become people of peace. And as we do this may we enter in the Kingdom of God on earth.

“Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting. The Lord builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.” Psalm 147:1-5 (read all of Psalm 147:1-20)

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,” Psalm 103:2-4

Volume 40 - Disciples

**“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
Matthew 28:19-20**

The church is where disciples are being made.

Where disciples are being made there is the church.

The Biblical definition of church has always been about making disciples. It is easy to gather and even easier to build a building than to build disciples. Somehow, we have mistaken church to be about buildings and programs. Yet the church is the people, the body of Christ.

Consider what we are told about the early church,

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Acts 2:42

The early church was formed of simple and small communities of people where instruction and understanding naturally flowed in the context of fellowship, of eating together, and in prayer. There were no large gatherings, and there were no ‘church’ buildings, gatherings, or agendas, as we know it today.

Simply put, church is where the gospel and manner of Jesus Christ is passed on to others and where we are to take on identification with Christ and become like him.

Yet we have, in our formalization of the gospel in our church attendance and programs, in fact watered down the gospel. We easily miss that Jesus offers to any who would be his disciple, a two part invitation, the first, ‘come to me’, the second, ‘learn to die to yourself’.

KEY: Disciples are those who have 1) turned toward Christ in the fullness of their heart, and 2) who are learning to die to self.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” 2 Corinthians 5:17

**“Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”
Luke 14:17**

This is a hard message. It does not support much of our modern preaching where we are told that if we come to God he will make us big, or wealthy, or happy. Instead, Jesus basically says, 'come and die with me'.

It is important that we understand this. The gospel is an invitation to die to our selfishness, our own comfort, our need to be recognized, our arrogance and pride, our own best thinking and understanding, our prejudices, our self-pity, and more.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” Proverbs 3:5-6

It is as we come into contact with the true Lord Jesus Christ that we will become more gentle, we will honour all people, and we will be faithful to walk alongside others through the messiness of life rather than demanding some sort of christian facade.

Our hatreds, our impatience, our contempt, our disdain, our bitterness, our arrogance, our pride, our selfishness, our need for vengeance, and more, will all be put at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we will become new creatures in Him. The persons we once were, we will no longer be. And we will grow

in steadfastness and faithfulness, regardless of the circumstance or difficulties of our life.

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” James 1:2-4

This is the promise of our Lord to us. To grow us up in Him, to strengthen us through the trials, and to change our hearts and minds and lives from the inside out.

So, the first mark of a disciple is someone who has turned to Jesus and is in process of dying to self. The second mark of a disciple is the ability to both give and receive, to enter into true fellowship with the Lord and each other. Consider this,

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 7:21

And we may ask, what is the will of our Father in heaven? It is this:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35

Here Jesus is giving a new commandment. Now, just prior to these verses Jesus had this conversation with Peter,

“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, 4 rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. 5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was

wrapped around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, do you wash my feet?” 7 Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.” 8 Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.” 9 Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” John 13:3-9

Jesus was taking the role of a servant and performing the lowest act possible, that of washing the dirty and dusty feet of his disciples. He was modelling to them the attitude that they were to take with others. He took on the job *no one wanted*.

But Peter could not, at first, receive from the Lord. His pride was too great to enter into the vulnerability of having Jesus serve him and minister to him. And Jesus, as we see in verse 8, asserts that without the washing of the Lord we have no part in him.

Jesus' death and resurrection is where we are first washed, but then this 'washing of the Lord' continues within our faith communities as acts of service to one another, primarily coupled with the ability to receive acts of service from others.

Now some will more easily receive, and these ones must learn to serve. Others more easily serve, and these ones must learn to receive. There is no division on this. In the Kingdom of God there are not some who serve and some who receive. We are all to serve and we are all to receive.

The early church was marked by this mutual uplifting and teaching of each other. And where this radical, God-centered model of church is today, there is thriving presence of the Lord with much growth and delight in Him.

This manner, this attitude of fellowship, of giving and receiving, is what marks a disciple:

A disciple does not count him or herself better than others.

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.” Philippians 2:3

A disciple serves the people around him or her.

“My brothers, you were called, as you know, to liberty; but be careful, or this liberty will provide an opening for self-indulgence. Serve one another, rather, in works of love.” Galatians 5:13

A disciple becomes vulnerable and receives from others.

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28

A disciple knows his or her brokenness and welcomes the healing touch of the Lord through others.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” Matthew 5:3-5

Disciples allow no hierarchy amongst themselves.

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:27-28

Jesus brought a model of corporate service to each other. He calls us to himself, and he then calls us to die to ourselves. Here, in humility and love we have the ingredients of a revolution, something so vastly different from our natural human natures that Jesus said these are the marks by which others will come to know God.

Model the Lord Jesus Christ in all you do. Be blessed as you pass Him on.

“Let all that you do be done in love.” 1 Corinthians 16:14

“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45