



Unit 4: Disciple of Christ

Live life as a disciple of Christ and intentionally make disciples for the glory of God.

Lesson 3 Identity in Christ

Day One Grace and Identity

We studied *Prayer and Grace* in Lesson Two, and now we are going to look at *Grace and Identity*. Grace is an important subject for disciples because it is the only way we can successfully follow in Jesus' steps. You may recall we also learned about grace in Unit 3, Christian Leadership, Lesson 6, *The Leader's Fire of Holiness*. Just as a reminder, here is a definition of grace from that lesson.

Definition: *Grace* is God's divine power in action to undeserving people—working in, through, or for them. In the New Testament, the Greek word *charis* (χάρις) conveys the unmerited salvation believers receive through Christ.

One way God's grace is evident in our lives is through our new identity—in Christ. As believers, we know who we are and why we are on planet earth. We are God's children and are being transformed into His Son's image (Romans 8:29). Therefore, as we imitate Christ, we *can* act in kindness toward *undeserving* people. This is part of our new identity—showing grace to others by relying on God's grace to work in, through, and to us.

Grace and mercy are key character traits of Jesus, which He desires to be reproduced in His disciples. The extent to which we embody His character determines how clearly our identity as God's children and Jesus' disciples is revealed to the world.

Action Step

Pray each morning and ask God to give you opportunities to be like Jesus, and show kindness and compassion to someone who does not deserve it. Ask the Holy Spirit to enable you to act like Jesus in love and mercy. Choose to depend on the grace of God in order to show grace to others.

1. Show grace to one person each day for five days. Make notes and share one or two of those graceful acts.

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answer to #1 with your discipleship team.

As we concluded Lesson 2, we touched on the subject of relationships. God's grace is certainly sufficient to heal any battered or broken bond; however, He may call us to examine our hearts and do some *inward* housecleaning. Before beginning this *inward* work, it is wise to honestly assess where we stand in our relationships.

Self-Awareness in Relationships

Definition: *Relationship* is the way in which two or more people (or groups) communicate, interact, and relate to one another. The most important *relationship* for everyone is with God.

In order to disciple others, it is important that we continue to grow in all areas of our walk with the Lord. One way to do that is to become aware of areas that God would like us to grow in by asking and answering questions about specific spiritual areas. Self-awareness is knowing and understanding ourselves so that we can pray and cooperate with the Holy Spirit in becoming like Jesus.

Prayerfully answer the following self-awareness questions 2–7:

2. What do I need to change in relating to others?
3. How am I falling short in my relationships with family, friends, and others?
4. How am I succeeding in my relationships with family, friends, and others?
5. Who am I blaming for my unloving attitude or lack of friends?
6. By God's grace, what needs to change in my life and personality in order to have healthier and more realistic and loving relationships?
7. Think of one relationship that needs some work. Pray and ask God what He would like you to do or not do. Share results.

Accountability: Share one, some, or none of your answers with your team as you feel led.

8. Read 2 Corinthians 10:5. We are not responsible for our thoughts. True | False
(Underline One)

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:5

9. Read Hebrews 4:16. God will help us have the right thoughts. True | False (Underline One)

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:16

The family unit contains the basic building blocks of life. It is through these critical familial (family) relationships that one is grounded, supported, and nurtured (nourished, encouraged) for healthy development. Family relationships can be particularly painful because these are the people who are supposed to love us the most. For some people, a loving family was not part of their lives. For others, the current family structure has been fractured and needs repairing.

If we do not receive or *feel* we have not received our families' love, we *may* not be sure of our identity in the world. Our confusion as to our character or personality may be so deep as to cause an identity crisis. In other words, we may not know exactly who we are as an individual. Our sense of worth and value diminishes (lessens). Our sense of aloneness and isolation increases.

Definition: *Identity* is the unique character or personality of an individual. It refers to who a person truly is, including their qualities, beliefs, and traits. It also means staying true to the characteristics that define them.

Definition: An *identity crisis* is a feeling of unhappiness and confusion that arises when a person questions their sense of self or their place in the world. It involves uncertainty about the type of person one truly is or a lack of clarity about their real purpose in life.

Read Romans 8:15–17 and answer questions 10–17:

The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. Romans 8:15–17 (Sonship is the state of being a son.)

Definition: *Abba* is the Aramaic¹ word for father. While the word itself does not appear in the Old Testament, its Hebrew counterpart, *ab* (אב), which also means father, is used frequently. In the New Testament, *Abba* is translated from the Greek word *abba* (ἄββᾰ).

¹ Aramaic is a Semitic language known since the ninth century BC as the speech of the Arameans. These people inhabited Aram (modern Syria) and part of Babylonia in the 11th–8th centuries BC. This language was adopted as customary speech by various non-Aramaean peoples including the Jews after the Babylonian exile. Semitic relates to or denoted a family of languages that includes Hebrew, Arabic, and Aramaic, and certain ancient languages such as Phoenician and Akkadian, constituting the main subgroup of the Afro-Asiatic family.

10. An identity crisis can stem from relying on worldly standards or human desires, which can lead to confusion, unhappiness, and fear. Who has the disciple of Christ received so that they are no longer slaves to fear (v. 15a)?

11. What has the Spirit of God brought about for men and women belonging to Christ (v. 15b)?

12. What does the Holy Spirit enable believers to call God (v. 15c)?

The apostle Paul was using the word *Abba* (Romans 8:15) to describe a believer's intimate relationship with God through faith. Paul was repeating the truth of our relationship that he either learned from the other apostles or from Jesus Himself. Recall Jesus used the word *Abba* to express His own close and familial relationship with God (Mark 14:36).

13. How does the truth of having God as your *Abba*, Father change *your* other relationships?

14. What does the Spirit Himself testify with a believer's spirit (v. 16)?

15. If we are God's children, then what else are we (v. 17a)?

Definitions: *Inheritance* is a legal transfer of property after someone's death to an *heir*. Biblically, *inheritance* is used as a metaphor to emphasize spiritual and eternal rewards. *Joint-heirs* are those who share the right to *inherit* with others, particularly in the context of believers being *heirs* with Christ "Roman law made all children, including adopted ones, *equal heritors*. Jewish law gave a double portion to the eldest son. The Roman law was naturally in Paul's mind, and suits the context, where adoption is the basis of *inheritance*."²

16. If disciples are heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ, then what do we inherit (v. 17c; Matthew 25:34, 19:29; Galatians 4:7–9)?

17. How do disciples of Christ give evidence that we are truly His joint heirs (v. 17b)?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers #10–17 with your discipleship team.

Disciples of Christ gain much from being His co-heir. We receive a relationship with God, we inherit eternal life, the kingdom, and share in Christ's glory. In addition, we are loved and cared for by our adoptive Father and heavenly family—we belong. However, being a son and child of

² Vincent Word Studies<<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/romans/8-17.htm>>(accessed 10/5/2022)

God carries obligations. Our identity rests in Jesus and we are responsible to walk in His steps and to share in His sufferings.

Persecution against Christians is a harsh reality in many parts of the world. While some of us may never face such trials, others suffer greatly for their faith in Christ. Scripture reminds us to remember those who are mistreated as if we ourselves were suffering (Hebrews 13:3). One such believer is Abuk, a courageous sister in Christ from Sudan, whose story serves as a powerful reminder of the cost of discipleship—and the need for our continued prayers.

Abuk lives in the war-ravaged country of Sudan, Africa, where a jihad, or holy war, against the mostly Christian south has raged for nearly two decades. It has claimed more than two million lives and sometimes called “the forgotten war.”³ The following occurred in 1999 in a small village near the frontlines of a battle being fought at the time.

“One morning just after dawn, Islamic soldiers raided her village. Most of the villagers fled before the marauding soldiers, but Abuk was not able to get away in time. Several soldiers abducted her and told her that she had to go with them. She refused. They then told her that she must convert from Christianity to Islam by immediately renouncing Christ and accepting Mohammed as the chief and last prophet of God. She again refused.

“Enraged at her refusals, the soldiers savagely tore off her clothes and tied her up. After starting a fire, they put their large knives into it until they were red hot, and then stabbed, sliced and mutilated Abuk’s upper chest, shoulders, and back. Fighting to hold back her cries, Abuk prayed to Jesus for the strength to withstand the agonizing torture and not deny or turn from Him.

“When Abuk would still not renounce her Christianity, the soldiers beat her unconscious and left her to die of her wounds. Sometime later, she regained consciousness, and stumbling, falling, and crawling, she made her way to the other villagers to get help.

“Although it has been several years since she was tortured for her Christianity, Abuk still suffers from her massive wounds. She is almost in constant pain from them, and because of a lack of proper medical help where she lives, there is often infection in many of the scars she carries on her body.

“Abuk has a strong faith in Jesus Christ and would undoubtedly suffer again for Him. But like any of us would be, she is always strengthened when Christians come to her village to bring supplies, to encourage them, and to tell them that their brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world are praying for them.”⁴

—End Day One—

³ <<https://www.heritage.org/africa/report/stop-sudans-brutal-jihad-support-sudans-opposition>>(accessed 10/8/2022)

⁴ John Foxe and Harold J. Chadwick, *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs* (Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos Publishers, 2001) 394–396.

Day Two

Faith in Identity

Abuk has a strong faith in Jesus Christ and it has been put to the test. She identifies with Christ, shares in His sufferings, and will also share in His glory. The key word is faith. Abuk trusts God's Word, which says her identity is in Christ, and she lives fully in that truth. She is a daughter and child of God. She is also a son—a full member of God's family with all inheritance rights.

The Greek word *huio* (violet) translated children in the Galatians 3:26, literally means sons. It also means descendants or in certain contexts, children. Therefore, some Bible translations use "sons" instead of "children." Additionally, *huio* is figuratively used for pupils, disciples, followers, or spiritual sons.

Those who are in Christ and do God's will are children and sons of God according to the New Testament. The apostle Paul tells us that those *who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God* (Romans 8:14). Jesus tells us that peacemakers are blessed because *they will be called children of God* (Matthew 5:9).

Our heavenly Father *is* the God of peace (1 Thessalonians 5:23). A peacemaker is one who establishes peace (no war or fighting) between two or more parties. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, came to earth to establish peace between rebellious humanity and God. He did the will of God the Father, and as such has given us a prime example of being a family worker for peace.

Read Galatians 3:26–29 and answer questions 18–27:

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:26–29 (One refers to a single unit or thing. It also means being the same in kind or quality, and can describe a unified group made up of multiple parts.)

18. How do you become a child or son of God (v. 26)?

19. What does it mean to be baptized into Christ (v. 27)?

20. What does it mean to be clothed with Christ?

21. If we belong to Christ we are Abraham's seed (spiritual descendants) and what according to God's promise (v. 29)?

Giving testimony to our faith and being immersed or dipped into water are the first steps of discipleship. In baptism, we declare our belief in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus as the only way of salvation. We trust Jesus and profess the death of our old, mistaken *identity*. The immersion into water symbolizes death to our old life of sin.

When we arise from our water burial, we are professing a new life and new *identity*. We are showing the world that we are spiritually united with Christ. Baptism is a way of showing the world that we are His disciples and that we live a life of righteousness.

The early church would put on white garments at baptism to signify their new life. The white clothes meant that they were taking on the clean, sinless characteristics of Christ. Thus, they were stepping into a personal and spiritual union with Jesus, *the Son*, and claiming sonship in His Name. Being clothed with Christ is referring to this same concept.⁵

22. What does the statement “you are all one in Christ Jesus” mean (v. 28)?

The beautiful thing about our new identity in Christ is that we are not alone. We share our identity with others who belong to Jesus. There are no ethnic, social, or gender distinctions that would cause us to be discriminated against or separated from each other.

Definition: *Discrimination* is the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of ethnicity, age, sex, or social status.

23. Do ever *you* think unkind thoughts, or treat others badly because of either ethnic, age, sex, or social status? Yes No Sometimes (Underline One)

24. What will you do to rid yourself of even the slightest discrimination?

25. How can your discipleship team pray for you so that you can resist discrimination against others and build loving relationships?

Think of the golden rule of Luke 6:31: *Do to others as you would have them do to you*. As much as it depends on us, we should be kind and loving toward all people. However, we cannot make others treat us well—even professing Christians.

This is where faith in our new identity is critical. Our identity is not tied to what other people think or say about us. Even though we may treat all people well regardless of their ethnicity, age, sex, or social status—others may not be so kind. We may be treated badly by others because we are different in some way.

⁵ Richard B. Hays, *The Letter to the Galatians*, The New Interpreter's Bible, Volume XI, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 272.

26. How do you think you are being mistreated in some way, either by actions or with words?

27. How can your discipleship team pray for you so you can overcome discrimination directed against you and build loving relationships?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers #18–27 with your discipleship team.

Definition: *Envy* is the painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another joined with a desire to possess the same advantage.

Identity in Christ cannot be measured or judged by a popularity contest. Perhaps you have envied the person who always has a ready laugh or clever joke. Or maybe you have felt jealous of the natural leaders others follow and look up to. Then there are those among us who are strikingly handsome or beautiful and command attention simply because of their appearance.

Once we understand our true identity in Christ, we will cast aside any kind of envy or resentment of others' gifts or talents. *First*, we will be eternally grateful for being a son and child of God and *second*, we will understand that we are fitted perfectly for our job here on earth. A word of caution to those who are powerfully gifted or popular in some way. Your gifting is also for the purpose of serving God for His purposes. *Your* challenge may be to overcome pride—another deadly sin.

Whether we are tested by envy or pride, the important thing to remember is that our identity is in the hands of our loving Father. His unfathomable (beyond understanding) love propels His children to shed their sinful garments and replace them with the righteous coverings of Christ. We confidently wear our new, pristine identity knowing the old rags of wickedness have been burned out of existence.

28. Ask God to speak to you as you read and meditate on 1 John 3:1–2.

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ²Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 1 John 3:1–2

29. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. What does your identity in Christ mean for you?

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 2 Corinthians 5:17

Read Colossians 3:2–4 and answer questions 30–34:

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ *For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.* ⁴ *When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.* ⁵ *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.* Colossians 3:2–4

Definition: *Idolatry* is the worship of a physical object as a god. It also means excessive attachment or devotion to something. Anything or anyone that is preferred or worshipped over the one, true, living God may be considered an idol.

- 30.** What does it mean to set your minds on things above and not on earthly things (v. 2)?
- 31.** As a new creation in Christ, where is your life now hidden (v. 3)?
- 32.** When Christ returns, why or why not will you appear with Him in glory (v. 4)?
- 33.** For those of us who will appear with Christ in glory, what are some things that He expects of us (v. 5)?
- 34.** What is another name for sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed (v. 5)?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers #28–34 with your discipleship team.

Colossians 3:2–5 is a beautiful passage of hope, joy, and motivation. However, the apostle Paul also gives a warning—anything independent of God is idolatry. While on earth, we experience a partial realization of our salvation and relationship with Christ; the full realization of our new bodies and seeing Christ face to face is yet to come.

In the meantime we are secure in our identity. God says, *Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you* (Hebrews 13:5b). *Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me* (Psalm 27:10). No matter who leaves, deserts, or abandons us, God will not. He alone fills our lives with purpose, peace, and love. Praise Him.

In biblical teaching we must take the whole counsel of the Lord so we are not misled. For example, do we think we can just punch a ticket to heaven by saying a prayer and live as usual? In Day Three, we look at the misleading and nonbiblical slogan, “once saved, always saved.”

—End Day Two—

Day Three

Identity and Approval Rating

Walking in assurance of our new identity means that we trust God. We have confidence that God has adopted us as sons and daughters in Christ Jesus. This is faith in our identity in Christ. We have a heavenly family who approves of us and therefore we do not have to be concerned with what others think, say, or do. Besides, *If God is for us, who can be against us* (Romans 8:31b)?

We are saved by grace and not good works. However, those who have received God's grace of salvation belong to Him. As members of His family, we live for His kingdom, with our thoughts and actions pointing to God and honoring Him. Our hearts belong to *Abba*.

With this in mind, we address a common slogan rooted in Reformed and Baptist theology. The phrase "Once saved, always saved" does not appear in the Bible. Though frequently quoted, its precise origins are unclear. It refers to the doctrine of eternal security, also known as the perseverance of the saints.

Eternal security teaches that "all those who are truly born again will be kept by God's power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives, and that only those who persevere until the end have been truly born again."⁶ This understanding of salvation emerged during the Protestant Reformation, particularly through John Calvin's teachings.

However, the phrase "Once saved, always saved" can be misleading, harmful, and dangerous. Notice in the second part of the definition of eternal security it states that only those who persevere until the end have been truly born again. Yet, this slogan gives people the false impression that simply saying a prayer or believing Jesus was crucified automatically guarantees them a place in heaven.

Even Satan and the demons know who Jesus is and that He died for humanity, but they will definitely not be going to heaven (Matthew 4:3–10, 8:24; Mark 1:24–25; James 2:19; Revelation 20:10). The Greek word translated *faith*, *believe*, or *trust* in English Bibles is *pistis* (πίστις). It is a noun that means the state of believing based on the reliability of the one trusted. It conveys trust and confidence in God in an active sense.

For Christians, *pistis* also means placing our *faith*, *trust*, and confidence in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior continually. Biblical faith is not merely intellectual belief or a one-time decision; it is an ongoing, lived-out trust in Christ.

When we begin our faith walk, we place our trust in Jesus as our *Savior*. That means we trust that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and has saved us from God's wrath and the fires of hell. However, we are also placing our faith in Jesus as *Lord* (Romans 10:9–13). Jesus is the head of the church and therefore, the leader of every Christian or believer (Colossians 1:17–23). We owe our allegiance, commitment, submission, and loyalty to our leader—the King of kings and Lord of lords—for life.

⁶ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Inter-Varsity Press: Leicester, England, 1994), 788.

Some Christians believe that “once saved always saved” means it does not matter how people live afterward, as long as they have said “the sinner’s prayer.”⁷ How often have you heard parents say, *I’m concerned about the way Joey is living right now, but thank goodness he is saved. He prayed for Jesus to come into his life when he was a child.*

This is a serious problem. If someone is consistently living as though they are not saved, it is likely that they are not. Yes, only God knows the heart, but we must remain aware of the eternal condition of those around us—so that we can pray for them and encourage them toward true faith in Christ.

Faith is *active* in the sense that we believe in God and act upon those truths as set forth in the Bible. If people do not act and live according to what God has said, they are without faith; they are faithless. Faith is not a passive belief. One cannot say the “sinner’s prayer” and continue to live according to their own wishes. Accepting Christ in faith is a lifetime commitment of loyalty and service to God. When Christ is trusted as Savior, King, and Lord, one is saying, *I trust, rely, depend, serve, and place my hope in the triune God.*

Jesus taught about the importance of following Him and His teachings (Matthew 7:21–27; Luke 9:23–24; John 8:31–36, 15:1–5). The apostle John also taught the importance of living like Jesus, following His commands, and not continuing in sin (1 John 2:6, 2:2–3, 3:6). John is not talking about living without any wrongdoing, because he also teaches us to confess our sins. John is warning professed believers about *living* in sin, like the apostle Paul taught. Paul warned those practicing and continuing in their sins—they would not be admitted to heaven (Galatians 5:21).

We are able and capable of following Jesus because He has given us His Holy Spirit (John 14:26; Acts 1:8). The Lord also promises to help us (Hebrews 13:6), shield us with His power, (1 Peter 1:5), and keep us from stumbling (Jude 1:24–25). God has also given us many promises in Christ Jesus to glorify His holy name and live a victorious and fruitful life (2 Corinthians 1:20; 2 Peter 1:3–4). In other words, we have God’s grace to follow Him.

When a person is truly saved, there is a genuine transformation. Our hearts and minds are changed and we *want* to follow and please God. There is fruit in our lives due to the inner workings of the Holy Spirit. We desire to know God, read His Word, spend time with Him, and help other people to do the same. Perhaps all of these things do not happen overnight but the change, no matter how small, is noticeable.

If there is no transformation, usually demonstrated by behavior and deeds, perhaps the person was never truly saved to begin with (2 Peter 1:10–11, 2:19–22; 1 John 3:9–10). That is why Paul admonished church members to *work out your salvation with fear and trembling* (Philippians

⁷ The *sinner’s prayer* is a name given to a prayer whereby a person admits they are a sinner and accepts by grace Christ as Savior and Lord. The prayer is meant to be a first step and decision to give up control of one’s life and follow Christ forever. Sadly, some misunderstand and think it is a onetime prayer and then, life as usual.

2:12–13). Our salvation is a free gift of grace but we need to sincerely and continually obey God to give evidence of our transformed heart.

Jesus taught that His true disciples hold to His teachings, and if they do not, they are not really His disciples (John 8:31–36). He also declared that the one who stands firm to the end will be saved (Matthew 10:22; 24:10–13). Finally, Jesus warned that some will call on Him to enter the kingdom of heaven, but He will say He never knew them—because they did not do the Father's will or put His words into practice (Matthew 7:21–27).

In summary, those who continue in Jesus until the end have been truly born again. Following and obeying Christ is a lifelong commitment. This does not mean we will never fail or need to seek forgiveness, but it does mean we are new creations in Christ. We are born again—born from above—into a new spiritual life, motivated to serve God.

35. How have you viewed the phrase “once saved, always saved,” and how do you view it now?

One of the ways we may struggle to fully embrace our identity in Christ is through the desire for attention and approval. Secretly, we may long for others to think well of us and may even crave popularity and recognition. This need for approval can become a way of measuring our self-worth—if we are liked and sought after, we must be okay.

36. Why do *you* think people care so much about what others think or say about them?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers #35–36 with your discipleship team.

A politician's approval rating is secured when a firm takes a poll (survey) of a percentage of the population in order to tabulate (chart) the results. If the majority of the people in the poll approve of the official and his work, he gets a good rating. Politicians or elected officials usually watch their ratings for various reasons, but an important one is reelection.

Sometimes we act like politicians seeking public approval and reelection, instead of children and sons, already approved and redeemed. Instead of seeking God for our approval rating, we look around us to see how many friends we have, who is following us, or how well we are treated in a group. When we take our eyes off God, the source of our wellbeing, we set ourselves up for failure.

37. Read Romans 8:1–2. How does this promise set you up for success and well-being in life?

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.
Romans 8:1–2

Definitions: *Condemnation* is the English word we translate from the Greek word *katakrima* (κατάκριμα). *Katakrima* is defined as a legal technical term for the result of judging, including both the sentence and its execution—it signifies *condemnation*, a sentence of doom, or punishment. In essence, it is the act of judicially *condemning* and includes the penalty that follows. *Penalty* is defined as punishment imposed for breaking a law, rule, or contract.

38. Read Colossians 2:9–10. In Christ, what have you been brought to (v. 10)?

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,¹⁰ and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. Colossians 2:9–10

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers #37–38 with your discipleship team.

In Christ, the fullness of God’s divine nature dwells in bodily form—a mystery beyond our full understanding. Yet, through this truth Christ has reconciled us to God, bringing us to fullness in salvation. As believers, we have been restored to God and given everything we need to identify with Christ and serve Him—He is sufficient.

A disciple’s identity is found Christ. He shapes our character and defines who we are. We have the fullness of Christ—we partake of His divine nature. Through Him, we receive atonement and forgiveness of sin, resurrection to new life, wisdom, grace, and the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

In Christ, we have a 100 percent approval rating from God. There is no condemnation or disapproval in the blood of the Lamb. But what about those people who dislike, disapprove, or criticize us? We will never be accepted by everyone, and that’s okay. We should not feel discouraged or fearful of their opinions. Instead, consider Jesus’ words: *But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him* (Luke 12:5).

Jesus then tells His disciples not to worry because God cares so much that even the number of hairs on their head is counted. He says the same to us. However, Jesus continues with a warning that we should not disown or reject Him before others or we also will be disowned before the angels of God (Luke 12:9).

We need to keep this warning in mind, but also to remember the positive side. Whoever acknowledges Jesus before people, He will also acknowledge before the angels of God (Luke 12:8). I pray we always declare boldly that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, who died for our sins and rose from the dead. Amen.

The first disciples had God’s full approval—His hand was with them. When the Lord’s hand was with or upon someone, they were marked God’s approval and blessing. Sometimes His divine blessing is accompanied by signs and wonders. Consider Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist—he was unable to speak from the moment the angel appeared to him until he confirmed his son’s name in writing. This miraculous event left people in awe, wondering, *“What then is this child going to be?”* because *“the Lord’s hand was with him.”* (Luke 1:66)

Read Acts 11:21 and answer questions 39–43:

The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.
Acts 11:21

39. What does the expression “the Lord’s hand was with them” mean?
40. What happened because “the Lord’s hand was with them?”
41. What does it mean that “the people believed and turned to the Lord?”
42. Are there people who have believed and turned to the Lord because of your sharing the gospel or your personal testimony? Yes No (Underline One)
43. Pray for the Lord’s hand to be continually with you so others will place their faith in Jesus and become His fervent disciples. I prayed. Yes No (Underline One)

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers #39–43 with your discipleship team.

Nehemiah was cup bearer who tested and served wine to the King of Persia in 445 BC. When he heard that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and its gates had been burned with fire, he was deeply distressed. Burdened by the report, he wanted to do something about it. After a period of fasting and prayer, he approached the king. Though Nehemiah held a position in the royal court, he was still a servant and not a free man.

Read Nehemiah 2:8 and answer questions 44–45:

“And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the royal park, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?” And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests.
Nehemiah 2:8

44. Besides asking permission to go to Jerusalem, what else did Nehemiah ask for (v. 8a)?
45. Why did the king grant Nehemiah’s requests (v. 8b)?

—End Day Three—

Day Four
Identity and Good work

After Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he examined the wall and the work to be completed. After his survey he called together the Jews, priests, and nobles who would be doing the work. He pointed out the disgrace they had all suffered because of the broken walls and urged them to join him in the rebuilding project.

Read Nehemiah 2:18 and answer questions 46–49:

I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. They replied, “Let us start rebuilding.” So they began this good work. Nehemiah 2:18

46. What did Nehemiah tell the Jews about God’s gracious hand (v. 18a)?

47. How did they reply (v. 18b)?

Yes, *they began this good work*. Although it was a good work and God’s gracious hand was on Nehemiah and his building project, there was opposition. Nehemiah had his detractors (critics) and enemies. Behind every enemy of God are the evil ones ready to incite trouble for His people.

Facing trouble does not mean that God is not with us. His gracious hand helps us to overcome opposition (hostility) and to stand in victory. So it was with Nehemiah. He overcame the resistance and under his leadership, the Jews rebuilt the wall and gates in 52 days.

48. Do you become easily discouraged when you face opposition or resistance to your faith?
Y N Sometimes (Underline One)

49. Explain your answer about being discouraged when you face opposition to your faith in #47.

Action Step

50. Read the book of Nehemiah. What lessons did you learn and how will you apply these lessons to your life to stay encouraged even in the face of hostilities (aggression)?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers #46–50 with your discipleship team.

Christian disciples have the Holy Spirit who testifies (confirms) with our spirits that God is with us. Jesus has made it possible for us to have a new identity with the gracious hand of the Lord on us. We may be gifted and called in different ways, but in whatever way we labor, we are still expected to make disciples.

Before we delve into making disciples, it is good to review Jesus' teaching on how we treat His mature followers. We will meet many people who may not need our help in knowing Christ or learning the Bible, but that does not mean we can ignore them. Perhaps they have other needs or God has reasons for bringing them into our lives.

51. Read and meditate on Matthew 10:42. How should you treat disciples' of Christ from other denominations, ministries, or backgrounds?

"And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward." Matthew 10:42

Meditate on 1 John 3:17–18 and answer questions 52–53:

If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? ¹⁸Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. 1 John 3:17–18

52. If you know that another Christian is in financial (monetary) need, what are some ways that you could help with action and in truth?

Action Step

53. Pray and ask God to show you someone with a physical or financial need and how He would like you to help. Do as the Lord leads and share what happened.

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers #52–53 with your discipleship team.

Novelist, Anne Isabella Ritchie, coined a familiar proverb in 1885: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." The Chinese were credited with a similar saying in a 1964 U.S. publication: "Give a man a fish, and you have fed him once. Teach him how to fish and you have fed him for a lifetime."

These sayings bring to light the importance of teaching and instructing others how to meet their needs. Instead of a simple gift or handout, take extra time with the needy and help them strategically (purposefully) so they can provide for themselves. Your overtime can pay handsomely with positive and radical changes that last not just for a day, but forever.

When Jesus called His disciples, He taught them how to interpret Scripture and live by it. He spent three years modeling behavior and preparing them to serve without His physical presence. He wanted them to be successful in fishing for people.

Fishing is a familiar occupation in the New Testament. When Jesus called Simon Peter and Andrew, they were successful fishermen. They had employees working in their business and owned a home. They already knew how to make a living and feed themselves.

However, instead of throwing their nets for fish, Jesus said they would be throwing spiritual nets for disciples. Jesus used figurative language to arouse interest and enthusiasm for God's purpose. He was talking about making them into disciples for the kingdom of God.

Jesus taught them how to be His followers and how to make other followers. They were to reproduce themselves and teach others how to do the same. This was God's plan for taking the gospel to the world, generation after generation.

Definition: *Spiritual* relates to the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things. *Spirit* is the nonphysical part of a person that is the seat of emotions and character.

54. If you know of a Christian who is in *spiritual* need, what are some ways you could help with action and in truth?

People may have many different spiritual needs, but all are fulfilled in and through Jesus Christ. The Bible is the instrument of truth that reveals Christ and gives perfect guidance and direction. Therefore, helping others study the Bible is one way to help in time of spiritual need.

Read Matthew 13:23 and answer questions 55–56:

"But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

Matthew 13:23

55. Why would you, or why would you not consider yourself a person having good soil in this parable (story)?

56. How can you cooperate with Jesus to produce a hundred times what was sown in your life?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers #55–56 with your discipleship team.

The fact that you are studying this lesson or are part of an In Jesus Steps' discipleship team would indicate good soil. However, we each have to evaluate our own lives and our relationship with God for the answer. We pray that God's Word is living and active in your life and you are interested in helping others know Christ. Staying or living in Jesus assures us of a crop of righteousness. We know that our power to do anything, including producing a good return on our lives, comes from Jesus.

Therefore it is not surprising our discipleship journey begins, progresses, and continues in prayer. We need to continually ask God for the people He has prepared for us to disciple. We are specifically and intentionally looking for those whose hearts God has prepared. It is also important to be open to God's Spirit as He may place those on your heart who are not believers.

They may just need to hear the gospel or may need special consideration before they trust in Christ. Although we addressed this important subject in Unit 3: Blessing Others, we need to be reminded that our witnessing and discipling of others is continuous.

That being the case, pray for the Holy Spirit to prepare those hearts and your own. Ask for the right opportunity to share the gospel in love and sincerity. Your next step, whether or not the person accepts Christ's offer of salvation, is to pray for the Spirit's further guidance.

If the person you have shared the gospel with does receive Jesus, you will want to prayerfully consider your role as discipler. God may have planned for this person to be disciplined by another, so the only way to know is to ask Him.

If you have not already studied Unit 3: Blessing Others, please find it on the In Jesus Steps website or ask your discipleship coach. This is the time to study this subject and follow the directions in the lessons. If you have already completed the Unit 3 study, perhaps a review would be helpful and encouraging.

Your pool of disciples will most likely come from those you are able to see and talk with on a weekly basis, but we do not want to limit God. Therefore, you may disciple others virtually, over the phone, through the mail, or in some other way we have not even thought of. If by mail, there would be an additional cost of postage for you, but if this is the Lord's will, He will provide.

Action Step

57. If you are not regularly asking God the Father in Jesus' name for one or more individuals of the same sex to disciple, ask now. Write the names the Lord places on your heart.

God may not place names on your heart right away so be patient and continue to pray. Perhaps not everyone you approach may agree to be disciplined. God may have another reason He placed that person on your heart. God works on a myriad of things in our lives at the same time. In fact God works on literally *countless* items during the course of a day.

Day Five may also be a review for those who have completed Unit 3. You may be regularly sharing your faith and consistently discipling other. Praise God!! Keep up the good work. If not, no worries, we just need to get jump-started again and our next day lesson is designed to do that.

—End Day Four—

Day Five

Identity and Recruitment

Recruit is a word that means enroll someone as a worker or member. In relating to matters of war, men and women may enlist or sign-up in the military or armed forces. For heavenly purposes recruit means enroll someone as a worker in the kingdom. We are recruiting to raise an army for the Lord.

You will be doing recruiting on various levels. The top level is discipleship. This level takes more time and commitment for both the discipler and the disciple. Recall Jesus had twelve disciples or apostles but fellowshipped, conversed, taught, healed, cast out demons from many and sent out others to do the same.

Read Luke 10:1, 17–20 answer questions 58–60:

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. Luke 10:1

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.”¹⁸ He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.¹⁹ I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.²⁰ However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” Luke 10:17–20 (some translations note seventy workers)⁸

58. How many workers did Jesus send out and how many returned with joy (vv. 10:1, 17)?

59. What were they rejoicing about (v. 17)?

60. Why did Jesus say, “do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (v. 20)?

The seventy-two returned from their mission filled with the joy of successful service. There is joy when we do something that the Lord has asked us to do. Even to this day and as early as last night, I am thrilled when I complete an assignment from the Lord. When I arrived home yesterday from the office, I felt God saying to call one of my single neighbors and go visit her. I followed through and felt particularly joyful that night and today.

These disciples had executed the Lord’s will and were happy about that, but they were even happier that evil spirits had to flee in Jesus’ name. They saw the power of His name and were elated.

⁸ Early manuscript evidence is balanced between the two choices, seventy or seventy-two workers. We do not have to be dogmatic (rigid) about it. It may be a round number for a large group or there may be some significance of the seventy nations in Genesis 10 and Moses appointing seventy elders in Exodus 24:1.

Jesus confirms (backs-up) their account. He saw Satan's power diminished in their anointed work. They had surely taken back enemy territory by following the One who has ultimate control over evil forces. Jesus reiterates (recaps) that the reason they are able to overcome Satan and his evil forces is because He had given them authority to do so. Snakes and scorpions represent or refer to the organized army of Satan, his soldiers or militia.

After Jesus acknowledges their work in His name He *commands* them not to rejoice that the evil spirits submit (subject to, obey, under authority) to them but instead rejoice (be glad) that they are saved. Jesus says be glad that I know you and your names are written in heaven in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 21:27). The disciples are to remember this humble attitude and practice it from now on.

Read Matthew 7:21–23 and answer questions 61–63:

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” Matthew 7:21–23

61. Will everyone who prophesies, drives out demons, and performs miracles using the name of Jesus enter the kingdom of heaven when they die? Yes No (Underline One)

62. What name does Jesus call men and women who do *not* do the will of God the Father (v. 23)?

63. Which would be better, spirits submitting to you on earth or spending eternity in heaven?

There is a difference between using the name of Jesus and living *in* His name. When someone uses Jesus, it means they are trying to manipulate or exploit Him for personal pleasure or purposes. He or she just wants to benefit in some way with no real love or concern for our Savior. There are all kinds of reasons for this, including a person desiring attention, honor, money, or power.

Living *in* Jesus means just that. We live our daily lives following Jesus and doing as He would do for the reasons that He would do them. After all, Jesus provides our identity. This is who we are. We love the triune God and our acts arise out of our devotion to Him. We are willing to do anything to please and glorify His holy name. It is not about us but about God.

We want to recruit men and women to live *in* Jesus, identify with Him, and *not* attempt to use Him. We also want to recruit on various levels. Time wise, only a few people might adequately be discipled, but greater numbers could be recruited for good deeds, leading Bible studies, working service projects, forming *In Jesus Steps* discipleship teams, or in various ministries.

We are in a war with the forces of evil and need our brothers and sisters in Christ marching with us side by side in freedom, love, and power. This can only be done in the blood of the New Covenant. We need to understand it, refer to it and live in it every day.

The New Covenant is important to keep us in God's terms and in His promises and benefits. If we are walking in the way God desires, then we are confident to enter into His presence and get all the help we need.

Some of you are natural recruiters. It may be your gift to attract people to a cause. You may have a magnetic (charismatic) personality that draws others to you. Congratulations! We are happy for you and equally happy that we are on the same team. However, not many of us have this God given gift. But it really does not matter, because gift or not, we are not let off the "recruiting" hook. We are all heavenly recruiters.

Read Jude 1:20–21 and answer questions 64–65:

But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Jude 1:20–21

64. What does, Jude, the brother of James and half-brother of Jesus tell his readers to do?

65. What part of Jude's instructions is a command (v. 21)?

Building ourselves up in our faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, and keeping ourselves in God's love are all positive actions. Consider the first action—build yourself up in your faith. Opposites of "build up" are to erode, weaken, tear down, dwindle, disarm, and demilitarize.

The word demilitarize is especially revealing. It means to prohibit or remove soldier's or a troop's presence in a particular area. We are in a holy war against Satan and his followers. They are God's enemies and when we engage in activities that are the opposite of building ourselves up in the faith, we are removing ourselves from the battle.

Building ourselves up is not tearing ourselves down. It does not mean telling ourselves that we cannot do something or that we are less in some way than other people. For example, when we talked about the captivating and compelling personalities that we label as individuals with charisma, did you think of someone and feel jealous or envious? Did you say to yourself, "I am dull or no one likes me or I am just not good with people?"

You just engaged in self-talk. Self-talk is the act of talking to yourself either aloud or silently. We do it all the time. Another word for self-talk is the process of thinking or mental activity. What we continually say to ourselves does make a difference. Jesus made this clear when He said, "*For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of* (Matthew 12:34b)". Perhaps, someone said you were stupid, ugly, a klutz, or will never amount to anything. It does not matter who said it or

where you got this idea about yourself but you have a recording in your mind that you have picked up and so tell yourself these lies just as if it were reality.

Self-talk can be positive or it can be negative. When we are engaging in positive self-talk, we are building ourselves up in our faith and trusting in God. We are speaking what the Word says about us. When we are engaging in negative self-talk, we are denying the promises of the new covenant.

We all have some kind of negative self-talk going on in our minds. Listen to yourself when someone hurts your feelings or causes you some kind of pain. What do you say to yourself about that person and about yourself? Perhaps you might say: No one likes me, I'll never have any friends, people are jerks, Christians are hypocrites, etc.

Our self-talk can be very defeating. It will take us out of the battle before we even step in. Satan will not have to worry about us because we are on self-destruct mode. But the good news is that you and I can overcome all this negativity, which quite frankly is sin.

The first step is to recognize what we are saying to ourselves. Listen to what we are actually saying to ourselves on a daily basis and in different kinds of situations. What do we say about ourselves and what do we say about others?

We may come to recognize that we are self-focused and not God-focused. Begin telling yourself who you are in Christ, what His plans are for you, and how He will accomplish His plans through you. The Bible is full of God's good promises that affirm your new identity in Christ. These promises all come from the New Covenant, which gives us the means to a full and abundant life. Before we study the New Covenant, we will review the first and older Covenants.

66. If you recognized a negative pattern of self-talk in your life, what will you do about it?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers #66 with your discipleship team.

—End of Day Five and Lesson 3—

Next—Lesson 4: First Covenants, Unit 4: Disciple of Christ

Rev 3/23/2025