

GRACE

Great Good News!

April 2004

I sense Jesus tenderly speaks Matthew 28:19-20 to my heart in this manner,
“As you GO about your daily activities, in all (good and bad) situations MAKE DISCIPLES, trust Me to teach (disciple) through you precious people to partake in all of the blessings I promise to fulfill in you and them.”

Four years ago, my gracious employer and co-workers allowed me to become a part-time employee to allow me time to disciple (teach) people with Christ Life Ministries (CLM) in Hendersonville, NC. This did not make much sense financially...I receive no compensation from CLM...but it is my heart in Christ...and me and Joy are being sufficiently provided for. I can see now that God was also preparing me to have time to help nurse Joy back to health...having the flexibility to be at home with Joy and to rest whenever I could has been so vital to us these past two years...and being disciplined ourselves in grace has been the foundation to her healing. *And we received wonderful news this month: Joy's blood test results indicate no infection three weeks after her IV was removed and the antibiotics were completely stopped! Joy is still soooo physically drained, but she is s l o w l y doing better.*

I typically disciple people one-on-one with CLM one day a week in Hendersonville, NC and whenever I can find time in Simpsonville, SC. Because of Joy's health situation, I have not gone to Hendersonville in a few months. However, God has recently brought three ladies to Simpsonville where I live and where I have been able to have weekly discipling sessions. Whenever I meet with a lady for discipling, I arrange for another friend (usually another lady) to sit in with us. For the past two months, I have had a friend sit in with me in each of these discipling sessions. It has been so special to share with these three friends the witness of Christ revealing Himself as hope to these ladies (1 Timothy 1:1). My friends become such a vital part of this discipleship ministry.

About three years ago when a lady first came to Simpsonville for discipling, Joy was able to sit in with me. That was such a special time for me and Joy as we shared witnessing a special healing in this lady and in her marriage. Her husband recently wrote us a note to testify of their healed marriage and to encourage me in my call to the discipling ministry. I do so yearn for others to know more about what I do in this ministry in order to encourage them to “foolishly” follow God's unique call on their lives. Every Christian is called to be a discipler at heart in a way that is unique for each one and where ever God has planted each one.

DISCIPLING IS...

...being willing to venture back into the wilderness (like Joshua and Caleb) to walk alongside a friend, to testify true hope, and to lead this friend to the threshold of the “Jordan River”...pointing to the Promised Land on the other side. The Promised Land is often considered a foreshadowing of heaven later, but it really is a beautiful picture of the abundant life in Christ NOW. Every Christian has a time in the wilderness...fully saved from the bondage of sin...with God leading them to experience the reality of the life of Christ as their abundant life. The Promised Land is a Promised Life now! What a wonderful privilege we have to be God's instruments to encourage a friend to take God at His word regarding this Promised Life and to surrender that first step into the “Jordan River.” How amazing it is to witness a friend's eyes open wide with hope as the “Jordan River” opens wide AFTER that first step which leads this friend to live in the Promised Land that is full of hope, joy, and life.

So when Jesus says “Go, make disciples,” I believe we are to first go into the wilderness to meet people where they are. That's where Jesus met me a few years ago. Now I am willing to go back...knowing that it will expose me to more pain and suffering...but knowing that I am not alone...knowing that this ministry is not up to me...knowing that Jesus IS the ministry...knowing that Jesus promises “never to leave me nor to forsake me.” Discipling, in a way, is putting feet on my intercessory prayers for others, and literally standing in the gap for them and with them.

TESTIMONY OF SHARING WITH A LOCAL CHURCH

A highlight of my life is the opportunity I was given this month to share my heart with precious people in a teaching series I entitled “LIFE” at Holly Ridge Baptist Church in Simpsonville, SC. I shared three consecutive Wednesday evenings on “The Meaning of Life,” “The Source of Life,” and “The Experience of Life.” Brief excerpts of each of these teaching (group discipling) sessions are on the back. It was a special opportunity to share in front of more people than I am used to, and to be affirmed that my true heart is to humbly and boldly (sounds contradictory, doesn't it?) testify of living truths that really encourages others forever.

GRACE NOTE

The founder of CLM has said, “Discipling is God allowing me to get close enough to watch Him work in a person's life.”

THE MEANING OF LIFE

God says in *Isaiah 43:7*, "Everyone who is called by my name, I have created for My glory." This is such a clear and concise description of why we all were created. But what does *God's glory* mean? *Hebrews 1:3* says Jesus Himself IS the very outshining of God's glory! So, Christ living His life through me IS the glory of God...Christ living through me in all His service...in all His obedience...in all His love...in all His genuineness...through my unique personality and human vessel. This is what it means to glorify God...and is God's greatest purpose for each of us. This, then, is the meaning of life.

THE SOURCE OF LIFE

Before I became a Christian, my identity was rooted in the fact that I was born a sinner; and everything I did, good or bad, was tainted by sin because that was my nature. I was a member of Adam's family, which is what Paul refers to in *Romans 5* as being *in Adam*. The miracle of salvation through the cross is that my sins were forgiven AND I was given a new identity. I was crucified with Christ (*Galatians 2:20*) and then according to *Colossians 1:13*, "God delivered me from the power of darkness and transferred me into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." So, I died to my old identity *in Adam* and was re-born with a new identity *in Christ*! I have a new source of identity...a new source of life!

Now I can live FROM my true identity, instead of striving to live FOR an identity. And you can, too. *Colossians 2:10* says that *we are complete in Christ*...we can't get any more completer than that! Now we yearn to grow in experiencing that completeness more and more. Discipleship is God working out what He has already worked in...learning to live from the inside-out...with Christ as our source. My pilgrimage now on this earth is a relationship where God is introducing me to me, so that I can genuinely introduce others to Christ through the real me ☺.

THE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE

God leads me to crisis points where He enables me to surrender my best attempts in life so that I can experience the miraculous life of Christ in and through me. I personally embrace the word *surrender* rather than *commitment*. Commitment to me can indicate that I still am holding on to some control and that I am still seeking to live out of my human resources.

God is radically transforming my experience of life as He is leading me to focus on *His commitment* to me rather than on my commitment to Him! When I focus on His commitment to me, I am growing to see my commitment to Him become more natural and less forced...my *striving commitment* is being transformed into a *sweet surrender*.

And Jesus' commitment to me and you is actually rooted in surrender. Just look at Jesus washing the disciples' feet in *John 13:5-17*...Jesus says in verse 17, "Blessed are you if you do these things." And just look at His journey to the cross as described in *Philippians 2:5-8*...verse 5 says that we have this same attitude of surrender...it is our nature in Christ.

We came to know Christ in the first place through surrender. *Ephesians 2:8* says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." We surrendered any efforts (works) to reach up to God for salvation so that we could simply receive God in His grace bending down to offer us salvation as a gift in the Person of Jesus. So, we were saved through a surrendered heart. Now, *Colossians 2:6* says, "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord (i.e., through surrender), so walk in Him."

For to me, to live is Christ (Philippians 1:21)