

## DISCIPLESHIP ESSENTIALS

### "How to Always Do the Right Thing"

11/4/12

Verses from New Living Translation unless noted.

**How many** of you **ladies** who **cook** frequently use **recipes**? **Why** do you use a **recipe**? Have you **ever forgotten** a critical **ingredient** when making something?

Some of you **men** are in the **building** trade. What is **this**? If you are going to build a house, you **need blueprints**, the plans, instructions. **Why** do you use blueprints – so you can do it **right**. What happens when you do it **wrong**?



**How to Always** Do the **Right Thing** – **that's** what the Bible is about from **beginning** to **end**. The Bible **begins** with the story of the **first married** couple in a garden **paradise** of Eden. They make a bad choice, disobey God and do the **wrong thing**.

In the book of **Revelation**, the **last** book of the Bible **Jesus** says, Revelation 22:7 **"Look, I am coming soon! Blessed are those who obey the words of prophecy written in this book. "**

The first principle for always doing the right thing is to

### **1<sup>st</sup> CAREFULLY FOLLOW GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS.**

**God's Word** the Bible is the **instruction** manual, the **"how to"** book, our **guide** and **recipe** or **blueprint** for **life**. The ideas of **right** and **wrong**, **obedience**, and **disobedience** appear on almost **every page**. **If we want** to do the **right** thing, we've **got** to study the book.

If you have a **copy** with you this morning, printed copy or digital, let's begin with **Joshua 1:8**. God has just **installed** a new **leader** for the nation of **Israel**. **Moses**, the one God used to bring his people out of **bondage** in **Egypt** has died.

Now God has chosen a **new leader** named **Joshua**. Joshua was stepping into **giant shoes** and he knew it. **But** task ahead of him was **different**. This was the **military** portion – leading a **slave nation** on a **military conquest** of the Promised Land.

God **used** Moses to **write** the **first five** books of the Bible, the part the **Jews** all the **Pentateuch**; Penta meaning **five**. God **tells** Joshua, this new leader:

**“Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.”**

The entire **territory** is theirs; from the **Negev Desert** to the **Lebanon Mountains**, from the **Euphrates River** to the **Mediterranean Sea**. God had **promised** it to their ancestors.

And God promised his unfailing presence. In v.5 he said, **“No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you.”**

All that is **required** of Joshua is full **uncompromising obedience**. To **insure** guaranteed success he would need **continual study** and **meditation** on the instructions God had given through Moses.

This is the same thing God requires of us—our uncompromising obedience. The guarantee of success is ours as well. God has promised his faithful and powerful presence with us too. We need only to keep our continual focus on Him and his /Word so that we will not stray from His path.

Now why is this important? Because doing the right thing, obeying God ultimately leads to  **blessing**, while disobedience, doing the wrong thing always has **negative consequences**.

Thus it  **behooves** us, it is to our  **advantage** to learn how to do the right thing  **all** the time. Here is a second principle for always doing the right thing.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> ALLOW GOD TO REVEAL HIS WISDOM.**

In 1 Corinthians 2:7 the NT Apostle Paul says, **“The wisdom we speak of is the secret wisdom of God which was hidden in former times, though he made it for our benefit before the world began.”**

These  **Corinthian** Christians were still  **hung up** on  **men’s** wisdom, the  **Greek** philosophers. Though in  **Paul’s** time  **Corinth** was under the rule of the  **Romans**,  **Hellenistic** influences were still strong.



Paul is **arguing** that man's **wisdom** and man's **philosophy** is **nothing** compared to God's.

And **God's** wisdom is **hidden, unknowable** by **human** means. It is **only** known through the **Spirit**. These are the "**deep secrets**" "**mysteries**" of God Paul mentions in **v.10**. **Only** we who have God's **Holy Spirit** can know them.

Jesus said in **John 16:13**, "When the **Spirit of Truth** comes, he will guide you into all truth." James, the half brother of Jesus said, "**If If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you.**" James 1:5

### **3<sup>rd</sup> BE PROACTIVE ABOUT YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE.**

Ephesians 4:22-24 "**Throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.**"

**Paul** is giving us extremely **practical** "how to's" for living the Christian life. The **old** nature has **never** been anything but **sinful** and **wicked**, self-centered and full of **greed** and **impurity**.

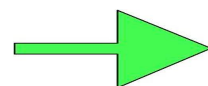
It's not the **well** you want to go to when you are **thirsty**, empty and **tired**. That's the **former** way of seeking **renewal** and **refilling**. It is like drinking **salt water** – greed and lust never satisfy.

They **trick** and **deceive** you. They only make you **more thirsty** and even **sick**. The **Holy Spirit** stands ready to **truly renew**, refill and **re-energize** you.

We must go back to the **closet** and **choose** to put on your **new nature**. You were **created** to be **like God**, truly **righteous** and holy. Turning to the **Spirit instead** of the old **sin** nature means, **breaking** old habits and **intentionally** starting new ones.

It means **refusing** to be **deceived** and misled and **paving** a **highway** that leads to righteousness and godliness. **Construct** concrete **barriers** blocking the old paths.

Intentionally **choose** a new way of life. Install **flashing colored** sign **pointing** to the right road.



**Thank God** for being willing to **meet you** at your point of **need** and for **offering** that which is **truly satisfying**, nourishing and **strength** building, making you more **like** Jesus.

How many of you SOAP or have a personal quiet time on a semi regular basis, raise your **hand**? **Keep** them up, please. How many are in a **quad** or a **triad**, or **other small group**, **Sunday school** class or **Wednesday** night discipleship **class**.

Now I'm **not** trying to **disparage** or **denigrate** any of you that **didn't** raise your hand because you might be helping in **AWANA** or attending **CBS** or something **else**, my point is, I want to **applaud** you for getting **proactive** about your spiritual development.

I'm **glad** that you all are **here** this morning – that **says something** about your **intentions**. But we **can't** just leave this up to **chance**.

We have a **number** of young **men** from this **congregation** who have recently gone to **boot camp**. Why?

Because they joined the **military** service and they **need** to be **ready** to **defend** this country **if** called upon. They **need** to be ready to go to **battle**. Last week **Dan Schar** and his daughter, **Sherry** talked to us about **Spiritual Warfare**.

We all **need** to be **ready** to do spiritual **battle**. It's not "if" we get **attacked** because we will be every day. Get **proactive**.

#### **4<sup>th</sup> LOOK AT THE WORLD FROM GOD'S POINT OF VIEW.**

Jesus in **Mark 8** tells his disciples, "**You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's...If you want to be my follower, you must put aside your selfish ambition, shoulder your cross, and follow me. If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will find true life.**" Mark 8:33-35

I read the **story** this week of **Marion Mill**. Marion was literally a **princess**, born in a fairy tale **castle** in **Hungary**. Her first spoon was **solid gold**. She grew up and was sent to **school in Vienna** to study **acting**.

There she **met** and fell in **love** with a young **aspiring** actor named **Otto**. Otto and Marion **married** and in **1935** Otto was **hired** by **Twentieth Century-Fox** and the couple moved to Hollywood, CA.

There, as they “set up **house**,” and **Otto** was began to **rise** in the film industry as a **movie director**. We now know as the **late internationally famous Otto Preminger**.

Marion’s **beauty**, wit, and **irresistible** charm brought her everything a woman **desires**. But Otto’s **princess** could not handle the **fast life** of Hollywood.

She got into **alcohol, drugs** and then numerous **affairs**. Her life and lifestyle became so **sordid**, even for Hollywood, that Otto Preminger **divorced** Marion.

She **tried** to take her own life **three times**, unsuccessfully, and finally **moved** back to **Vienna**. There at a **party** she met a **doctor**, named **Albert Schweitzer**, the well-known **medical doctor, musician, philosopher, theologian** and **missionary** to Africa.

Schweitzer was **home on leave** from his **hospital** in **Lambarene, Africa**. Marion was so **fascinated** by Schweitzer that she asked him if she **could meet** with him. For almost **six months**, she had a standing **appointment** with Dr. Albert Schweitzer **weekly**.

At the **end** of that time Schweitzer was **scheduled** to go back to **Africa**, and Marion **begged** him to let her **join** him in the **mission**. Schweitzer **agreed**.

Marion, the **young princess**, who was born in a **palace** went to a **little village** in Africa, and spent the **rest of her life** emptying **bed pans** and making **bandages** to wrap the **putrid sores** on the poverty-stricken **Africans**.

She wrote an **autobiography** of her life titled ***All I Want is Everything***. In her book she **quoted** Albert Schweitzer saying, “There are **two kinds** of people. There are the **helpers**, and the **non-helpers**. I thank God He **allowed** me to become a **helper**, and in helping, I **found everything**.”

**Peter** in Mark **8** attempts to **dissuade** Jesus for the **radical** path he was on that he knows will **lead** to his **death**. Christ’s response was the **most drastic demand yet** for his disciples – a complete **abandonment** of self and personal **ambition** and a **willingness** if necessary to **lay down** their **lives** for him and the Gospel.

The **disciples** had already **demonstrated** extreme **willingness** to **follow** him—leaving **vocations** and **families** but evidently there was still a **residual** of **self** in their ambition.

Ultimately **eleven** of the twelve **proved willing** to lay down their lives for the Gospel. The **call** to Christ's disciples **today** is the **same standard** of commitment. How far are **you** willing to go?

How much are you willing to **sacrifice**? Can you **turn away** from **everything** for the sake of his Kingdom? If we want the **true life** his is offering, **if** you want **everything**, you must **abandon** every pursuit **except** the life **only He** can give.

Now I've talked about **obedience** and doing the **right thing** as **individuals**, but God has a **similar requirement** for **nations**.

**Nations** need to

### **5<sup>th</sup> LISTEN TO HIS PROPHETS.**

Just a little **history** about the **ancient** nation of **Israel** – under King **David** Israel became a **dominant military** power in its part of the world. David was a **brilliant** military **leader**.

When **David died**, his son **Solomon** became king and **God** gave the nation a time of great **peace and prosperity**.



**But** following Solomon, the **nation divided**. **Solomon's** son **Rehoboam** imposed **oppressive** policies on the nation causing the **northern tribes** rebel and **secede**. They **chose** a man name **Jeroboam** to be their king and took the name **Israel**.

The **Southern** Kingdom remained **loyal** to **Rehoboam** took the name **Judah** and the **two** kingdoms **co-existed** for the next **200** years. The **northern** kingdom was call **Israel** and the **southern**, **Judah**.

In the **OT** books of **Kings** and **Chronicles** you can **read** the stories of the **kings** of both the northern and southern **kingdoms**. Both kingdoms **strayed** further and further away from their **historic commitment** to God—the **God** who brought them out of **slavery** and **established** them as a **nation**.

God **had promised** that as long as they **remained faithful** to the **covenant** he had established with them, **he** would be their **God** and **they** would be his **people**, and they would **continue** to enjoy his **blessing** and **provision**.

**But**, they were clearly **warned**, if they **disobeyed** his covenant, began worshipping **false gods**, God's hand of **blessing** would be **removed** and they would **suffer** the **consequences**.

**Many** of the **kings** that followed were **selfish** and **ungodly** men **leading** their **respective nations** into **rebellion** and **idolatry**. God sent **numerous prophets** to warn the kings and the nations to **repent** and **return** to God.

**Periodically** they would, and God would **mercifully forgive** them and bring **blessing** again to their land, but these spiritual **awakenings** were generally **short-lived**.

**Eventually**, the **northern** kingdom fell in **722 BC** and **Sargon** of Assyria reportedly carried off **27,290** Israelites into captivity. The **Southern** kingdom lasted **another 135 years** before falling to **Babylon** and king **Nebuchadnezzar**.

**Though** the nations had been **conquered** and many of their leaders **killed** or taken away in **captivity**, the nations remained **serf-states** paying taxes to their conquering **nations**.

In the **last** chapter of **2 Chronicles**, chapter **36** we hear the last **whimpering cries** of a once **great** and **illustrious** nation. **Zedekiah** is the **final** king. Let me read just two verses, **12&21**.

**"He (Zedekiah) did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and he refused to humble himself when the prophet Jeremiah spoke to him directly from the LORD....So the message of the Lord spoken through Jeremiah was fulfilled. The land finally enjoyed its Sabbath rest, lying desolate until the seventy years were fulfilled, just as the prophet had said."**

The **tragic** and final **end** of Judah's earthly **kingdom** had come. And the **destruction** came at the **hands** of **army** of **Babylon**, the **ancient** city of the **Chaldeans**.

**Abraham**, the man known in the OT as **God's friend**, was **called** out of **that country**, from **Ur** of the **Chaldees**. God took him into a covenant relationship with himself.

Now his **degenerate seed** are being **carried back** to that country again, **signifying** that they had **forfeited** all the **kindness** they had enjoyed for the **forefather's** sake.

The **benefits** and **blessings** of that **covenant** into which he was called--**all** was now **undone**.

The **city** was completely **destroyed**. Everything of **value** was **demolished** or carted off. The **temple**, the king's **palace**, all other **buildings** and even the **walls, demolished**.

**All** this happened **just** as the **prophets** had **warned**. Ezekiel in **Ez.12** precisely **described** the **king's** end. He said that **Zedekiah** would **leave** Jerusalem through a **hole** in the **wall** but that he would be **captured** and **taken** to the land of **Babylon**, but that he would **never see** it.

That's **sounds** a bit **strange** – he would be **taken** to Babylon but that he would **never see** it. But **prophecies** are sometimes **like** that. They **don't** make sense or sound **illogical**.

**However**, when **Nebuchadnezzar** set siege to the city, and there was finally **no hope** of victory, **Zedekiah abandoned** the city through a **hole** in his **garden wall**. But he was **chased** and **captured**, bound in **chains** and his **eyes gouged** out before he was taken to **Babylon**.

It **all** happened **just** as God had **warned**. God's **credit rating**, if you've ever wondered, is a **perfect 850** – he has **never** failed to **deliver** on a promise or **fulfill** a **prophecy**. Everything he says **will** happen – **happens**. We **dare not** take his words **lightly** or **flippantly** disregard his **warnings**.

## **6<sup>th</sup> PRAY FOR GODLY LEADERS.**

Proverbs 28:2 **“When there is moral rot within a nation, its government topples easily. But with wise and knowledgeable leaders, there is stability.”**

**Solomon** was in a **unique** position to **observe** nations and their **leaders**. God had given **King David** military **victories** over almost all **surrounding nations**.

Now **Solomon**, David's son **inherits** a kingdom that sees **40 years** of peace and abundant **blessing**. And also God granted Solomon **exceptional wisdom**. Solomon **records** distilled **wisdom** in the book of **Proverbs**.



His warning in **28:2** is of particular **importance** to the **United States** in this time. We have been **burdened** with leaders who **adopt** and **support** immoral **positions** that seem based on nothing more than the amount of campaign contributions they will generate.

Our **country** is headed toward unprecedented **depravity** and **decadence**. We have **abandoned** the **sacredness** of **marriage** and family. We are **sacrificing** the innocent **unborn** on the altar of **convenience**.

We have **jettisoned honesty** and integrity for **campaign** expedience—whatever it **takes** to win. As David said in Ps 60:11, **“all human help is useless.”** God is our only hope.

Finally, if we are to do what is right we must

### **7<sup>TH</sup> PUT FAITH IN ACTION.**

Matthew 7:21 **“Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter.”**

Jesus is just concluding a three-chapter sermon that he might have titled “Kingdom Citizenship.” In it he teaches about be-attitudes, salt and light, the law, anger, lust, divorce, revenge, loving enemies, giving, prayer, fasting, money, worry, judging others, the way to heaven and furtfulness.

He concludes with a powerful illustration about the wisdom of obedience, doing what it right, and the foolishness of ignoring his instructions. It’s like the difference in building a house on rock or on sand.

Christianity without obedience is Christianity without Christ. Too often those who claim to be Christ followers believe that all they have to do is say “I believe!”

We teach and rightly so all these wonderful truths about grace and mercy and forgiveness and love, but people somehow hear that all they have to do is accept these and they don’t really have to follow Jesus.

They’ve made a commitment to a set of religious facts about a religious figure thinking this is just a head game. The test for authentic conversion isn’t just doctrinal, it’s also behavioral.

Someone suggested that we are like **gun collectors**. We buy a Bible, go to church, take good notes, sing the songs but we never go out and shoot anything.

We have to do more than just talk about our faith. We have to share it with those who don't know. That's obedience. That's **doing** the right thing, not just **knowing** the right thing.