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## 05 Genuine Discipleship: GPS and the Rich Young Ruler

### Recap to Date

1. We had two sessions on seeking God, being aggressive and intentional in that quest which is foundational to our goal of genuine discipleship, growth to maturity and transformation.
2. In the last session we talked about the journey: knowing where we are and where we want to go as we desire to move toward discipleship, Christlikeness and walking worthy.

### Why Not Tell Us How to Change NOW?

You may wonder why we don't just jump straight into the change and transformation process. There is a critical reason why we need to set a foundation. We need to know where we are starting from. We need to understand the predicament we are actually in as fallen creatures, living in the world...and most people don't know! We must fully understand this to understand God's prescription for how to change. Transforming will cost us something. It requires our time, our energy, our commitment. Many books call the required transformation "radical discipleship" because compared with traditional "go-to-church-on Sunday Christianity" it is radically different. Consider the analogy of going to the doctor with what you think is a pulled muscle and learning you have a torn achilles tendon. The latter will require a radical solution. Without the proper "heart-set" the transformation we seek is impossible.

### Accurately Assess Where You Are

Recall our analogy from the last session. If you are in east St. Louis and desire to get to St. Louis, it is a short easy hop. But if you are actually in San Francisco and you think you are in East St. Louis you are going to get wet and not arrive at your destination. When we read the Word, we may think we are in east St. Louis, but we are actually in Tibet, or Mongolia! Today we will look at someone in God's Word who probably thought he was in a pretty good spot but found out why he wasn't.

### Learn from the Word The "Shifts" that are Possible

In Romans 3 we have another example of "where we are" and what is actually possible.

#### **Romans 3:10-18**

<sup>10</sup>as it is written:

These verses are quoted from the Old Testament. Paul brings them into the New Testament, post Pentecost, in the current age. We can extrapolate...this is what human beings are like, but this is where we can go as detailed in the Church Epistles.

"None is righteous, no, not one;

But we know from Timothy “all scripture is given for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in **righteousness.**” So, no one is righteous from birth but because of what Christ accomplished we can be righteous.

<sup>11</sup> no one understands; no one seeks for God. <sup>12</sup> All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

It’s not politically correct to call anyone “worthless,” however, in God’s eyes they are worthless because they are not doing anything he deems worthwhile.

<sup>13</sup> “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.”

What do people use their mouths and tongues for? You can use it to deceive and manipulate. You can be a politician and use it to lie. But as we see in the New Testament you can use your tongue for good, to speak the Word, to speak the truth in love!

“The venom of asps is under their lips.” <sup>14</sup> “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” <sup>15</sup> “Their feet are swift to shed blood; <sup>16</sup> in their paths are ruin and misery, <sup>17</sup> and the way of peace they have not known.” <sup>18</sup> “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

So that is an example of where we are and what we can move towards. Here is another example:

#### **Jeremiah 17:9**

<sup>9</sup> The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Some translations say, “desperately wicked.” That is the heart of man: selfish, self-interested, “I’ll do what I need to do to get what I want.” We can’t really understand it! That is why we need the Word so that we can be informed.

In first Timothy we read:

#### **1 Timothy 1:5**

<sup>5</sup> The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

The transformed Christian is able to love out of a pure heart! How do we get from a deceitful heart to a pure heart? That is what this series is all about.

#### **Jeremiah 17:10**

<sup>10</sup> “I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.”

The Lord searches the heart and tests the mind. In relationship with Him, He will reveal to us exactly where we are.

### **Examining Oneself**

The last session ended in 2 Corinthians 13 on the topic of examining oneself. Even Socrates said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” We need to look at ourselves and examine who am I? Where am I? What do I do well? Where do I need to improve. [Psalm 17:3](#) and [Psalm 26:2](#) speak of examining oneself.

## GPS Global Positioning System? Or God's Positioning System?

GPS enables us to pinpoint exactly where we are on the planet.? You can argue with the GPS because you think you know the way, but the GPS is accurate. Similarly, you may think you are in a certain place physically or spiritually, but you may not be correct. But GPS – God's Positioning System...the Word tells us exactly where we are. We may think we are in great shape spiritually but then we read The Book and realize we are not in as great a shape as we thought. Maybe we need to do a little adjustment here and listen to the Word!

## Why Are We the Way We Are?

There is no better way to understand why we are the way we are than in Genesis chapter 3! You can read this section a hundred times, teach it a hundred times, and each time you will find different things to emphasize. We are going to look at it in light of what we are doing now in seeking to grow to maturity.

### Genesis 3:1-20

<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

He is **sowing doubt**. He is using partial truth to get her to listen and consider what he has to say. There is seduction going on. We don't know the length of time involved or the extent of the conversation. We have here what God inspired Moses to write. He uses the same temptations today. Does the Bible really say...? Did God really raise Jesus from the dead?

<sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,  
<sup>3</sup> but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

Is that completely accurate? God did not say anything like "you can't touch it lest ye die." We **need to be right on what the Word actually says**.

<sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.

Eventually the devil gets around to **out and out contradiction** of what the Word says.

<sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Who knows what is going on in Eve's mind right here?! But the promise of the devil is that her eyes will be open, and she will know good and evil. What actually happens is she becomes spiritually blinded. What could she have said? How about: "Wait a minute...I am created in the image and likeness of God." **She apparently did not know who she was!** (We need to know who we are in Christ.)

The devil uses partial truths throughout to get her to consider disobeying. Partial truth acts like a hook. Getting one to stop and consider and possibly miss the false part of the suggestion.

The devil himself was Lucifer, the angel of light and had a prime position. He was like God in terms of attributes, but he wanted to be like God in terms of position. He wanted to usurp the

power of God. We are seeing the same thing going on today. People don't want to be like God in terms of his attributes...gentle, kind, loving. People want to be IN CHARGE. They don't want anyone over them. They want to call their own shots and not subject themselves to the authority of God's Word.

<sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise,

You could do a side-study on "desire." **They already had the wisdom of God but now what they are going to obtain is worldly wisdom.**

she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked!

Because of their sin they knew right away that something was different!

<sup>7b</sup> and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

They devise a way to cover themselves. This is really the first religion! "I've been separated from God!" "I need to DO something in order to cover myself!"

<sup>8</sup> And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

Here is another principle. They were in the presence of God originally. They had fellowship with God. Now they have the **sudden urge to hide themselves from God.**

<sup>9</sup> But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

Now did God know where they were? God knows everything. Of course, He knew where they were. He is asking the question so they will have to realize "where they are now at". God is helping them to understand where they are. Examine yourselves Adam and Eve!

<sup>10</sup> And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."

Now **fear enters**. There was no fear before this. There was no shame before this. There was no guilt before this. All that was brought on by man's sin.

Here is another principle: **hiding themselves from God**. Do people do that today? People don't want their sin, their private life to be exposed so they hide themselves (they think) from God.

<sup>11</sup> He said, "who told you that you were naked?"

Again, did God know who told them? Of course, but He is getting them to realize that they listened to someone else, i.e., the serpent. Earlier God had told them their function in the garden was to dress and keep (or guard) it. God is identifying for them the cause of their seduction and sin, so they knew. All these things are the same for us today.

<sup>11b</sup> Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" <sup>12</sup> The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate."

God knew what they had done, but this is the first time they have to come to grips with who they are and what they have done! Here we see the **first shifting of blame**. Adam is essentially saying, "Hey it's not my fault. I'm really a victim in this. It's the fault of the woman who God had given him." He is not accountable. There is a book by Larry Crabb entitled [\*The Silence of Adam: Becoming Men of Courage in a World of Chaos\*](#) Adam should have spoken up and said God told us not to eat of that fruit! But he didn't. He just went along and now blames Eve. So, what happened to Adam? He just loved the beautiful persuasive little woman so much that he went along with the disobedience she was proposing.

<sup>13</sup> Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Here is **the first acknowledgement of sin and conviction**. Right after her admission God lays out the consequences of their action.

<sup>14</sup> The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. <sup>15</sup> I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.

Which means the devil has offspring and they are still running around in the world today. Her offspring was Christ.

he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

He, Christ, shall bruise your head. Here is the promise of a redeemer to come. A path to fix the damage Adam and Eve had just done.

<sup>16</sup> To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing.

**Pain?! There had been no pain to date. This is new in the Lexicon!**

in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you."

There are people who pick out this verse and say "See, the man is supposed to rule over the woman!" That is not what this is talking about! This was a curse. This was the result of sin. In early civilization the man was required to take care of the woman due to the harshness of the elements and the difficulty in acquiring food for survival. She needed to be cared for and protected by the man.

<sup>17</sup> And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

So, the man too is going to experience pain.

<sup>18</sup> thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. <sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Adam and all humanity after him will return to the dust from which he had been formed. We are the descendants of Adam and Eve. We have the same blood, DNA. We inherited a propensity for sin which has been passed down to all generations since.

This is the beginning of the drama for redemption from here until Christ in order to rescue man out of this predicament.

<sup>20</sup> The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. <sup>21</sup> And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

They had tried to clothe themselves, but it was insufficient. God made them suitable garments of skins. To make these God would have had to kill some animal(s). This was the first indication that in order for man to be cleansed, blood would have to be shed.

So here are Adam and Ever now: naked, hiding, fearing, now they know their predicament and there is pain.

### **The Rich Young Ruler – Example of One's Location in God's Positioning System**

We are going to look at someone who thought he was in a pretty good place but really wasn't! There is much to be learned from this record. It appears in the three synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke).

#### **Luke 18:18**

<sup>18</sup> And a ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

We don't know what type of ruler he is. It is a theocracy, so he is not a Roman ruler. He could be a Pharisee or a member of the Sanhedrin. The record does not say. He had likely heard about or witnessed signs, miracles, and wonders that Jesus had performed or at least heard him teach.

<sup>19</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.

You might ask, what about Christ? Christ had not yet endured to the end and finished his work of overcoming all temptation. He had not yet, by free will, obeyed God all the way to the end.

<sup>20</sup> You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.'"

Notice he left out several commandments.

<sup>21</sup> And he said, "All these I have kept from my youth."

So, he is thinking "I'm in a pretty good place!" I'm in east St. Louis, there is probably just one more thing I need to do to inherit eternal life! How successful, really, was he at keeping the commandments? We don't know. Remember how Christ elevates the commandments in his Sermon on the Mount where he said if a man just looks on a woman with thoughts of adultery, he has committed adultery with her in his heart?!

<sup>22</sup> When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." <sup>23</sup> But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.

Think about what must be going on in the mind of this man!

<sup>24</sup> Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, "How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." <sup>26</sup> Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?"

This man had come to Christ because he had seen all the good things Christ had done. He was wealthy and of stature. He thought he was doing good. He was keeping the law, I'm a decent person etc. Christ gives him this one thing to do...sell all, give it to the poor, follow me. He could not do it because he was very wealthy.

Speculating here...the man may have been thinking Jesus is good, does and teaches good, but how can this be good for me? In the Old Testament wealth was a sign of blessing from God. He probably had all sorts of plans for his family and their future. He probably already tithed. Jesus had said:

"Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

We must remember God is always good. Whatever God tells us to do is always good for us and for our benefit and blessing. Remember in Exodus where Moses asked to see God's glory and God had his goodness pass by. God is always good. So many people blame God for things that happen, but God is good.

How could what Jesus had told him to do possibly be good?

Number one, the fact that he could not do it shows that he was not obeying the first commandment of loving God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.

Number two, so much of Christ's ministry is getting us to move beyond this life and to focus on the next life. That is a huge deal because we live in this life. We have our daily experiences. Think of the guilt he had to live with after going away sad and realizing he could not do what Christ had told him to do. He was too attached to it and could not see how that would be good for him to do. He went away with no peace.

Do we have to do this (sell all, give proceeds to the poor, and follow Christ) in order to obtain eternal life?

<sup>26</sup> Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?"

Why did they ask that question? In that time wealth was understood to have come from God. They were using their wealth and tithing according to the law. They didn't think anyone could do this hence the question...

<sup>26</sup> Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?"

Here is what Jesus replied:

<sup>27</sup> But he said, "What is impossible with man is possible with God."

So they are probably thinking, "What does that mean?"

Now for some humor...

<sup>28</sup> And Peter said, "See, we have left our homes and followed you."

Peter was a fisherman. What did he have in terms of wealth? A fishing boat and some nets? Compare that with what the rich young ruler had!

<sup>29</sup> And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers<sup>b</sup> or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, <sup>30</sup> who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life."

What happened on the day of Pentecost, after Christ had been crucified, died, paid for all man's sins, been raised from the dead? How does one receive eternal life? By faith in Christ, believing that he was raised from the dead and making him Lord! [Romans 10: 9,10](#)

The rich young ruler was looking for one more "work" to do to obtain eternal life. But everything was to shift after the Day of Pentecost.

#### **John 6:28-29**

<sup>28</sup> Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

Salvation in the Old Testament was contingent on keeping the works of the law and then doing sacrifices when you fell short in order to be deemed righteous. But after the day of Pentecost salvation contingent on Romans 10:9,10

#### **Romans 10:9 and 10**

<sup>9</sup> because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

If the rich young ruler hung around till after the day of Pentecost, he would have learned that he no longer needed to sell all, give to the poor, and follow Christ. He had to believe on Christ's finished work to be saved. He could have gone to Peter and asked if this was really true?

His guilt would have evaporated. Before Pentecost there was no good that was good enough. Now after Pentecost there is still no work that you can do that is good enough. The only work is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ's finished work, make him Lord and accept all that God has made possible by grace.

Here is the Scottish prayer in application!

Make the book live for me, Oh Lord.  
Make the book live for me.  
Show me thyself (who you are...all good)  
Show me myself (not good)  
Show me my Savior (Christ who has done it all)  
And make the book live for me!

The only way to eternal life is through Christ, making him Lord. (One can debate what that means.) He's the Lord means I am not my Lord, my spouse is not my Lord, my boss is not, my



neighbors are not, my kids are not. **Christ is my Lord and I believe in Him and his resurrection** which is an essential element.

What does it say in the New Testament about riches and the believer's relationship to them?  
What does it say in 1 Timothy?

**1 Timothy 6:17-19**

<sup>17</sup> As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

So, it doesn't say one needs to sell all and give proceeds to the poor. But it does say that the rich aren't to be prideful nor to put their hope in uncertain riches but rather put your hope in God who provides. We here in the U.S. are the rich compared with most people in the world today.

<sup>18</sup> They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, <sup>19</sup> thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

This is packed! Let's tie it back into what Christ had told the rich young ruler:

**Luke 18:22**

<sup>22</sup> Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, **and you will have treasure in heaven;** and come, follow me.

He is telling him to focus on eternity (and you will have treasure in heaven). Here in 1 Timothy the focus is similar, looking to the future and hope:

**1 Timothy 6:18b,19**

<sup>18b</sup> be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, <sup>19</sup> **thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future**, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

Thinking about the future and eternal life rather than the cares and entanglements of this current world and preoccupation with it. Make use of your resources thinking about what is to come! This current life is just a drop in the bucket, a breath compared to eternity. Having this focus enables one to enjoy what is TRULY LIFE, or some translations render this LIFE INDEED.

Next session will begin with a 3-page paper the Ken Schleimer did on "The Weakness of the Flesh." It is also posted on the "lifeindeed.org" website.