

Discipleship

Part 4: One Thing

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Full Sermon Text (for reading on your own)

Submerged in The Word

“John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” (Mark 1:4) There’s a lot that we can get here:

“John came baptizing” What do we know about the Greek word for baptism? What does it mean? It means to be “submerged.” And of course that is what we’ve experienced in baptism; people are submerged. And it is a full submersion as John was baptizing them into repentance - into changing their minds!

“Preaching a baptism of repentance” Repentance is a mind set change. It’s a change of mind. You were walking / working in one direction, repentance happens and you say “I am not going to walk that way any more. I am going to do it how the Lord says to do it.” That’s repentance. So John was baptizing those who would be baptized into a change of mind.

Now, when people get baptized (unless they do baptism by diving off the high dive), what’s the last thing that goes under? Your head - the crown of your head! And I have shared before about how a number of years ago the Lord spoke to me “your mind is on the throne of your heart, and I want to be.” The last thing that goes under is the crown of your head. But the Lord wants us to be baptized - to be fully submerged - to be in over our heads - in changing our minds according to the Word!

If you look in scripture, symbols are very consistent because God is really smart - He does not make analogies that are only half-correct. You look at the parables and every aspect of them is profoundly meaningful. You can dig as deep as you want to go in the Word of God and you never will reach the point where it doesn’t make sense any more. People tell me I am good with analogies, but if you dig deep into my analogies, you’ll realize that 4 out of the 6 characters in them didn’t make any sense!

“Water” means something in the Word of God - in the same way that “oil” means something. “Oil” stands for the anointing or the Holy Spirit. “Water” stands for the Word. Look at Hebrews 10:22. It says that if you have an old, defiled conscience - if you have a dirty mind - that keeps you out of the presence of God, there is a fix for that. The way that you get rid of a defiled conscience is that you wash it. You make it clean. You cleanse it. And what do you wash it with? The water of the Word! So, when we look at baptism, there’s a lot to learn about baptism because you see John baptizing people (fully submerging them, over the top of their head) into a change of mind. And

what substance is John baptizing them into? Water! And what is that water representative of? The Word of God!

Now we also see something else in this passage. Where does John baptize them at? In the Jordan River, yes. But what location does Mark 1:4 designate? Read it. God baptizes you into mindset changes *“in the wilderness”* so that you are ready for the promise! He did not baptize them in the promised land. God will always take you out of captivity, into transition, and into a promise. It’s the goodness of God that leads us to change our minds (repentance).

Spiritually Minded vs. Carnally Minded

We see in Luke 7:29-30 that not everyone who heard John’s message got baptized by him. We see in verse 29 *“And when all the people heard Him, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John.”* So, the tax collectors were baptized by John and declared God just and listened to Jesus (Him). At another point in the New Testament, the people heard thunder from Heaven, but it wasn’t thunder; it was God speaking clearly - but some people couldn’t hear it! But in Luke 7, we see tax collectors (sinners), who have been stealing from families who don’t have enough to feed their children, declared God just when they heard Jesus speak. Why? Because they had been baptized into repentance. They did not get baptized philosophically. They went under the water. All the way. Over the crown of their heads. And they could hear the words of Christ and declare God just.

Contrast that with the Pharisees and the lawyers who *“rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him (John).”* (verse 30) The Pharisees and the lawyers were self-righteous. And we have talked before about how self-righteousness does not necessarily equal “looking religious.” Self-righteousness, in the truest sense of the word, means that you are “self-right.” Which means you think you are correct - you are the plumb line for “right” in your life. And, if you are the plumb line for “right” in your life, you look to yourself a lot for answers. You look to yourself for answers which means you become focused on the flesh.

The Pharisees and the lawyers were proud; they were not humble, which means they had an inaccurate view of themselves. God had given them the 10 Commandments to show them their need for a savior. The Pharisees and the lawyers were in the mindset of “yeah, I’ve kept those. We’re good.” Pastor Brad has taught us that pride = and inaccurate view of yourself. Humility = an accurate view of yourself. The Pharisees and the lawyers were off-base in their assessment of themselves! So, pride is directly connected to self righteousness and they were self-normed. Self-referenced.

There are two frames of thinking for all of human thought. One starts with God and ends with life and one starts with the flesh and ends with death. *“For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”* (Rom. 8:6) Now, you’d expect that the mind that is set on the Spirit to produce the opposite result of the mind that is set on the flesh, right? And we see in Rom. 8:6 that it is, isn’t it? Mind that is set on the flesh = death. The mind that is set on the Spirit = life.

They are opposite. But, God's better than that. The mind that is set on the Spirit doesn't just produce life, it produces life AND peace! He not only gives a good thing, but He packages it amazingly too! God gives you life, life abundantly, and it comes in the package of peace!

"The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and He adds no sorrow with it!" (Prov. 10:22) When your mind is set on the Spirit, you not only get blessing from the Lord, you not only get life deposited in you, but it comes in the context of peace - total well-being! It's financial breakthrough at your job without working extra hours. I'm not against hard work, but you get what I'm saying. "I got promoted!" "Oh, so you mean you make less per hour now and you work 20 hours more per week?" That doesn't sound too much like forward motion to me. God's blessings have no sorrow with it! A mind that is set on the Spirit produces life AND peace!

So, that's powerful to understand that there are two reference frames for all of human thinking and that being carnally-minded stems from pride. Pride leads to self-righteousness, which causes to focus on yourself - which sabotages your ability to receive from God. And that's what 1 Cor. 2:14 says *"But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."* And we've all been fools like this before! John Wimber (founder of the Vineyard Movement) used to wear a sign around parks which read "I'm a fool for Christ, who's fool are you?" Everybody's serving somebody. The natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit of God because they are spiritually discerned. Like Andrew Womack says, to be carnally-minded is to be a "meat head."

Have you Had your Ear Pierced?

It was my hope last time that by talking about the difference between being spiritually-minded and carnally-minded that it would stir up a hunger in our hearts to have the Word of God on the throne of our hearts.

Give a look at Ex. 21:6. It is an awkward scripture, so try not to squirm in your seat, but instead get the revelation that's in it. This section of scripture contained an ordinance for the Jewish people. It said "if end up with another Jew being your servant for one reason or another, have them serve you for 6 years and after they've served you for 6 years, let them either choose to go free or let them choose to stay with you, if they want to stay with you in your house, to serve you and your house the rest of their days of their life." That's the context. Now, then there is verse 6 (don't wince) which directs the master what to do if the Hebrew servant decides to serve him for the rest of their life: *"then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever."*

Now, let's get the revelation from that. When we grow up in the Lord, we're His servant. At some point, we may have a decision to make like the Hebrew servant in Ex. 21. Perhaps it has already happened for you like it happened for me when God told me "your mind is on the throne of your heart and I would like to be." God was asking me "do you want to stay in my house, or not?" I'm talking about walking away from the Lord. That wasn't the question. I was as saved as saved can

be; I wasn't walking away from the Lord. The question was "do you want to be my servant the rest of the days of your life? You've seen my goodness for 6 years, you've served me for 6 years, you know my nature, you've seen my hand. Would you like to have your ear pierced through so that I'm the only one you listen to the rest of your days?"

There is a "yes" to being saved, there is a "yes" to being submitted to the Lord, but there is a bigger "yes" than that. I don't know what to call it . . . maybe the "ultimate yes." It's the "yes" that says "I'm going to be spiritually minded." "If homosexuality is a sin, it's a sin. If abortion is murder, it's murder. If the Word of God says 'spank your kids,' then I am going to spank my kids." And if the Word says "don't gossip," you are going to walk away!

Ps. 34:9 says "*Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!*" (ESV) Have you ever worried about lack in your life? Have you ever wanted more abundance? If "that's you!" you just got a powerful scripture right there! Other translations say "have no want." Same thing.

Now, look at verse 11 "*Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.*" This is David speaking. He said in verse 9 (with God's inspiration) "those who fear the Lord have no lack." Now, 2 verses later, he says "come over here so I can teach you the fear of the Lord!" "What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good?" (verse 12) Who wants to listen up about the fear of the Lord?!? Here's how (verse 13-14):

- "Keep your tongue from evil." Don't gossip. You're thinking "I just want to prosper in my workplace." Stop talking by the water cooler! Keep your tongue from evil!
- "(keep) your lips from speaking deceit." Don't lie. Don't twist the truth. Don't spin tales. Talk plainly.
- "Depart from evil" You might not be doing any of the gossiping or planning evil, but you walk into the copy room, hear it, and walk out of the room as if you forgot something. "Those copies can be made in about an hour - that would be just fine." Depart from evil! "*Fret not yourself because of evildoers*" (Ps. 37:1) Some people just do evil. Stay away from them! I'm not saying don't minister to them, but if they are bent on doing evil, leave them to their own devices, don't get around them! Bad company corrupts good habits!
- "*and do good*"
- "*seek peace and pursue it.*" There is a hope that the Lord is wanting to lay in your heart and that hope comes from the secret place. Hope is what gives birth to faith. It's a positive imagination - it's what gets you out of bed in the morning. But the place you want to get that hope from is the secret place with the Lord. Let Him impregnate you with hope for this season. When you get that hope in the secret place, you will notice something comes along with it - it not only releases a burst of life into your heart, but it also has a sense of peace with it (remember, life and peace come from being Spiritually minded). Seek peace! "Lord I know you have new business ventures for me! I know there's new opportunities!" But I'm not going to just analyze the market - although

analyzing the market can be part of it. I am going to see Him in the secret place and He is going to put something on my heart after 3 months of talking with Him about it and not hearing anything in particular. And, 3 months later, all of a sudden this idea pops in and its like “huh, that seems really right!” And you sit on that idea for a week and it just keeps getting bigger in your heart. You don’t have to think about it, but every time you do, it just feels great. You’ve just found peace! And once you’ve got the peace of the Lord . . . PURSUE IT! Now that you have the peace of the Lord, you can get after it. You don’t have to think twice about it the whole time. If something doesn’t work quite right in that new venture you don’t have to freak out and wonder if you heard God wrong. No, you waited, and you sought peace, and you found peace, and you don’t have think twice about it and you are getting after it! “God bless me in the work of my hands, I’m going for it!”

Motivation for the Word

Being discipled is as simple as being in the Word and letting the Word naturally do the work that it does in our hearts to transform us. But, I know motivation can be an issue. For instance, there have been seasons in the past, where all I wanted to do was to be in the Word. I couldn’t leave a room without trying to sneak a peak at the Bible to see if I could quickly find a verse that ministers to me that I could hang onto for the next 15-20 minutes and get revelation from until I got back in the room to look at my Bible again before continuing on with my day. Every place I’m going I packing a little Bible in my pocket so I can steal glance in the Word when I have a chance. I’m clearing off the nightstand at night so that the only thing that’s on it is the Word so that the last thing I see is the beauty of His splendor before I go asleep. I can picture myself running to get in bed - because I had a thing with the Lord that I knew that if I got in bed by 9:17pm each night, He would never let me be tired when I woke up at 4:30am to spend time with Him. I’m coming back to it. But I recognize that while “being in His Word” is the solution, I knew that there needed to be a deeper solution for some of us. I recognize that at times, motivation can be an issue. Or, vision for being in the Word can be an issue.

Say “amen” if that’s you. (Even if God’s the only one in the room to hear you :)

A Tale of Two Gardeners

I am going to paint a picture of 2 gardeners. Imaging you are a reporter who has been tasked with telling the “tale of the gardening season” for 2 gardeners. One is a little bit younger. Beautiful young lady in her early 30’s. Her name is Martha. Martha grew up in the city, and now that she has some land she started gardening about 4 years ago. She is ecstatic about gardening, in fact some of her friends have had to ask her to stop talking about rutabagas in her conversations with them - in favor of some more universally interesting topics. Undeterred by her friends, Martha is so excited about gardening that after she started her garden 4 years ago, she has expanded the footprint of her garden bed each of the last 3 years. At the beginning of the season, when you meet with Martha to ask her about her gardening this year she tells you she is particularly excited about her tomatoes -

hoping to get so many tomatoes that she would be able to can them and potentially even sell them. That's Martha.

Mary, the second gardener you will be interviewing throughout the gardening season, is much older, probably in her early 70's (you didn't want to ask her age of her specifically). When you meet with her she tells you she can't quite remember how long she's been gardening exactly - but "probably about 50 years or so." She tells you she's not specifically excited about any particular crop this year (remember Martha was really looking forward to tomatoes) - but instead indicates she will be "planting the usual." But, Mary does say that she cannot *WAIT* to be outside, working through the soil with her hands. She indicates "even all these years later its almost like I step into another world when I walk through that garden gate - just being out there is so enjoyable for me." That's Mary.

Fast forward to the middle of the season. When you talk with Martha, you hear that apparently weeds have been a nightmare for her: "it has been so much work, the weeds have been terrible this year. Weeds upon weeds upon weeds!" Next, you proceed to go check with Mary about her experiences in the garden this year. You were thinking Mary would have some complaints to report about weeds as well, but to your surprise, Mary simply notes that she has been "loving being in the garden, the weather's been so pleasant, it's so nice to be out there," etc. You figure "I've got to ask Mary about her weed situation" so you kind of pry on that specific point. Mary responds "well there's always weeds in garden; you just pick them" and then she keeps moving on with conversation. You think "that's pretty interesting."

So, fast forward towards the end of the season. You go to meet with Martha and see that she has cans and cans of beautiful tomatoes. She even had the ability to sell some cans of tomatoes in addition to all the lovely cans you see upon visiting. She says "the garden has produced really well" but you look out at the garden and see a number of half rotten tomatoes hanging on the vine - looking like she has not picked the garden in a while. So, you ask Martha about it and she says she had left many on the vine, because she "had just too much on my plate here towards the end of the season so I'm going to just let those go and just before it frosts I'll just till it all under."

You proceed to have your end-of-season meeting with Mary. She is mostly just sad that the gardening season is about to end. She really can't bear the fact that it is going to be cold and she is going to have to wait all the way again until next spring to be back out in the garden that she loves so much. But she too of course had a wonderful harvest this year, she's already compositing for next year, saving seeds for next year, etc. She's wrapping up late season tomatoes individually in news paper so they can ripen up through the late fall in her basement.

So, those are our gardeners. We have Martha, who's younger in her 30's, and Mary, who's older in her 70's. My question for you is: "who finds it easier to work in their garden, and why?"

Most people would say Mary would find it easier to work in her garden. OK, why? Some would note that she "wants to do it" or "she enjoys just being in the garden" or "she's more interested in the experience that what she gets" or "she's focused on the positive things." All true.

The reason it would be easier for Mary to work in her garden has to do with the question of motivation or vision. Proverbs 29:18 says *“Where there is no revelation (vision, prophetic vision), the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law.”* We see in this verse that all discipline comes from vision. Where there is no vision, people cast off restraint. What’s another word for restraint? Discipline. Discipline says “I’m going to restrict my options today in order to increase my options tomorrow.” If you want to have discipline, you need to have vision of the goal of tomorrow or else you will never limit yourself today! For instance, if I talk with a student who doesn’t want to try in their Algebra class, I know something - guaranteed - they don’t know how math matters to them! So, if I find out that they want to be a businessman, I can paint a picture of them sitting in a board meeting with a \$3 million / year salary and not being able to do the mental math to understand the numbers being show in a presentation. Or, I can give the positive side of that -that they could be such a brilliant mathematical thinker that they could find solutions to major company problems quicker than anyone else in the room. They look at me and say “I see what you mean.” Notice, they can “see it” now. Vision. They may now be able to discipline themselves in math class for future success in the board room.

Remember, we’re talking about being in the Word. Discipline comes from motivation or vision.

“What do you think of Me?”

Let me ask you another question about Mary and Martha. For this one, you’ll have to apply what we’ve noticed so far from them and think a bit outside the box. Let’s imagine that at the end of the growing season their respective gardens were able to speak. And those gardens asked each of them a question. Their gardens asked them “what do you think of me?”

How do you think our gardeners would respond to that question from their gardens? Let’s start with Mary. She would likely say things like “you’re lovely” or “I love you” or “I enjoy my time with you.” What would Martha say to the garden? She would probably coach herself for a second and then say “you really produced a lot for me. We had a good harvest, but at the end of the season I just didn’t have any time for you.”

Martha’s motivation was “cans of tomatoes.” Once she got her cans of tomatoes, her garden became a liability to her - a weight on her back. “I’m going to just till it under.” For Mary, the motivation was enjoying the garden. She got her cans of tomatoes as well. Do you see the difference?

Now, if I can, let me ask you to calm your heart, and imagine God, the Father, standing lovingly in front of you. Which is a wonderful thing, and it is also a very honest thing to stand before God - because He knows us better than you know ourselves). But it’s a beautiful thing to stand before God like that. In that place of wonderful honesty, God proceeds to sweetly ask you a simple but profound question (which I would like you to honestly answer in your heart). He sweetly asks:

“what do you think of me?”

Take 15-20 seconds to answer the Lord before you move on. Close your eyes for a bit if you have to. Answer Him honestly. He wants to hear from you.

It's a great thing to let the Lord ask you questions. He always asks the right question. Sometimes I don't know the question I need to ask. If you are having trouble getting traction with the Lord, you're probably asking the wrong questions - it doesn't mean they're bad questions, it just means they're not the right ones. But wisdom knows the right question to even ask - and He has all the wisdom we could possibly need! So, if you are having trouble finding traction with the Lord, a great prayer to pray is "Lord, show me what question I need to ask you." I think it was Bob Hazzlet who says "in new seasons you have to ask new questions." And that can be disorienting if don't find the right questions to ask from the Lord.

Can you remember how you answered the Lord? What do you think of Him?

I believe there are basically 4 categories of answers that different individuals would likely respond to the Lord's question with:

- *Negative Towards God* (Hate / Angry / Dislike / Resist Him). What's at the root of that? The root of that is those people are "alienated" from God.
- *Like how He makes us feel* (peaceful, calm, loved, secure, etc. when you are around Him). That's a good thing.
- *Appreciative and cognoscente of what He's done for us* (provision, healing, deliverance, salvation, etc.) "God I love how you provide for me." "You're so good in what you've done." "You healed me of this, set me from that." "You so ministered to that couple I met on the street with power!" That's a good thing too.

Now, before we get to the fourth type of response we may have to the Lord, know that this self-assessment is not meant to be heavy. In fact, the only reason I am including it is because this message only has one point and it could become like a small town on a country road that you could blink and miss it! In fact, Pastor Brad taught me the main point of this message 6 years ago, again 3 years ago, and also 3 months ago - and I'm just now getting it! So, I was really asking the Lord "what's the question that I could have people respond to so that when they answer it they could see what they need to see so that then they could hear what they need to hear?"

So, we might respond that we hate God. We might respond that we love the security that we feel in Him. We might respond that we love the provision, protection - the things He's done for us. The fourth type of response the Lord may receive is from someone who would begin their phrase with the pronoun "You."

- *"You're Beautiful. You're Marvelous. You're Lovely. You're my entire Focus and Attention. You're my Greatest Delight. I enjoy You, God."* That's Mary's response (from our gardeners' story) isn't it!

The last response, where “you enjoy Him” is about relationship. That’s the focus. The responses that is about “what He’s done for you” is about provision and power. That’s good too! The response that’s about how He makes you feel - that you feel secure and loved - that’s about identity. The one we don’t want to be in (although God will redeem that - He did for all of us) is the alienation response - where you are an alien to the Kingdom . . . where you are not a citizen of the Kingdom, you are not a son or daughter of God. So the four types of responses actually represent 4 motivations or relational foci:

- Alienation
- Identity
- Provision / Power
- Relationship

Stages of Discipleship

Now, the reason I am bringing these up is because they are the natural stages of discipleship. Let me show you what I mean:

- Alienation: “ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him” (Col. 1:21-22) That’s alienation. Pre-disciple.

Now, watch this. 1 John 2:12-14 has a powerful progression of discipleship which I’m sure you’ve read before, but perhaps have walked right over what it has to say. In this section of scripture, John, the writer, writes to little children, young men, and fathers. When you see orders and patterns in the scriptures, pay attention! God doesn’t mess up with His words. He writes here to little children, young men, and fathers. What is God painting a picture of? A progression of maturity!

- To the little children he says this, “I am writing to you, little children, because you sins have been forgiven you for His name’s sake.” (1 Jn 2:12) This verse is about Identity. When people are first saved, it’s about figuring out who you are in Christ. Figuring out that the work on the cross was finished. Figuring out that you’ve become a son or daughter of God, that you can approach Him with confidence, that you’ve been reconciled to Him by the blood of His Son! It’s about identity.
- The he says, in verse 14, “I have written you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.” (1 Jn 2:14b) So, you figure out your identity and then you start to find some promises! Because if you don’t know who you are, you won’t operate according to His Word - because you’ll think it’s not for you. You’ve disqualified yourself in your heart. You’re born-again, 100% good-

to-go on God's end, but you don't think that you are so your heart condemns you before Him so you don't operate according to His Word and declare His promises in your life! But, what John is saying is "once you get your identity set, young children, then you become a young man, and the word of God abides in you and you're strong and you've got some experience overcoming the evil one." How? Through the promises of the Word of God! Provision / Power. That's the focus for young men. God's provision and His Power at work within us.

- Now, watch what he writes to fathers. This is so good! "I have written to you fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning." (1 Jn. 2:14a) Do you see it? He wrote to the children that they would know that they are saved. He wrote to the young men that they would know that they are strong in the Word. And he wrote to the fathers because they know HIM. What is this season of discipleship about? Relationship. Isn't that powerful?!? Remember Philippians 3:10? Everything Paul was doing in setting aside all self-righteousness was for one purpose: "that I may KNOW HIM."

I've been at all these stages. I can relate to all of them:

- My wife Megan led me to Jesus on March 15, 2005, but if you would have seen me in 2002 I did not like God and you could have found me in a 9th floor dorm room on Ohio State's campus trying to convince fellow students that they shouldn't believe the Bible. Opps. I was dumb as a box of rocks and premise was absolutely counter-factual. I had no factual basis for my comments. It was ridiculous, but I didn't like God, so that is what I was doing. I was alienated. Hostile. Doing evil deeds. **ALIENATION**
- But praise God Megan led me to the Lord in 2005 - reconciled me to God! I remember as a new believer thinking "I just love how I feel when I read the Word and when I am in His presence. When I talk with Him, it's just so calm. I just feel loved-truly loved!" Now, also as part of that identity segment of my discipleship process, in about 2009 or 2010, you could have seen me screaming in joy at the top of my lungs driving in my Honda, listening to Kris Vallotton explain to me that my old man is DEAD - that I'm a completely new, born again creation without a sin nature praise God! "As He is, so are we in this world ..." (1 Jn. 4:17) It was blowing my mind! I had my Bible in my pocket everywhere I went. I just couldn't get enough of it! **IDENTITY**
- Around 2012 you could have found seen my jaw drop when I realized that God had answered our prayer for our income to increase 83 or 84% over a 12 month period! We had prayed in faith a year prior to that for a specific income. We realized we needed to make more money if we were going to have a house. So, we figured out what we would need to make to own a house very comfortably, then we prayed "Father, in the name of Jesus, we pray that our income would be _____ within the next calendar year!"

After that you may have come over to our house and seen an amazing outpouring of His favor on us as we set up our woodworking shop. I still remember sitting on a couch with Megan, realizing that we had the money TO THE PENNY set aside for woodworking tools that God had prophetically identified to us. We had received a certain set of woodworking tools through His leading (which started with a vision), then had a tax return come into an account we had set aside for tools and it was to the penny what the tools would be with tax and discounts, etc. all applied! Actually it wasn't to the penny initially, it was off by one cent. But that bugged me for 4 days so I took the numbers to four decimal places and it was a rounding error - it was to the penny the right amount!!! He's unbelievably good!!! What is that season about? Provision, power! In the same season, seeing people healed for the first time when you pray for them! "I have written you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one." **PROVISION / POWER**

- Or you could see me right now, over the last 4, 5, or 6 months where my whole world is getting rocked in the Lord - and its probably the greatest renaissance I've ever had in the Lord where I'm realizing it's all about One Thing - to know Him. "I write to you fathers, because you *know Him* who has been from the beginning." **RELATIONSHIP**

"One Thing"

We never stop learning about identity in Christ. And, you never stop learning about the power that resides within you and the provision that God has for you. But what I'm talking about is what gets you out of bed in the morning. What causes you to clear off the nightstand. When I was first in the Lord, just knowing that He loves me was enough for me to pick up the Bible at every spare moment. Am I still thankful that He loves me - 100%. Then it was "these promises from God are incredible!" and that did it for me. Are there still tons of promises for me to learn about? Absolutely. I'm not saying anything differently. But, I am telling you (for me at least, and I believe also for many who read this), will fail. But there is one motivation, one thing, one focus that will never fail you.

David said it: "*One thing I ask from the Lord, that shall I seek: to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life: to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple.*" (Ps. 27:4) Which thing did David ask for? Something that's not a thing! This sounds a lot like relationship! Gaze upon His beauty. Meditate or inquire in His temple. One thing.

This is a really important message in a series on discipleship because what I've found is that every time I transitioned between seasons of discipleship I didn't know what was happening! All I knew is that my motivation would wain and I didn't know where it went . . . and I would have to find my new motivation in the new season as it became clear to me what the Lord's focus was on. It was like I was constantly recalibrating a compass for true north in my walk with God. But there is a focus that you can have that will be continuously on-point across all seasons of discipleship - that will

never let you down in terms of your motivation to be in the Word. And that's to know Him. To enjoy Him. If you remember Pastor Brad's series on the purpose of man . . . the #1 purpose of man is to "know Him and enjoy Him."

Out of the discipleship sequence (identity, provision, relationship), "knowing Him" is the only part of the discipleship process that will persist in perfect applicability in Heaven. If you have this one thing as your focus, you will not even be phased when you step into Heaven - you won't have to change motivations or anything else. You won't have to say "well, this is a little bit different than I thought." John 17:3 says *"And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."* What's eternal life? That we know Him!

I'm not meaning to create a value distribution between these 3 stages of discipleship. There is a season for identity as a focus. There is a season for provision and power as a focus. Psalms 34:8 says "taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him." If you haven't tasted and seen that the Lord is good, you won't want to take refuge in Him. There is a season where you need to taste and see that the Lord is good in order to want to take refuge in Him! Remember the Hebrew servant? 6 years with the master and *then* they can decide "do I want my ear to pierced?" But when you've tasted and seen the goodness of God and His power, there is one focus that will never let you down.

Think back to Mary in our gardening story. Her love for gardening did not start with a love for gardening - guaranteed. Her love for gardening started with a love for tomatoes, vegetables. Just like Martha, the younger gardener. But there is a motivation that is a higher way - that does work better long term.

If you want to have your life radically transformed in this regard, spend a week meditating on Psalms 27:4. It's worth the time. It will bless you to be about one thing.

Examples of "One Thing"

I want to give you a few examples:

- In Phil. 3:10, Paul said the whole focus of everything he was doing with the Lord was so that he would know Him.
- We just saw in Ps. 27:4 that David had a "one thing." Think about David - a man that was so after God's own heart that God decided to make His Son a son of David. God was trying to decide "which human lineage would I like to birth My Son through?" All flesh was corrupt at that point, but God was trying to decide which fleshly lineage to birth Jesus through. God chose David. Jesus the son of David. As men go, God was impressed with David. "One thing I ask from the Lord . . . to gaze upon His beauty, to inquire in His temple."

- Having this “one thing” is not theoretical; it is intensely practical. For instance, when Moses was commissioned by God in Ex. 3:11-12, he questioned God “Lord who am I” to go deliver the people? Look how God responded “Certainly I will be with you.” Are you seeing the theme?
- When Jesus commissioned the 11 disciples at the end of Matthew (28:18-20), the last thing He says in the entire gospel of Matthew is “I am with you always.”
- For Jesus Himself, His time on the mountaintop seeking the Father face-to-face was the backbone of His ministry. All other destinations and purposes of Jesus’ ministry came from that one thing. You see the centrality of His time with the Father expressed when He tells us He only does what He sees the Father doing and only says the words of the Father. Having Him as our “one thing” is intensely practical, it’s not theoretical. It’s not “too heavenly minded to be earthly good” - to be about just one thing.

Earlier, I said do not turn the stages of discipleship process into a value-system hierarchy. If your answer to God’s question “what do you think of me” was about His wonderful provision, great! But, just know that’s where you’re at and at some point you’re going to have transition your motivation to “knowing Him.” I too was in that stage and then I was disoriented wondering “where did my motivation evaporate to?” Did I know God and have a relationship with God in that stage? Yes! In fact, in 1 John 2, another way John addresses the young children is that they “know the Father.” So, you can start to know the Father as soon as you are born again, but you can really get to know Him when you come into a place of maturity and make that your one thing.

Even though it is not a hierarchy and you do have to start somewhere, Jesus does make it clear that “one thing” is the higher way. In John 6:26-27, after Jesus had multiplied food, He told the people “look, you’re seeking me because I filled your belly.” Which is OK - that’s the provision part. But Jesus continued “Don’t labor for that. Don’t labor for that bread. Labor instead for the true bread from Heaven - Me.” Luke 10:17-20 shares a very similar re-directing comment from our Lord. The seventy had been sent out. They operated in power. They are all excited! The seventy returned with joy and Jesus said “nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in Heaven.” Do you see the theme?

The Greatest Call and Purpose

Mark 14:4 says “*But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, “Why was this fragrant oil wasted?”* I think you probably know this story. There is a jar of very costly perfume - the single jar has \$50,000 of perfume in it (a year’s wages). The lady breaks the jar open and pours the valuable perfume over Jesus’ head. There’s a lot to say about this story, but here’s what Jesus said about it: “*wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.*” God decided to have Jesus be born of the line of David because David was a man after God’s own heart. Jesus says “this story about this woman will be told everywhere the

gospel is preached.” Now, we talked before about water representing the Word. What does oil represent? The spirit or the anointing. And you will see if you study Isaiah 61 that the anointing always comes on you for a purpose. But what if the greatest calling and purpose of the anointing of God on our lives was to love Him?

I’ll give you an example. Heidi Baker has a wonderful ministry with her husband, Roland, called Iris Ministries. They see wonderful and astonishing miracles as they love the people of Mozambique. They see multiplication of food, lots of people raised from the dead, etc. In fact, the reason the ministries is called Iris ministries is because they kept having this miracle happen where people only had whites for their eyes and they would pray for them and the iris of their eyes would grow and they would no longer be blind - so its called Iris Ministries. Needless to say, Heidi Baker is a sought-after international conference speaker. I’ve heard a story (which I am sure I have some of the details off about). I understand she was invited to a conference to speak. She gets up to speak at this conference and asks the director of the conference if it is alright if she takes some time “to love on / worship her Jesus” before she starts speaking. The person running the meeting says “sure; take as much time as you need.” Multiple hours later, the whole crowd was very uncomfortable. They had likely driven from many many miles away to come hear her speak and all she seemed to be doing was worshiping the Lord. They interrupted her to ask if she was going to speak and she, almost surprised says “I thought you told me to take as much time as I need.”

Watch this. People at the conference had watched her walk on the stage of the conference. And she is a very anointed lady so she represented the anointing of God to them in that moment. They watched her walk onto the stage and multiple hours later they were asking themselves “why was that anointing (fragrant oil / perfume) waisted on Jesus?” What if the greatest purpose and calling of the anointing of God on my life and your life and was to love on Him?

Luke 10:40-42 tells us the real story of Mary and Martha. They were sisters. One is trying to serve Jesus, the other (Mary) is sitting at the feet of Jesus. Look what Jesus says to Martha about Mary: “but ONE THING is needed and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.” That relationship is what you will take into Heaven. One Thing. One Thing.

Text Summary (for reading as a group)

“John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” (Mark 1:4) John was baptizing those who would be baptized into a change of mind. The Lord wants us to be baptized - to be fully submerged - to be in over our heads - in changing our minds according to the Word! God baptizes you into mindset changes *“in the wilderness”* so that you are ready for the promised land! It’s the goodness of God that leads us to change our minds (repentance).

There are two frames of thinking for all of human thought. *“For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”* (Rom. 8:6) The mind that is set on the Spirit doesn’t just produce life, it produces life AND peace! He not only gives a good thing, but He packages it amazingly too! God gives you life, life abundantly, and it comes in the package of peace!

Pride leads to self-righteousness, which causes to focus on yourself - which sabotages your ability to receive from God. And that’s what 1 Cor. 2:14 says *“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* And we’ve all been fools like this before!

It was the hope last time that by talking about the difference between being spiritually-minded and carnally-minded that it would stir up a hunger in our hearts to have the Word of God on the throne of our hearts. God is wondering *“Would you like to have your ear ‘pierced through’ so that I’m the only one you listen to the rest of your days?”*

Being discipled is as simple as being in the Word and letting the Word naturally do the work that it does in our hearts to transform us. But, motivation can be an issue. To address that we can consider a tale of two gardeners . . . one who enjoyed gardening for gardening’s sake, and another (a little younger) who enjoyed it for “tomatoes’ sake.” All discipline to be in the Word comes from our vision - our motivation.

If God sweetly asked you “what do you think of me?” How would you honestly answer Him? Nearly all answers would likely fall into 4 basic categories: negative towards God, like how He makes us feel, appreciative of His provision, and Relational. That fourth type of response the Lord may receive is from someone who sound like “You’re Beautiful. You’re Marvelous. You’re Lovely. You’re my Greatest Delight. I enjoy You, God.” That’s Mary’s response (from our gardeners’ story) isn’t it!

These are the natural stages of discipleship. The first represents ***alienation***: *“And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him”* (Col. 1:21-22) The next represents ***identity***: *“I am writing to you, little children, because you sins have been forgiven you for His name’s sake.”* (1 Jn 2:12) The next is about ***provision / power*** *“I have written you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.”* (1 Jn 2:14b) Finally, John writes to fathers about ***relationship*** *“I have written to you fathers, because you*

know Him who has been from the beginning.” Remember Philippians 3:10? Everything Paul was doing in setting aside all self-righteousness was for one purpose: “that I may KNOW HIM.”

We never stop learning about identity in Christ. And, you never stop learning about the power that resides within you and the provision that God has for you. But this is about what gets you out of bed in the morning. What causes you to “clear off the nightstand.” There is one motivation, one thing, one focus that will never fail you.

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Points to Ponder . . .

- How does motivation / vision relate to discipline?
- Describe the stages of discipleship in 1 Jn. 2, what is the focus of a believer at each given stage?
- What is the “one thing?” Describe some examples of the “one thing” from scripture.
- What do we learn from the woman with the expensive perfume (Mark 14) and Mary (Luke 10) about our calling to the one thing?
- What are some scriptures that communicate what it means to be “submerged in the Word?”
- Scripturally, what are some of the benefits of being spiritually-minded (as opposed to being carnally-minded)?
- What does the “ultimate yes” as it relates to the Word of God look like?