

a disciple's guide to

CHOOSE THE LIFE

Exploring a Faith that Embraces Discipleship

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AND

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INTRO

To choose the life is to commit to a way or pattern of life. Its basis is humility and it is a life of self-denial and submission to others. We choose it because Christ chose it for himself. The essence of faith is to take up our cross daily and follow him.

We don't just amble our way into this pattern; it is a conscious decision to live by faith. It is fundamentally about giving up the right to run your own life. It is the life Jesus lived, the life to which he has called every disciple. It means to be as unnecessary and irrelevant to our culture as he was to his. And just as we are never more alive as when we deny ourselves, we are never more relevant and necessary than when we choose his life.

The life that Jesus lived and prescribed for us is different than the one being offered by many churches. His servant leadership was radically distinct from what is extolled by secular society and even too bold for what is modeled in the Christian community.

Henri Nouwen said it well, "The long painful history of the Church is people ever and again tempted to choose power over love, control over the cross, being a leader over being led."¹ It is as Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ."²

What will we choose? Will we surrender to the powerful forces of our culture and simply try to be successful for Jesus? Or will we choose the life that Jesus chose, and commit to follow him regardless of where he leads?

To put it another way, to **choose the life** is to commit to:

- ♦ Believe what Jesus believed
- ♦ Live as Jesus lived

- ✦ Love as Jesus loved
- ✦ Train as Jesus trained
- ✦ Minister as Jesus ministered
- ✦ Lead as Jesus led

To *choose the life* is to choose *His* life. Jesus *chose* His life.

*"Because we come out of a divine nature, which chooses to be divine, we must choose to be divine, to be of God, to be one with God, loving and living as he loves and lives...Man cannot originate this life; it must be shown him, and he must choose it... We are not and cannot become true sons without our will willing his will, our doing following his making. He was not the Son of God because he could not help it, but because he willed to be..."*³

George MacDonald

*"Every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you into something different than it was before...each of us at that moment is progressing to one state or another."*⁴

C.S. Lewis

*"The ills of the church and of the individual almost totally derive from the simple failure to just do what Jesus told us to do in the Great Commission. That is what it means to choose the life. There is no excuse whatsoever for not doing it, and every rationalization is simply a wound to our own soul, an injury to our group, and an insult to the Christ who told us what to do."*⁵

Dallas Willard

ABOUT THE *GUIDE*

ITS PURPOSE

Bill Hull's book *Choose the Life* exists to assist the motivated disciple in entering into a more profound way of thinking and living. That way is the pattern of life Jesus modeled and then called every interested person to follow. It is a life grounded in humility—characterized by submission, obedience, suffering, and the joys of exaltation. It is the life that transforms its adherents and penetrates the strongest resistance.

Choose the Life challenges traditional thinking about what it means to be a Christian—it rebuilds the Gospel from the disciple up. It asks what is wrong with the Gospel taught in contemporary Western Culture and then suggests some changes in the way it is communicated by the Church. It then calls upon each person to rethink what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

A Disciple's Guide to Choose the Life is designed to lead disciples in a ten week course through *Choose the Life*. However, it is more than simply a reading guide. It presents the ideas in *Choose the Life* so as to provoke a disciple's thinking towards the application of these truths, which produces in him a faith hospitable to healthy spiritual growth—a *faith that embraces discipleship*.

ITS PARTICIPANTS

Virtually all significant change can, should be, and eventually is, tested in relationship to others. To say that one is more loving without it being verified in relation to others is hollow. Not only do others need to be involved to test one's progress, they are needed to encourage and help one another in the journey of transformation. Therefore,

going on the journey with others is absolutely necessary.

The *Guide* is designed to lead each disciple in a personal journey of spiritual formation by his participation within a “Community” of disciples, who have likewise decided to *choose the life*.

The “Community” is composed of (optimally) from two to six disciples being lead through this ten week exploration of *Choose the Life*.

Participants in the Community will have agreed to make time and perform the daily assignments as directed by the *Guide*. They have agreed to pray daily for the other members of their Community and to keep whatever is shared at their “Community Meeting” in complete confidence (unless express permission to disclose a specific matter is given by all involved). They will attend and fully participate in each weekly Community Meeting.

ITS PROCESS

Change is a process. Events can change people but most often transformation is a process that takes time. Most studies on change agree that acquiring a new idea and putting it into practice so that it becomes permanent requires three months. This would be the minimum time required. The ten weeks to finish the *Guide* provides a solid opportunity for significant transformation. The process employed by the *Guide* includes:

- Reading the scripture together
- Reading a common philosophy of the Christian experience
- Journaling insights, questions, and prayers
- Discussion over material that has already been studied, prayed over and reflected upon
- Helping each other keep their commitments to God
- Helping each other break free of areas of defeat and bondage

- A common commitment to apply what God has impressed on each member
- A common commitment to impact those with whom they have contact

ITS PATTERN

The *Guide* leads an exploration of each successive chapter of the book (including the introductory material) in ten weeks.

Each week—beginning with Chapter One—a chapter is explored in five daily 30 minute sessions.

At each daily session, the disciple begins with prayer focused on the issues to be presented in the daily reading. The daily reading provides each disciple with core thoughts and key ideas that will be explored in the day's exercises. Questions are provided designed to help the disciple's understanding of the core thoughts and key ideas. Disciples are then directed to reflect on the application of these core thoughts and key ideas to their own spiritual growth. Journaling space is provided for answering questions and recording the thoughts, questions, applications, and insights stemming from his reflection.

Once weekly (at the sixth session), the disciple meets with the other disciples which comprise his "Community" at their Community Meeting. Here, they pray together, discuss the core thoughts and key ideas introduced in the week's readings, share from their times of reflection, and encourage each other on their journey.

Although the *Guide* was designed primarily for use by groups consisting of 2 to 6 members optimally, the material contained within can easily be used to effectively lead much larger groups in a discussion based exploration of *Choose the Life*. This is done by using the 10 weekly Community Meetings as the agendas for a ten-week discussion program. It is recommended, when the *Guide* is used in a large group setting, that the accompanying DVD be used to introduce the topic

for the week's discussion. Additional questions to enhance the weekly meeting may be gleaned from the week's five-day study program.

Lastly, it is recommended that the leader (or leaders) of a weekly discussion group proceed through the *Guide* together as their own Community group. The insights that they will acquire by proceeding on their own journey through *Choose the Life* will be invaluable to them and the larger group they will be leading.

When leading a classroom sized (or larger) group through *Choose the Life*, one must keep in mind that most of the "spiritual traction" for transformation is due to the interaction that the Lord has with each individual as He interacts with them through the other individuals in a community of believers. To preserve this traction, the leader must provide a venue and time for this interaction. For this reason it is suggested that some time during the weekly session, the leader divide the large group into smaller groups (mimicking the 2 to 6 member Community group) for the purpose of more intimately discussing the issues presented in the week's session. It is reported after experiencing successive weeks with the same members of this smaller discussion group, that individuals previously not participants in a small group-like program, have desired to continue in just such a program.

While the authors believe that the most effective and efficient means of leading individuals to healthy spiritual transformation is in the context of a smaller Community group, we do acknowledge that the larger group setting may be the only means currently available to a church's leadership, whereby the biblical truths taught in *Choose the Life* are likely to be made available. We believe most strongly that though the form of instruction is important, the function is what must be preserved- *Verum supremus vultus* (truth above form).

ITS PRODUCT

Learning studies demonstrate the importance of application. The most relevant question a teacher can ask is, “Are my students learning?” According to a leading learning researcher people remember:

- 10% of what they read
- 20% of what they hear
- 30% of what they see
- 50% of what they see and hear
- 70% of what they say
- 95% of what they teach someone else⁶

Each session asks the disciple to determine what concrete activity they can take that week to apply what they have learned. The *Guide* highly values the *spiritual traction* one can get by facing challenges in a high trust community. This avoids the hothouse effect (people not experienced in the reality of ministry) on groups that do not answer the challenge to reach beyond themselves.

Christ was a man for others; disciples then are to be people for others. It is only in losing ourselves in the mission of loving others that we live in balance and experience the joy that Christ has promised. This is the *faith that embraces discipleship*. This is the life that cultivates Christ-likeness and whose product is a transformed disciple—the only life of faith worthy enough to justify our calling upon others to *Choose the Life*.

PREPARING FOR THE FIRST MEETING

COMMUNITY

The first order of business is to determine the members, size, and makeup of the Community.

The Community should consist of:

- Members
All believers-
While no particular age range or level of spiritual maturity (or Christian experience) should be the overarching criterion for inclusion in your Community, but given that the objectives of *Choose the Life* are only obtainable by Christians, it is assumed that each member of any particular *Choose the Life* Community is already a Christian.
- Make-up
2 to 6 members (*optimally*)-
The Guide can also be used a discussion guide for leading larger groups through an exploration of *Choose the Life* (see above, *About the Guide, Its Pattern*).
- Materials
The *Book*, the *Guide*, the *DVD*-
Once the membership of the Community is established, each member should acquire a copy of the book, *Choose the Life: Exploring a Faith that Embraces Discipleship*, and the course guide, *a disciple's guide to Choose the Life*. In addition the Community needs to acquire the course DVD entitled: *a DVD guide to Choose the Life* – . The DVD features Bill Hull, the author of *Choose the Life*, introducing each week's core thought, key ideas and concepts. These materials must be available to each member at least one week prior to the first Community Meeting.

This brings us to the second order of business: When and where the Community will meet.

CALENDAR

The members of the Community need to establish when and where the Community will have its weekly meeting. Bear in mind that it will require about 90 minutes from start-to-finish to accomplish all that is to be done at the Community Meeting. What matters most in setting the time of these meetings is that all of the members are able to make this accommodation. As you will learn in the course of this journey, the commitment to Community is essential to your own personal transformation. Therefore it is imperative that all members be present, and able to contribute, each time the Community meets.

In selecting the location of your meeting, choose a site that will allow for the fewest possible interruptions, confidential conversation, and ease of access. After consensus is reached, write the start date and meeting time, and the location in the appropriate space provided on the “*Choose the Life: Community Purpose and Covenant*” in Appendix One of your *Guide*.

COMMITMENT

Having determined the Community’s membership and meeting location and time, the members of the newly formed Community need to clearly state and affirm their commitment to accomplishing what is stated in their Purpose and Covenant. We have included a covenant (see *Choose the Life: Community Purpose and Covenant* in Appendix One of this *Guide*) and each member should read, sign, and turn-in the *Covenant* at their first Community Meeting.

The final order of business in preparation for your first Community Meeting is for each Community member to read Dallas Willard's "Foreword" to *Choose the Life* (pages 6-8) and the "Preface: A Conversation Starter" (pages 9-14), and to write their answers for each of the questions posed in the *Guide* for the First Week's Community Meeting.

WEEK 1

Your First Community Meeting

In preparation for this meeting, all Community members have read Dallas Willard's "Foreword" (pages 6-8) and "Preface: A Conversation Starter" (pages 9-14) from *Choose the Life* and have written their answers to each of the questions posed in the *Guide* for the First Week's Community Meeting.

AT THIS WEEK'S INTRODUCTORY MEETING

1. Open with prayer asking the Lord to help you become conscious of any difference that may exist between what He means by discipleship and we have allowed it to become. Pray that He will grow in us the desire to be obedient as we live-out His faith.
2. Play the introductory video clip "Cheap Grace" from a DVD guide to *Choose the Life*.
3. Collect the signed *Choose the Life Community Purpose and Covenant* from each Community member.
4. Have one member of your Community read aloud the following introduction to this week's meeting:

Dallas Willard begins his Foreword to CTL with, "There are now signs that significant groups among professing Christians are ready to take up discipleship to Jesus as the core of their religious

life.” One of those signs is your reading of *Choose the Life* and your participation in a Community that will discuss the core thoughts and key ideas and apply the practices presented therein. The use of the word “core” indicates that it is central to one’s life. The following discussion is designed to draw out a person’s spiritual readiness to choose the life of following Jesus, a life of humility, obedience, submission, and sacrifice.

5. Discuss with the members of your Community, the answers you developed for this week’s questions.

QUESTIONS

1. When you were a child, to what were you highly committed? Describe what that commitment entailed, how it affected your commitments as an adult.

2. Dallas Willard cites three things vital to spiritual growth (pages 6, 7). Discuss each one and evaluate its place in your present experience.

3. What does Bonhoeffer mean by “cheap grace?” (page 10) Do you think “cheap grace” is a problem in your life, faith community, or church? How is it manifested?

-
-
-
4. Do you agree with the description of the “problem” and the “solution” advanced? (pages 11-13)
-
-
-

REFLECTION

Talk with one another about your readiness (or reluctance) at this time, to *choose the life*, specifically, about living out “a faith that embraces discipleship.” Why now?

PRAYER

Share matters for the Community to pray about through the following week. Make note of the requests made to use in your daily time of prayer.

CLOSE

Pray together, and close the meeting.

WEEK TWO

Choose the Life, Chapter One “How I Got to this Point”

DAY ONE

PRAYER

Dear Lord, help me to be dissatisfied with my current ways of being “successful” in accomplishing your calling in my life. Begin now to develop in me a taste for your ways.

TODAY’S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter One, (pages 15-16).

QUESTION

What were the signs that indicated to the author that something is “not working,” that “something is wrong”?

REFLECTION

What has been the greatest motivator for change in your life? Why was it so motivating for you?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY TWO

PRAYER

Lord, today, help me to be very conscious of how I conduct myself. Help me to see if I exhibit character traits that those who know Jesus well would recognize.

TODAY'S READING:

Choose the Life, Chapter One (page 17, paragraphs [¶] 1-4)

QUESTION

What caused the author to want to change? What were the factors that were causing the despair the author was feeling?

REFLECTION

Do you find yourself “stuck in the same rut” of “religious activity without transformation” and “doing things right” but with “little movement from the Spirit”? List those things you are doing “right.” What do you expect to see in those things which would evidence the Spirit’s movement?

Things I'm doing right	Expected Evidence of the Spirit's movement
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PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY THREE

PRAYER

Lord, help me to admit my failure in following you. And help me to gain a greater understanding of your love and acceptance of me, as I seek to be transformed into the disciple you called me to be.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter One (page 17 ¶ 5 through page 18 ¶ 2)

QUESTIONS

1. What caused the “plague” to lift?

2. What did the author mean when he told his congregation that he intended to “evangelism them”?

REFLECTION

What do you believe you should see happening in your life if you were truly living as a disciple of Jesus?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY FOUR

PRAYER

Lord, help me to change my understanding of following You, so that I really act like the disciple you describe in the *Sermon on the Mount*.

TODAY'S READING

Choose *the Life*, Chapter One (page 18 ¶ 3 through page 19 ¶ 3)

QUESTIONS

1. According to the author, what is the “problem” and what is the “solution”?

2. What does a disciple look like (according to Matthew 5-7)?

REFLECTION

How (and about what) have you been practicing “sin management”?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY FIVE

PRAYER

Lord, teach me how to minister as You minister and lead others the way You led.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter One (page 19 ¶ 4 through page 21)

QUESTION

What do you suppose the author means when he states that “Jesus was irrelevant and unnecessary to his culture”?

REFLECTION

What are the obstacles which keep you from sincerely saying to God, “Lord, I’m not afraid of any change you want to make in my life”? List the obstacles and list what fear they cause you to have.

The Obstacles

The Fear

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

WEEK TWO

Choose the Life, Chapter One “How I Got to this Point”

Community Meeting

DAY SIX

In preparation for this week’s Meeting, you will have read Chapter One, “*How I Got to This Point*” in *Choose the Life* and have answered the reading questions for each day.

AT THIS WEEK’S MEETING

1. Open this session by asking God to help us “be transformed from relevance to prayer, from popularity to ministry, and from leading to being lead.” Help me to “jump-in” and swim the “uncertain seas of downward mobility.”
2. Play video clip two, “*How I got to this Point*,” from a DVD guide to *Choose the Life*.
3. Have one member of your group read aloud the following introduction to this week’s Meeting:

Most of us don’t willingly invite change into our lives. I suppose one exception to that rule is getting something we really want that is shiny and new: a car, a house, a trip, a new spouse. Generally, however, we resist change. In fact, the cause of every problem is change. Change is painful; change threatens our safety and security, and it makes us less confident of our abilities. When that change challenges one’s very sense of identity, it intimidates and is naturally resisted. But if we want to grow in the image of Christ, change is the

name of the game. Transformation is change and that change only comes when we say, “Lord, I’m not afraid of any change you want to make in my life.” It is to this destination that we go in this lesson.

As a group, answer the following questions:

QUESTIONS

1. What did Bill mean when he used the metaphor of “fly-fishing on ice” to represent his struggles while serving as Senior Pastor at a “successful” church?

2. What are the differences between believing in Jesus and believing what Jesus believed? (pages 19, 20)

3. Discuss the five-fold way the author presents of how we are to follow Jesus. (pages 19, 20)

REFLECTION

1. What are we to understand by Bill’s statement that “competence is a cul-de-sac”?

2. How are brokenness and humility “essential to spiritual health”?

CLOSE

Share matters for the Community to pray about through the following week. Pray to close the meeting.

Jesus calls us not to sin management but to transformation, where we experience one breakthrough after another and do away with sin in our lives.

WEEK THREE

Choose the Life, Chapter Two “The Need for the Life”

DAY ONE

PRAYER

Lord, teach me to repent of my commitment to a non-discipleship style of Christianity.

TODAY’S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Two, (page 23 through page 28, ¶ 2).

QUESTIONS

1. What does the author mean when he says that “we have made the test for salvation doctrinal rather than behavioral”?

2. What is “missing” from the gospel of our modern church?

REFLECTION

What are your “default settings,” where did you get them, and why do you keep them?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY TWO

PRAYER

Lord, remake me into someone who is neither bored, nor boring.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Two, (page 28 ¶ 3 through page 31 ¶ 2).

QUESTIONS

1. Do you agree with the author that “discipleship or spiritual formation is the primary and exclusive work of the church”? Why is this understanding correct (or incorrect)?

2. Why has church become “boring”?

REFLECTION

Given the truth of Luke 6:40, why would being like Jesus keep you from ever being a bored and boring person?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY THREE

PRAYER

Lord, help me not to fear Your leading. Help me to make heart-deep commitments to You.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Two, (page 31 ¶ 3 through page 35 ¶ 2).

QUESTIONS

1. What is different in the first disciples' understanding of discipleship from the contemporary church's understanding?

2. What does the author say is the first thing that must be done?

REFLECTION

Reflect on the idea of "choosing the life" in light of Matthew 6:24.

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY FOUR

PRAYER

Lord, help me to submit to Your leading through “another like-minded person in mutual submission and humility.” Help me not to fear bringing “everything out of hiding and into the light.”

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Two, (page 35 ¶ 3 through page 40 ¶ 3).

QUESTIONS

1. What is the “key part of being a follower of Jesus”? (page 35)

2. What should discipleship look like today? (page 36)

REFLECTION

If faith is only real in obedience, how would the casual observer recognize that you have this faith? How do those who know you best “see” your faith?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY FIVE

PRAYER

Lord, prepare me to understand and make the changes I need to make to become Your disciple and to make disciples for You among the unbelieving.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Two, (page 50 ¶ 4 through page 42).

QUESTIONS

1. What does this “new kind of evangelism” consist in?

2. What is “the great omission in the Great Commission”?
What has this “omission” caused?

REFLECTION

About what particular sin have you “raised the white flag of surrender” and chosen the “sin management” approach to addressing it?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

WEEK THREE

Choose the Life, Chapter Two “The Need for the Life”

Community Meeting

DAY SIX

In preparation for this week’s Meeting, you will have read Chapter Two, “*The Need for the Life*” in *Choose the Life* and have answered the reading questions for each day.

AT THIS WEEK’S MEETING

1. Open this session by praying for God to help us understand what it is about us that needs to be changed. Help us submit to however You intend to change us. And help us not to fear the repercussions of this changes. Help us to trust ourselves with You.
2. Play video clip three, “*The Need for the Life*,” from a DVD guide to *Choose the Life*.
3. Have one member of your group read aloud the following introduction to this week’s Meeting:

There is common concern among church watchers that the message has been compromised, and the harmful results have cascaded down into our definition of faith and what it means to be a Christian. The test for salvation has become doctrinal rather than behavioral. We have ritualized salvation with walking the aisle, praying to receive Christ, or signing a doctrinal statement. The trouble with our evangelism is that we have made it so easy to enter the Christian life that we

miss the repentance, commitment, and regeneration that provide the power to live the Christian life, The trouble with our discipleship is that it is “in-house” and non-reproductive. These two factors alone account for the decline in church attendance, but more importantly, the decline in disciples being “salt and light” in the world.

As a group, answer the following questions:

QUESTIONS

1. Discuss whether your test for salvation been primarily “doctrinal” rather than “behavioral.”?

2. Discuss the statement that “faith is only real in obedience.” How does it challenge our modern notion of faith? (page 24)

3. How does holding a faith that does not transform lead to “sin management”? (page 26)

REFLECTION

Do you think your church and other churches have accepted a non-discipleship Christianity? Is it optional in your life?

Do you think you have a choice? (pages 26-30)

CLOSE

Share matters for the Community to pray about through the following week. Pray to close the meeting.

Discipleship today must also begin with a commitment of submission to at least one other person. Choosing the life begins right here.

WEEK FOUR

Choose the Life,
Chapter Three
“The Call to the Life”

DAY ONE

PRAYER

Lord, help me to understand exactly what it is that you are calling me to do. Enable me to do it. And then, allow me to lead others in it.

TODAY’S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Three (page 43 to page 47).

QUESTIONS

1. What does the author mean by “the first act of a disciple is obedience, not a confession”?

2. How, in our current church culture, is “spiritual greatness” being “measured by size”?

REFLECTION

What are some of the rivals in your life to following Jesus?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY TWO

PRAYER

Lord, give me the strength to deny myself the right to be in charge of my own life. Train me to appreciate my new position as I follow behind You.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Three (page 47 ¶ 1 to page 52).

QUESTIONS

1. Who is Jesus calling to the life of discipleship? And, why does the term “spiritual formation” war against the inclusion of those whom Jesus intended to include?

2. What is self-denial, and why is it “essential”? (pages 49-52)

REFLECTION

What are some things that you must deny yourself to follow Jesus in the fullest sense of being His disciple?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY THREE

PRAYER

Lord, help me to give up control of the timing and the method of my actions and submit my dreams, visions, and breakthrough ideas to Your leadership. I deny myself in order to say yes to You. Please steady my hand as I drive the stake of obedience to You, through the heart of my will, my ego, and my desire to control.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Three (page 52 ¶ 1 to page 55 ¶ 1).

QUESTION

Why is seeking the answer to the question “Lord, what do you want me to do; what is my mission?” *before we start walking the path of obedience* a common mistake?

REFLECTION

What do you (and others who know you well) identify as your strengths? (page 53)

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY FOUR

PRAYER

Lord, remind me to lead not from my strengths, but from a heart that is willing to suffer any humiliation as I follow Your leading.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Three (page 55 ¶ 1 through page 57).

QUESTIONS

1. Why does Jesus use the simile of taking up a *cross* in His description of following Him? (Luke 9:23)

2. Why does Jesus tell us to take up our cross *daily*?

REFLECTION

What are the areas in which you are “following with doubt”?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY FIVE

PRAYER

Lord, teach me to do first what interests You most—often what is in my neighbor’s best interest—and never what interests only me.

TODAY’S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Three (page 58 through 60).

QUESTIONS

1. What is “God’s paradox”? (page 58)

2. What are the “rewards” for answering “to the Society of Jesus”?

REFLECTION

How have you benefited in living by God’s paradox?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

WEEK FOUR

Choose the Life, Chapter Three “The Call to the Life”

Community Meeting

DAY SIX

In preparation for this week’s Meeting, you will have read Chapter Three, “*The Call to the Life*” in *Choose the Life* and have answered the reading questions for each day.

AT THIS WEEK’S MEETING

1. Open this session by praying for God to teach us how to hold our lives loosely, to become self-forgetting, and to loose ourselves in the joy of accomplishing of His mission.
2. Play video clip four, “*The Call to the Life*,” from a DVD guide to *Choose the Life*.
3. Have one member of your group read aloud the following introduction to this week’s Meeting:

It has been taught and caught in far too many Christian settings that Jesus’ invitation, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow after me,” is for the spiritual elite—for those called to suffer, for those whom history will call “the saints.” This idea leads us to the belief that there are a few chosen ones whose destiny is to live at a higher level than the rest of us and that it is the role of the ordinary disciple to support the special ones. While there may, by necessity, be an element of this in any group of people, Jesus’ call is universal. This is why he

uses the word “anyone.” The call to this kind of life is for everyone.

As a group, answer the following questions:

QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by “faith is more than agreement, it is taking up your cross”?

2. The author presents various things disciples are urged to follow. These alternatives to Jesus’ calling may appeal to us but can be very dangerous. What are these alternatives, and why could they lead us astray? (page 46)

REFLECTION

1. How should a disciple give these alternatives their proper consideration, when seeking to follow Jesus' leading?

2. Why is self-denial "essential"? (page 49-52)

CLOSE

Share matters for the Community to pray about through the following week. Pray to close the meeting.

... until we actually step out in obedience to him, we can't experience the transformation of our character. As we follow him, Jesus will reveal more about himself and our mission day by day.

WEEK FIVE

Choose the Life, Chapter Four “The Habits of the Life”

DAY ONE

PRAYER

Lord, I want to be changed, but I don't like the process, especially because it involves some kind of pain. Give me power beyond my own will to help me remain in the pain, while you walk with me through my transformation.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Four (page 61 through page 64 ¶ 2).

QUESTIONS

1. Why should we practice the spiritual disciplines?

2. How do “habits create character”?

REFLECTION

What do you consider to your “best” habit?

What would others consider to be your “worst” habit?

How did you develop these habits?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY TWO

PRAYER

Lord, I've tried and tried so many times to make the "right" changes in myself. I know that I am at war with myself, that as strong as my will is to change, the same strength of my will is opposing that change, desiring to remain the same. Lord, please rescue me from my "body of death." Create in me *one* will, Yours.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Four (page 64 ¶ 3 through page 66).

QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by "Spiritual disciplines are to transformation what calisthenics are to sport"?

2. What does it mean that the spiritual disciplines have an "work indirectly" in creating character?

REFLECTION

Why is willpower alone of little help in our transformation?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY THREE

PRAYER

Lord, I've worked hard to know more about You. I now desire to be the kind of person whom You are delighted to know. Help me become that kind of person—Your friend.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Four (page 67 through page 69 ¶ 2).

QUESTIONS

1. What was meant by the claim that “Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning”? Do you agree with this claim? Why?

2. What is the “malpractice of the disciplines”?

REFLECTION

What do each of the tools (spiritual disciplines) in your “tool shed” look like? Which ones are well worn from constant use? rusty? Which ones have never been taken out of their package? Which ones are neglected because you aren't sure you know what they are for, or how to use them?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY FOUR

PRAYER

Lord, I confess that I have been one of the “undisciplined disciples.” I choose now a different life. I will no longer try to be godly; I will train to be godly. I choose Your life.

TODAY’S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Four (page 69 ¶ 3 through page 74 ¶ 2).

QUESTIONS

1. What is an “undisciplined disciple”?

2. What is the “cost of non-discipleship”?

REFLECTION

What has “non-discipleship” cost you personally?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY FIVE

PRAYER

Lord, I've found it hard to follow You. Not because I do not know the right thing to do (I usually do), but because it's easier (it's almost automatic) to do otherwise. My "default setting" is usually set to respond differently from what I know is the right response. Please train me so that I will respond freely and easily from a different default setting—Yours.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Four (page 74 ¶ 3 through page 79).

QUESTIONS

1. What is the "power of habit"?

2. Discuss the difference in attitude between "trying" and "training" to be godly?

REFLECTION

How is it that training in the spiritual disciplines causes Jesus' yoke to be "easy" (Matthew 11:30)?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

WEEK FIVE

Choose the Life, Chapter Four “The Habits of the Life”

Community Meeting

DAY SIX

In preparation for this week’s Meeting, you will have read Chapter Three, “*The Habits of the Life*” in *Choose the Life* and have answered the reading questions for each day.

AT THIS WEEK’S MEETING

1. Open this session in prayer.
2. Play video clip five, “*The Habits of the Life*,” from a DVD guide to *Choose the Life*.
3. Have one member of your group read aloud the following introduction to this week’s Meeting:

The spiritual disciplines are essential to the deliverance of human beings from the concrete power of sin. The interplay between discipline and disciple is not without importance. John Ortberg says, “Disciplined people can do the right thing at the right time in the right way for the right reason.”⁷ The practice of the disciplines develop habits of the heart that make a disciple more capable of answering the call of God on his or her life. It is equally important to understand that the disciplines are simply tools that God uses to cultivate a more intimate relationship with us. The disciplines are meditation, chastity, service, fasting, sacrifice, worship, simplicity,

fellowship, frugality, submission, prayer, secrecy, confession, study, celebration, silence, solitude and charity.

As a group, answer the following questions:

QUESTIONS

1. Drawing from the list above in the introductory paragraph, what disciplines have you engaged in at one time or another (you may discover that you have experienced most of them)? At that time, what effect did they have upon you?

2. Looking again at the list above, and list examples of these disciplines being practiced in the life of Jesus?

The Spiritual Discipline

Jesus Practicing that Discipline

The Spiritual Discipline	Jesus Practicing that Discipline
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REFLECTION

1. Training to practice the spiritual disciplines without being held accountable is very difficult. What are the challenges you face in connecting at a deep level with another person or small group (keeping in mind that some of the necessary qualities to cultivate a helpful relationship are humility, submission, and vulnerability)?

2. Knowing that not all the spiritual disciplines are to be practiced concurrently, how will you decide which ones should be practiced when? Which ones have you determined are crucial for you to practice at this time?

CLOSE

Share matters for the Community to pray about through the following week. Pray to close the meeting.

*The spiritual disciplines transform the mind and train us for everything...
Character is formed by the Holy Spirit, and the disciplines are the tools.*

WEEK SIX

“The Inner Workings of the Life”

DAY ONE

PRAYER

Lord, when I was young I had many visions of myself being great. But as I grew older I realized (for whatever reason) that almost all of them would not come true. Yet, even with this disappointment, I still have that hunger inside me to be in some way, uniquely great. Lord, help me to become the uniquely great person You have always meant me to be.

TODAY’S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Five (page 81 through page 85 ¶ 1).

QUESTION

What good can having a positive vision of yourself, when you are young, do for you in the future?

REFLECTION

What part does vision play in your spiritual formation?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY TWO

PRAYER

Lord, I know that have *accepted* me “Just As I Am.” But I know also that You will never be *satisfied* with me as such. Teach me to be dissatisfied with who I have been, and train me to prefer being the new person you are making.

TODAY’S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Five (page 85 ¶ 2 through page 89 ¶ 3)

QUESTIONS

1. Why is being crucified with Christ the necessary step to taking on a new spiritual person?

2. What does subjecting the will have to do with triggering transformation?

REFLECTION

Transformation is a process. What are some specific steps you are taking to balance the passive voice (Romans 6:6-8) of the Christian faith and the active voice (Galatians 5:24, 25)—in other words, between being and doing?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY THREE

PRAYER

Lord, you know that I'm not all that comfortable with "sharing" and discussing my personal thoughts and ideas and feelings with others. Please help me to develop a higher concern for becoming who You want me to be, than about what other's may think about who I am now.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Five (page 89 ¶ 4 through page 91).

QUESTIONS

1. How is "learning to live in the disciplines...similar to learning a foreign language"?

2. In what ways is commitment and involvement in a discipleship community essential to transformation?

REFLECTION

What is it about commitment and involvement in a discipleship community that you find positive, or negative, or just worrisome?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY FOUR

PRAYER

Lord, teach me about how you intend me change me. I know from my own experience that me just changing my mind, usually won't change anything at all. Help me to learn how to change.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Five (page 92 through page 96 ¶ 1).

QUESTIONS

1. What does the author mean when he states that, "the body is a tool for God"? Does God mean to use our bodies to transform the other "parts" of us? How? (Consider Romans 12:1-2)

2. How is transformation both an "inside-out" and an "outside-in" operation?

REFLECTION

What natural circumstances of life has God used as opportunities to grow you to be like Him?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY FIVE

PRAYER

Lord, I'm coming to believe that You really are dedicated to making me into all that I can be. All I ask is for You to be with me when it gets tough.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Five (page 96 ¶ 2 through page 100).

QUESTIONS

1. What were the two events or experiences that were reported to have caused the most important spiritual transformation?

2. What does it tell you about God's determination to grow you to complete maturity when He will use even our feelings of being "utterly, unbearably crushed" and "despairing of life" to form us?

REFLECTION

What are the fears which keep you from following Jesus fully?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

WEEK SIX

Choose the Life, Chapter Five

“The Inner Workings of the Life”

Community Meeting

DAY SIX

In preparation for this week’s Meeting, you will have read Chapter Three, “*The Inner Workings of the Life*” in *Choose the Life* and have answered the reading questions for each day.

AT THIS WEEK’S MEETING

1. Open this session in prayer.
2. Play video clip six, “*The Inner Workings of the Life*,” from a DVD guide to *Choose the Life*.
3. Have one member of your group read aloud the following introduction to this week’s Meeting:

How is character formed? What really goes on inside when we are being spiritually formed? This session addresses the inner workings of transformation. When one commits to Christ, the life of discipleship begins. Discipleship means: I am in a state of following Christ, and therefore, I arrange my life around the practices of Jesus. Spiritual formation is the direct act of the Holy Spirit on the inner person.

Discipleship is the choice. The inner person is formed by the practice of the disciplines when our vision is to become like Christ. That is why we can say that the Spirit of the disciplines is the Holy Spirit.

As a group, answer the following questions:

QUESTIONS

1. What was your vision of your future when you were young?
Did you have an alter ego like the author's Bobby Logan?

2. Talk about the difference between the first and second crucifixion in practical terms, the difference between the passive voice (the first crucifixion) and the active voice (the second crucifixion).

REFLECTION

What are some ways God has used transformational combinations in your life?

CLOSE

Share matters for the Community to pray about through the following week. Pray to close the meeting.

Following Jesus, however, requires a different value system. He is to lead, and I am to follow, which means I give up the right to run my own life.

WEEK SEVEN

Choose the Life, Chapter Six “The Mind and the Life”

DAY ONE

PRAYER

Lord, I understand that many things that are untrue, unhealthy, and undesirable to You find a home in my mind. Train me Lord to make my mind a place that is inhospitable to any thought that opposes You.

TODAY’S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Six (page 101 through page 107 ¶ 2).

QUESTIONS

1. What does Paul mean by telling us that we need Christ’s “attitude” or “mind-set” in us?

2. How the mind can be reprogrammed?

REFLECTION

Why is it sometimes difficult to accept as true something that you have believed to be false, even when you fully agree that the facts in evidence are irrefutable and compelling? Give an example.

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY TWO

PRAYER

Lord, I need to be trained to recognize Your voice. "I know that I have to move from speaking about Jesus to letting Him speak within me, from thinking about Jesus to letting Him think within me, from acting for and with Jesus to letting Him act through me."

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Six (page 107 ¶ 3 through page 111).

QUESTIONS

1. What are some false ideas that God has changed in you?

2. What, according to the author, is the basic message in all temptation?

REFLECTION

What are some good ways to detect those false beliefs which have become resident in your mind, that you may use unconsciously in your thinking?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY THREE

PRAYER

Lord, lead me not in my temptation, but deliver me from the Evil One.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Six (page 112 to page 116 ¶ 1).

QUESTIONS

1. What are some of "Satan's favorite ideas"?

2. What in your beliefs are each of the "ideas" aimed at attacking?

REFLECTION

How does your struggle with insecurity describe what you truly believe about what God is really like?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY FOUR

PRAYER

“Lord, what lies have I believed, what images of myself and others are distorted? Lord, bring down those strongholds.”

TODAY’S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Six (page 116 ¶ 1 to page 122 ¶ 1).

QUESTIONS

1. How can what you see in the mirror (your “self-image”) effect the way you live your life?

2. What did Tozer mean by “whatever comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you”?

REFLECTION

What is your strategy to “take every idea and image captive” under the control of the Spirit working in you?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY FIVE

PRAYER

Lord, let my mind, its ideas, images, and feelings, be purified through the washing of Word. Direct my repentance, and lead me to be fully healthy, so that I can love You with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Six (page 122 ¶ 1 through page 126).

QUESTIONS

1. Describe how “feelings are the product of both (ideas and images)”?

2. What is meant by “passions and desires (also know as feelings) are the most used and powerful tools that trigger sinful actions”?

REFLECTION

What is the relationship between “feelings,” “repentance” and “health”?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

WEEK SEVEN

Choose the Life, Chapter Six “The Mind and the Life”

Community Meeting

DAY SIX

In preparation for this week’s Meeting, you will have read Chapter Three, “*The Mind and the Life*” in *Choose the Life* and have answered the reading questions for each day.

AT THIS WEEK’S MEETING

1. Open this session in prayer.
2. Play video clip seven, “*The Mind and the Life*,” from a DVD guide to *Choose the Life*.
3. Have one member of your group read aloud the following introduction to this week’s Meeting:

The genesis of transformation is the process of renewing of the mind. Our minds are wired in such a way that we have thoughts that create images, feelings, and perceptions. Even spontaneous, unconscious action is based on a cognitive memory that is fixed in the mind (which explains why every time I think of eating liver, I immediately gag). When Olympic Athletes win the Gold Medal, they often cry on the awards platform at the sound of their National Anthem and the sight of their flag being raised. This is about the idea that they have done something wonderful in the name of their country. The idea is empowered by the image of the flag and the sound of the music; therefore, it creates a powerful

emotion. Our minds work the same whether it is what we think about politics, our favorite team, the members of our family, or deeply held religious beliefs. This is why the battle for the mind is the most important of all.

Images are the pictures in our mind's eye. They are concrete and often specific. The images that accompany our ideas make them more powerful. They are what the Lincoln Memorial is to liberty, what Lance Armstrong is to dedication, and what Elvis Presley is to self-indulgence. Just as images can be powerfully used for good, they can also magnify negatives. One's negative image of self can override clear thinking or any other force in life.

As a group, answer the following questions:

QUESTIONS

1. Briefly recount a recent conversation you've had with a person of a completely different world view from your own. Was it difficult for you to "get-through" to them? Why?

2. What are “strongholds”? How do we get them?
How do we get loosed from them?

REFLECTION

1. Have there been moments when you were the “deeply loved, secure disciple,” who was inspired by God’s love to take a risk? Share the experience with your group.

2. Take twenty minutes and each person practice Madame Guyon’s method for meditation on Scripture. Use I Corinthians 9:24-27. Describe the experience to the group

CLOSE

Share matters for the Community to pray about through the following week. Pray to close the meeting.

Waiting on God is not waiting around; it is actively persevering in obedience as we wait for God to orchestrate circumstances.

The ideas that need to be transformed are deeply embedded, and so the Scriptures will need to go just as deep....It is an acquired skill to go deep, to reroute the words through the heart in prayer reflection.

WEEK EIGHT

Choose the Life, Chapter Seven
“Relationships and the Life”

DAY ONE

PRAYER

Lord, I've always thought that You gave me skill by which I should lead people. Teach me how to lead from my character.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Seven (page 127 through page 129 ¶ 3).

QUESTION

What are the perils of leading from you competence?

REFLECTION

Recount a time when your skills were not sufficient to properly accomplish something that just had to be done right (and right then). What did you think about yourself when you skills “failed” you?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY TWO

PRAYER

Lord, I desire to grow in Your grace. Grow me into someone who You would be comfortable entrusting the grow of Your other children with.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Seven (page 129 ¶ 4 to page 134 ¶ 1).

QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by “the disciple-making climate”? What is the current “disciple-making climate” like?

2. What do “relationships of trust” and “environments of grace” look like?

REFLECTION

Why do you think a proper balance of relationships, principles, and environment is so difficult to establish and maintain?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY THREE

PRAYER

Lord, I've heard about Your strength being made perfect in my weakness. But I must say I do not desire to be seen as weak. Please help me to understand the defect in my thoughts and desires.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Seven (page 134 ¶ 1 through page 141 ¶ 4).

QUESTIONS

1. What are the "Capacity" and the "Character" ladders? What do they indicate?

2. Why will be higher on the "Character" ladder take you farther than being high on the "Capacity" ladder?

REFLECTION

How have you relied more on "Capacity" than "Character"?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY FOUR

PRAYER

Lord, I am so sorry for having been any part of dragging someone down who is enjoying Your blessings. Teach me to be mindful that I am to be Your instrument of blessing to build others up, not an instrument of the Evil One causing Your little ones to stumble.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Seven (page 141 ¶ 5 through page 149 ¶ 2).

QUESTIONS

1. What are “relationships of trust”?

2. How does the “ladder of Success” relate to “relationships of trust”?

REFLECTION

Relate an experience where you were brought crashing down from a glorious spiritual success by people who should not have done so. What would have had to be different to keep this experience from happening?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY FIVE

PRAYER

Lord, help me to remember the great patience you show to me as I train to be godly. Bring to my memory the many times you have responded to my failings and my incompetence with graciousness. Your grace inspires me to move beyond my own vision.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Seven (page 149 ¶ 3 through page 156).

QUESTIONS

1. What is an “environment of grace”?

2. How does the “ladder of Success” relate to “environments of grace”?

REFLECTION

How do you react when you are affirmed by others? What does it motivate you to do? Do you agree that “it arouses the desire to please God”?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

WEEK EIGHT

Choose the Life, Chapter Seven *“Relationships and the Life”*

Community Meeting

DAY SIX

In preparation for this week’s Meeting, you will have read Chapter Three, “*Relationships and the Life*” in *Choose the Life* and have answered the reading questions for each day.

AT THIS WEEK’S MEETING

1. Open this session in prayer.
2. Play video clip eight, “*Relationships and the Life*,” from a DVD guide to *Choose the Life*.
3. Have one member of your group read aloud the following introduction to this week’s Meeting:

Bill Thrall wrote, “To rise above and beyond your individual best, you need a certain kind of environment in which to live and work. Such an environment would nurture the integration of heart and hand, word and deed, spirituality and everyday life. It would nourish your relationship with God and kindle your connections with those around you. This environment and the relationships it spawns would help you become the kind of leader others want to follow.”⁸ The most important question anyone can ask and get an answer to in connection to others is, “Can I trust me with you? In other words, can we be honest together, can we then submit

to each other, and finally, can we help each other keep our commitments to God?

As a group, answer the following questions:

QUESTIONS

1. Describe a relationship of trust. (page 146)

2. Describe an environment of grace. (page 149)

REFLECTION

1. There are three elements to the discipleship climate: principles, relationships, and environment. Review the author's story, and describe what was working or not working in his environment. (pages 130-154)

2. The author talks about how competency took him just so far and then let him down. Why do you think he thought competency was enough? (pages 134-136)

CLOSE

Share matters for the Community to pray about through the following week. Pray to close the meeting.

The ideas that need to be transformed are deeply embedded, and so the Scriptures will need to go just as deep....It is an acquired skill to go deep, to reroute the words through the heart in prayer and reflection.

WEEK NINE

Choose the Life, Chapter Eight “Submission and the Life”

DAY ONE

PRAYER

Lord, I confess that the first indicator that I’m being successful is the accolades I receive from people with whom I work. I love to be praised—and then act humble. Train me to love being your blessing to others, especially when my service is unknown to them.

TODAY’S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Eight (page 157 through page 162 ¶ 1).

QUESTIONS

1. The author claims that Jesus’ core character trait was “humility, which manifested itself in submission,” that this is “the heart of Jesus’ life and mission; everything else flows from it.” Explain why this is true (or false).

2. What justifies Nouwen’s statement that “the Christian lead of the future is called to be completely irrelevant and to stand in this world with nothing to offer but his or her own vulnerable self”?

REFLECTION

Rodin Scott said, “When our daily self-worth and the measure of our effectiveness come primarily from the reaction of those with whom we work, then we are finished as Christian leaders.” Why do you think he believes this to be true? By what means do you measure your self-worth and effectiveness?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY TWO

PRAYER

Lord, I fear being insignificant. I've always tried to make sure what I do would count for something. I've never really stopped to ask myself who is doing the counting? I now realize that for me to follow You, I must let You do the counting. Lord, train me to live by Your standards, Your system of "weights and measures."

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Eight (page 162 ¶ 2 to page 166 ¶ 1).

QUESTIONS

1. Why is it that is "in a man" that makes him untrustworthy?

2. In what ways was Jesus "irrelevant" according to His culture?

REFLECTION

Describe the freedom you would have if (according to your culture) you were "irrelevant"?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY THREE

PRAYER

Lord, train me to behave as though I really do believe the extent to which You love and value me.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Eight (page 166 ¶ 1 through page 168 ¶ 3).

QUESTIONS

1. How does humility cure our need for false-identity?

2. What is meant by “submission to mission is the cornerstone of humility, of living in the light of who God says we are”?

REFLECTION

How would you be different if you really did believe the extent to which God loves and values you? What would you fear? What would limit you?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY FOUR

PRAYER

Lord, there are times when it's gotten so tough that I've given up. I want to be someone You can count on. What will it take to become a disciple that will endure to the end?

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Eight (page 168 ¶ 4 through page 172 ¶ 3).

QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean that “submission is a love word before it is an authority word”?

2. How will true humility sustain us through the tough times?

REFLECTION

Describe a time when you have been abandoned, left alone to continue on your own. What kept you going? Or, if you stopped, what caused you to “throw in the towel”?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY FIVE

PRAYER

Lord, who is it that You want to affirm through me today? Who is it that you wish for me to remind that they are very valuable to You?

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Eight (page 172 ¶ 4 through page 178).

QUESTIONS

1. What are three things that the submissive life affords us?

2. What was the problem with Timothy that Paul was addressing when he advised Timothy to “fan into flames” the gift of God that was within him? Why was this advise excellent counsel?

REFLECTION

Who needs your affirmation, a reminder of their value to God? Do it today!

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

WEEK NINE

Choose the Life, Chapter Eight “Submission and the Life”

Community Meeting

DAY SIX

In preparation for this week’s Meeting, you will have read Chapter Three, “*Submission and the Life*” in *Choose the Life* and have answered the reading questions for each day.

AT THIS WEEK’S MEETING

1. Open this session in prayer.
2. Play video clip nine, “*Submission and the Life*,” from a DVD guide to *Choose the Life*.
3. Have one member of your group read aloud the following introduction to this week’s Meeting:

The greatest truth about submission is that we submit to what we trust. It is also true that most think of submission as a negative, as placing yourself in jeopardy; it conjures up images of abuse or of cult behavior. Americans are told never to give up their passport or rights as citizens. Jesus demonstrated that submission was the means that his Father used to unleash His grace and mercy on the world. Jesus modeled giving up his rights and changed the world by leading with his weakness. This session teaches us that submission is a love word before it is an authority word. In fact, we will learn that unless we do submit to others we

trust, we won't get our needs met; we will lack humility, and we will keep others from loving us.

As a group, answer the following questions:

QUESTIONS

1. What is the most compelling reason to live a life of submission? (page 156, see Richard Foster's statement)

2. Talk about how the following results happen when we live in submission to one another?

That our needs are met

That we will develop humility

That others are free to love us

(meaning that I allow their gifts and care to be applied to my life, because I am open and vulnerable before them)

REFLECTION

Write out an affirmation statement about someone in your life or in the group. Make it in the tradition of Paul's affirmation of Timothy. Then, share it with that person and/or the group.

CLOSE

Share matters for the Community to pray about through the following week. Pray to close the meeting.

When leaders model and communicate authentic relationships, it is a powerful tool for God to use.

WEEK TEN

Choose the Life, Chapter Nine “Leadership and the Life”

DAY ONE

PRAYER

Lord, I sometimes have been critical of Your church, forgetting that I have never really seen it as You see it- in all its power and glory. I repent of placing myself above what You love so dearly.

TODAY’S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Nine (page 179 through page 188).

QUESTIONS

1. What does the author mean when he describes the church as “always vacillating between glory and the grotesque”?

2. What is the trap leaders find themselves in, and how can they get out of it? (pages 180-185)

REFLECTION

What are some of temptations leaders face when trying to live by the same principles that Jesus lived by?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY TWO

PRAYER

Lord, I've always considered being irrelevant and unnecessary as bad things. Teach me why You want me to be them.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Nine (page 189 through page 196 ¶ 1).

QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to be “irrelevant” and “unnecessary”?
(pages 184-188)

2. Does being “irrelevant” and “unnecessary” imply that we must ignore and withdraw from the culture in which we live?

REFLECTION

How can attendance at religious services be understood in a balanced way (note the statements by Trueblood and Willard, pages 189-191)?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY THREE

PRAYER

Lord, I know that Your love for me over-flows out of the abundance of Your heart. I also know that I cannot give what I do not have. Train me to love from a satisfied soul.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Nine (page 196 ¶ 2 through page 211 ¶ 1).

QUESTIONS

1. Why practice the spiritual disciplines of silence and solitude?

2. Describe what you think a satisfied soul is based on Ps. 23.

REFLECTION

How would your actions be different if you lived from a fully satisfied soul?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY FOUR

PRAYER

Lord, train me to trust in Your ways, especially when my church culture tells me You are mistaken.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Nine (page 211 ¶ 2 through page 216 ¶ 1).

QUESTIONS

1. Describe what others would see if you gave yourself to the principle of discipleship.

2. According to Trueblood, what is “one of the most powerful ways of turning people’s loyalty to Christ”? Why is this way so powerful?

REFLECTION

Why do we leaders (and you in particular) tend to ignore the second of the Greatest Commandments (loving our neighbor), preferring the latest technique for church growth/evangelism?

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

DAY FIVE

PRAYER

Lord, my desire is to know you through whatever means you deem best for me at this time. Please grow in me the willingness to discover you through means with which I may not be familiar.

TODAY'S READING

Choose the Life, Chapter Nine (page 216 ¶ 2 through page 221).

QUESTIONS

1. How does the author suggest we prepare to give ourselves to others?

2. What is "*lectio divina*"? What will this process do?

REFLECTION

Using the process called "*lectio divina*" interact with God through His Word. Describe your encounter.

PRAYER

Pray for each member of your Community and their shared requests.

WEEK TEN

Choose the Life, Chapter Nine “Leadership and the Life”

Community Meeting

DAY SIX

In preparation for this week’s Meeting, you will have read Chapter Three, “Leadership and the Life” in *Choose the Life* and have answered the reading questions for each day.

AT THIS WEEK’S MEETING

1. Open this session in prayer.
2. Play video clip ten, “Leadership and the Life,” from a DVD guide to *Choose the Life*.
3. Have one member of your group read aloud the following introduction to this week’s Meeting:

Many leaders feel trapped, unable to do the work they are called to do because of working conditions. This is very common among teachers, professionals in the medical community, and those who practice law. It is also a big problem for religious leaders, both clergy and laity. The trap is real and many Christians find themselves in it. It is characterized by the desire to be relevant and the need to feel necessary.

Getting off the gods of our religious culture to which we are addicted is like going through detox. Their allure is so strong that it might require beginning with a complete separation from the conditions in which we live. That means to spend

some extended time in solitude with others of like mind in order to reset your inner compass. The gods of attendance, progress, and competence plague all serious Christians. This session addresses the pathway out to a new way of being and doing

As a group, answer the following questions:

QUESTION

1. How does our (Western) culture militate against the values that Jesus modeled?

REFLECTION

1. Identify a few ways in which the prevailing culture has affected you. Discuss the way you use your money and the material things you buy. In other words, what is driving you? Are your goals related to meeting the needs for relevance according to the world's values?

2. This would be a good time to share insights from your journal. How has the experience with *Choose the Life* caused you to make changes in your behavior?

CLOSE

Share matters for the Community to pray about through the following week. Pray to close the meeting.

Our radical nature is expressed in our stubborn insistence that we follow the humility and submission of Jesus in his agenda and ways of touching others.

What can be done with competence alone is puny and meager compared to a life that is lived out of the character of Christ in us.

APPENDIX ONE

Choose the Life Community Purpose and Covenant

OUR COMMUNITIES' PURPOSE IS:

To develop relationships with one another, that will help, support and encourage each of us to grow in Christ-likeness, through loving one another by sharing our thoughts, experiences, concerns, fears, successes and failures, and by serving one another when a need or the opportunity arises, as we *choose the life and explore a faith that embraces discipleship*.

Therefore, I commit, for the next 10 weeks, to accomplishing our Purpose by:

- Making my spiritual growth and relationship with God one of my top three priorities (with spouse and family).
- Completing the daily readings and exercises on time, each week, according to the *Guide*.
- Being faithful in my attendance to Community Meetings (only injury, sickness, family and work schedule conflicts are reasonable excuses for absences), and calling prior to our weekly meeting to inform our leader of my absence.
- Participating in discussion, prayer and the sharing of ideas.
- Being honest and open when I share my thoughts and feelings.
- Maintaining complete confidentiality of anything discussed in our group by our members (unless prior permission to disclose the information has been given by all the individuals involved).
- Praying daily for each member of the Community and the needs they have shared.

Name: _____

Date: _____

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1993), 60.
- ² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1963), 63-64.
- ³ George MacDonald, *Creation in Christ*, as quoted by Reuben Job and Norman Shawchuck, *A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants*, (Nashville: The Upper Room Press, 1983), 124,125.
- ⁴ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, (New York: Macmillan, 1943), 86.
- ⁵ Dallas Willard, "Introduction," *Choose the Life: Exploring a Faith That Embraces Discipleship*, Bill Hull, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2004).
- ⁶ William Glasser, *Control Therapy in the Classroom*, (Harper & Row: NY, 1986); *Reality Therapy: A New Approach to Psychiatry*, (Harper & Row: NY, 1965).
- ⁷ John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 54.
- ⁸ Bill Thrall, *Ascent Of A Leader*, (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1999), 1.q

ABOUT BILL HULL

Bill Hull's passion has been to help the church return to its disciple making roots, and he considers himself a discipleship evangelist. This God-given desire has manifested itself in twenty years of pastoral service and the authorship of ten books. His first book, *Jesus Christ Disciplemaker*, is celebrating 20 years with a new edition. *The Disciple Making Pastor* and the *Disciple Making Church* are two successive books which make up his popular disciple making trilogy. These books have provided the church with a new paradigm for disciple making.

ABOUT PAUL MASCARELLA

Paul K. Mascarella, BA Philosophy, MTS, has served in local church ministries for more than 25 years as an Associate Pastor, Minister of Music, and Worship Director while holding an executive management position at a daily newspaper in Los Angeles, California. He and His wife Denise enjoyed raising their three children and playing with their two grandchildren. Paul is currently an Instructor/Mentor at Londen Institute Graduate School of Ministry, and serves on the Board of Directors of Bill Hull Ministries.

OTHER BOOKS BY BILL HULL

Complete Book of Discipleship

Choose The Life

Jesus Christ Disciplemaker -- 20th Anniversary Edition

Straight Talk On Spiritual Power

Revival That Reforms

Building High Commitment in a Low Commitment World

New Century Disciplemaking

The Disciple Making Pastor

The Disciple Making Church

7 Steps to Transform Your Church

Anxious For Nothing

MORE INFORMATION

Bill Hull also teaches seminars on his other writings at various venues or conferences. He is recognized among pastoral and ministry leaders around the world because of his published works on leadership. These events are scheduled by invitation. To inquire, email bill@billhull.com.

The Joy of Wasted Time

A three day retreat for 25 or less for the purpose of seeking God and redefining the meaning of leadership. The focus is to believe what Jesus believed, live as Jesus lived, love as Jesus loved, train as Jesus trained, minister as Jesus ministered, and lead as Jesus led.

Foolish Wisdom: The call to be irrelevant and unnecessary

A two day seminar that presents the philosophy of the book, *Choose The Life*. It explores a faith that embraces discipleship. It challenges non-discipleship Christianity and calls for faith to be more than agreement with church teachings. It presents humility as Jesus' core character characteristic and explains how all followers of Jesus can rearrange their lives around the practices of Jesus. It calls every person of faith to answer the call of Christ and to embrace the life Jesus has designed for them.

Choose The Life Preview

A three hour look at the various ways in which *Choose the Life* can be implemented in a church or ministry context.

For information about *Choose the Life* and the exciting new happenings in the Choose The Life Community please visit www.choosethelife.org.

About the bible.org Ministry

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