**Journey Into Wholeness “*Seek peace and pursue it” Ps 34:14***

**Session 3: “A HOLISTIC DISCIPLESHIP MODEL”**

***Overview: This session will cover what it means to have a holistic approach to discipleship. We will begin to dig deeper into some of the basic and overall principles of what we are trying to accomplish and how.***

1. **A HOLISTIC DISCIPLESHIP MODEL**

***“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind.” Luke 10:27***

The ***Journey Into Wholeness*** is about seeing and defining discipleship in broader terms. The ***“great commandment”*** is to love God with our whole being – spirit, soul, and body (***Luke 10:27***). Thus, true biblical discipleship is the commitment of one’s spirit, soul, and body to the Lord. We must come to see the interconnectedness of our whole being and how the Lord wants to restore and transform all areas of our person. We want to see growth in God as including and integrating all parts of our being – or as a ***holistic discipleship model***.

1. ***“Holistic”*** describes an all-embracing approach that views every aspect of our **life as a cohesive** ***whole*****rather than a collection of isolated entities**. In Western thought, things are often compartmentalized and separated in a way that does not emphasize the interconnectivity between things. Many of us have been trained to differentiate entirely what happens in our soul from what transpires in our body and spirit. A ***“holistic”*** approach emphasizes the importance of the whole and the interdependence of all parts.

**Example:** Doctors today often have a singular focus on diagnosing a problem in the body by looking merely at the outward symptom. Most doctors are not trained to consider the underlying factor(s) that might contribute to the disease/sickness (maybe a long term problem the individual has with unresolved past hurts, grief, or dealing with the effects of a stressful lifestyle or outlook). The result is that often a person is given a medication that deals with the symptom, but the root cause is never addressed or even considered, and healing isn’t achieved.

1. ***Holistic Discipleship Model*** – This is a biblical approach that addresses spiritual, mental/emotional, and physical growth and health. We are trying to better see the connections between these different aspects of our lives and understand how we can heal and thrive on a deeper level. **We want to recognize and validate our whole person and become an active participant with the Lord in our growth in a multidimensional way.** True and lasting freedom, fulfillment, and fruitfulness will come when our whole being is aligned with the Lord and prospering. This is a life-long process, but we can make significant progress if we give ourselves to the Lord and partner with Him in a directed way.
2. **THREE ESSENTIAL PARTS**

**“*Seek peace (wholeness) and pursue it” Ps 34:14***

Each of us are challenged to focus our development and growth in three essential areas:

1. **Spirit** (innermost part) – Focusing on our spiritual life and growth in intimacy with the Lord through Bible reading/study, prayer/meditation, worship/praise, etc.
2. **Soul** (inner part) – Focusing on developing our thinking/mental focus, emotional control/resilience, decision-making, and the direction of our will.
3. **Body** (outer part) – Focusing on our health, diet, fitness, and sensory control.

***“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.” 1 Corinthians 6:19-20***

We are called to glorify God with our whole body, soul, and spirit. The Lord wants all three areas submitted to Him and led by the guidance of the indwelling Spirit of God. Health and growth in each of these areas is essential and to be guided by the Lord, and isn’t dictated or mandated by anyone in any delineated way. The Lord promises that, by His Spirit, He will lead and guide us into all truth.

***“For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons and daughters of God.” Romans 8:14***

***“When He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth.” John 16:13***

We want to approach growth and transformation free of judgement, pressure, or striving. ***“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17).*** Rely on the Spirit to guide. We can have confidence that God will show us individually what we need to focus on in each area and at what pace. Don’t push too hard – we are in a marathon, not a sprint.

***“Every action you take is a vote for the type of person you wish to become.” James Clear, author of Atomic Habits***

1. **FOCUS ON ADJUSTING YOUR LIFESTYLE**

This class is not about only learning information, it is about changing your lifestyle, one adjustment at a time. Good intentions last only so long and short-term motivation fades. **Be focused on living more intentionally, more wholly, and more spiritually.** We can accomplish great things with God’s help and grace. Lasting motivation comes from understanding that you can be who you want to be and who God has called you to be. The Lord has given you the power, by His grace, to take charge of your life and be transformed.

***“His divine power has provided to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.” 2 Peter 1:3***

You are not a victim! You are called to be an overcomer and reign in life now through God’s grace and Spirit!

***“For if by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one, much more will those receive the abundance of grace of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.” Romans 5:17***

Focus your attention on how God will help you to make good and better choices and ***“reign in life”*** from your spirit and through your soul and body. This is all very practical. One of the ***“fruits of the Spirit”*** is self-discipline or self-control.

***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” Galatians 5:22-23***

The ***“fruit of the Spirit”*** is the change in our character that comes about because of the Holy Spirit’s work in us. We do not become a Christian on our own, and we cannot grow in the likeness of Christ and become whole on our own.

***"It is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."*** ***Philippians 2:13***

God, by His Spirit, is working in you to give you ***the will to change****,* and He is also ***providing the means to change***. Every good thing we do and become is the fruit of the Spirit’s work in our lives. Lean on the Lord and His Spirit to give you the grace to make positive changes in your life. **Ask the Spirit for self-control and help to change.**

1. ***Self-control*** **(self-discipline)** is the ability to control oneself. It involves moderation, constraint, and the ability to say “no” to our fleshly and soulish desires. One of the proofs of God’s Spirit working in our lives is the ability to control our thoughts, words, emotions, and actions. **Self-control is a gift of the Spirit that frees us. It frees us to enjoy the benefits of a healthy, fulfilled, and godly lifestyle.**

***“Applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they do not make you useless nor unproductive in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 1:5-8***

1. **REWRITE YOUR STORY**

Change in your life can be seen to be about telling a new story. Many of us are stuck living in a story about ourselves that is programmed or dictated by our past, the world, negative circumstances, and/or false beliefs. **We need to see and comprehend that the process of positive change into wholeness can be powerfully effected by creating a new story and aligning our story with God and His truth.**

***“As a person thinks within himself, so he is.” Proverbs 23:7***

***“We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.” Albert Einstein***

Cognitive research tells us that our brains interpret the world by relying on preexisting conceptual models known as “frames”. **Frames are how we process and mentally organize what we encounter in the world and in our life – how we interpret our story.** **Our mental “framing” is how we define the structure and boundaries of our story and how we define who we are.** The frames that we create about ourselves and our lives heavily influence how we interpret meaning, how we see things, our attitudes and beliefs about ourselves, and, therefore, how we live and the choices we make.

The way you frame your story is related to your personal identity. Our personal identity can be defined as your “sense of self” that consists of your beliefs and thoughts about who you are, your characteristics, your circumstances, and your purpose. **How we see ourselves and the story we believe has a powerful effect on how we live and who we become.** There are areas in each of our lives that God wants to help us reframe. **There is a new story that needs to be told that is immersed in God’s truth that will reshape us and lead us on the path of transformation and wholeness.**

**Our story and identity is to be shaped by who God is, what He has done for us, and who He says we are.** As we move forward in this class we want to allow God to show us areas that we need to reframe, change the story, and align with our identity in God.

**Just a few Scriptural examples of how God wants to frame our story and identity:**

1. **You are loved as a child of God**

***“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” 1 John 3:1***

1. **God delights in you and rejoices over you**

***“The Lord your God is with you…He takes great delight in you…He rejoices over you with singing.” Zephaniah 3:17***

1. **You are created with a purpose**

***“We are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Ephesians 2:10***

1. **You are blessed and provided for**

***“God is able to make all grace overflow to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” 2 Corinthians 9:8***

**Which of these do you have a hard to believing or connecting with? Do you feel loved and cared for? Do you feel like you have a purpose and calling? Do you feel like you are experiencing God’s pleasure and joy in your life?**

We want to step back from our life and see how we are framing our story, how we are defining ourselves in our heart and mind, and what we are experiencing or not experiencing in God in relationship to His truth and the story He tells. **Then, we want to begin the process of reframing and rewriting our story in the Lord – with a commitment to putting in the necessary time, resources, and energy necessary to see positive change.**

1. **ENVISION THE GOAL**

***“Without vision, the people perish/are unrestrained.” Proverbs 29:18***

What our mind envisions and believes is what we can achieve. **Visualization is very powerful and biblical, and it helps to align ourselves with what we are wishing to accomplish.**

**Without vision we are unstrained in what we give our lives to and we suffer great loss.** Vision brings clarity, purpose, and direction to our lives. Visualization helps to create the picture, to flesh out the story, and establish the boundaries of what we are wishing to accomplish. **Vision is like planting the seeds of what our future desired state looks like.** When we think about reframing our story and aligning our identity with God, it helps to envision the thing you want to become. A simple and effective application is to create a vivid, biblical image you can envision and identify with.

***“He will be like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruits in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.” Psalm 1:3***

**Example:** Each of us called to be like a strong and life-giving **“tree of life”** planted and being fed by God’s Spirit - **“*streams of living water”*** ***(Ezekiel 47:1-12; John 7:38)***. As we dwell and abide in the Lord’s Spirit we will produce that flow through our life (spirit, soul, and body) that results in us yielding fruit, life/light and prosperity in every season. This is what we want to be, so envision it!

**Visualization combined with intentional action reinforces each other and strengthens the goal of what we are desiring to become in God.** For maximum effectiveness, we want to join visualization with faith, expectation, and the focused desire to become what you are visualizing. We will learn more about visualization when we discuss biblical meditation, but we want to begin to cultivate vision now.

***“That He (God the Father) would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner self (soul), that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to all the fullness of God.” Ephesians 3:16-19***

**We want to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal truth to our soul and mind how we are to reframe our story in Christ.** Ask the Spirit to show you what areas in your soul and body needs to change and be aligned with the Lord in truth. Ask that the Holy Spirit would give you faith to give yourself to transformation into His image and His purpose for your life. Begin to envision yourself as a rooted and grounded ***“tree of life”*** immersed in the river of God’s Spirit, feeding you and giving you sustenance and grace. Picture yourself as spreading out yours roots into all the depths and dimensions of His truth and love, so that you can grow strong and be healed, whole, and renewed in Christ and filled with all the fullness of God.

***“To Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.” Ephesians 3:20-21***