

# APPRENTICESHIP TO JESUS: FOUNDATIONAL UNDERSTANDINGS

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***A personal note:** This outline is still a work in process. Jesus continues to teach me so much about how to be His apprentice and how to pass on these things to others. I am but a pilgrim on a journey of discovery.*

## **In Apprenticeship to Jesus, by faith...**

- 1 – We establish Jesus as Master Teacher for our lives.
- 2 – We experience Jesus delivering us from the effects of sin.
- 3 – We learn how to be with Jesus 24/7.
- 4 – We learn to live out the reality of our baptism.
- 5 – We learn to rely habitually on the Holy Spirit.
- 6 – We learn to obey, and we learn how to obey.
- 7 – We are being transformed into His likeness in each component of our person.

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## **1 – We establish Jesus as Master Teacher for our lives.**

*“You call me Teacher and Lord – and you are right, for that is what I am.” – John 13:13*

*“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” – Matthew 11:28-30*

**1) Jesus taught from wisdom unparalleled in human history.** He preeminently understands how human life was created to function.

*“The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and see, someone greater than Solomon is here!” – Matthew 12:42*

*... the knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. – Colossians 2:2-3*

**2) The Apostles, apprentices who were with Him on earth, are our most important source** of understanding and interpreting what Jesus taught.

*For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. – Galatians 1:11-12*

**3) How to enter and live in the Kingdom of God was the integrating theme of Jesus’ teaching.** He began His ministry by calling the people to repentance, and by announcing the immediate availability of the Kingdom to all who would enter via Him. – Matthew 4:17

4) **Who is your teacher?** What is the source of the ideas and convictions that are shaping the course of our lives? Who have we allowed, perhaps unknowingly, to teach us? In Apprenticeship to Jesus we submit all these to Jesus.

5) **Recalibrate priorities.** The more we understand the depth of our need, the more we rearrange our priorities to allow maximum time and energy for learning from Jesus.

*“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” – Matthew 13:44*

## 2 – We experience Jesus delivering us from the effects of sin.

*The next day he [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” – John 1:29*

1) **Salvation:** Many understand Biblical salvation as being about freeing us from sin’s **guilt**. And that it certainly does! But the Biblical scope of salvation is broader. Salvation means **deliverance**, and the Exodus is an important Biblical symbol. God miraculously delivered Israel from Egypt, led them through the Red Sea, formed them for 40 years in the desert, and offered them the promised land. He made every provision for complete deliverance from their bondage. That’s what Jesus does! He offers **every provision** for **progressive deliverance** from the bondages of sin: temptation, guilt, compulsive behavior, destructive habits, emptiness, loneliness, despair, meaninglessness, etc. This deliverance becomes our personal reality as we become His apprentices.

*Jesus answered them, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.” – John 8:34-36*

2) **A process:** This deliverance comes gradually as the result of a process of obedience that makes space for the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. There may well be crisis experiences along the way which are gifts of God’s grace. But...

*“Any crisis, not followed by a process, will soon become an abscess.” – George Verwer*

*“The Holy Spirit will not do it **to** you, or **for** you; He will do it **with** you.” – Dallas Willard*

### 3) **What has sin done to me?**

- + It has made me guilty before God.
- + It has separated me from the unbroken fellowship with God for which my soul craves.
- + Separated from my Father’s affirmation, I am deeply insecure – unaware of who I am.
- + Inner drives to prove I am valuable have formed destructive compulsivities in my soul.
- + My soul has been left wounded, fragmented, disordered and chaotic.
- + I have been wounded further by the sin others have committed against me.
- + But I have responded to their sin by my own sinful choices; the cycle goes deeper.

4) **The healing of my soul is crucial** to the process of my deliverance from sin’s consequences. **Unhealed woundedness leaves me blocked in immaturity.**

5) **In broad strokes, my healing takes place as:**

- + I come present to God, who is always there, and abide in His Presence listening
- + I obey what I hear the Spirit say to me.

6) **Three major areas of healing for each of us:** – Leanne Payne

- + Inability to accept myself – Distant from my Father, I lack affirmation only He can give.
- + Inability to forgive – As a child of God, I am not a victim.
- + Inability to receive forgiveness – Sin has left me vacillating between pride and inferiority

**3 – We learn how to be with Jesus 24/7.**

*“Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.”* – John 15:4

1) **Apprenticeship to Jesus:** I am with Jesus, to learn from Jesus, how to be like Jesus  
– Dallas Willard

2) **In the Presence of Jesus**, abiding 24/7 in Him, ever listening and obeying, we are progressively transformed by the Holy Spirit.

*And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.* – II Corinthians 3:18

3) **We need more than teachings which excite the intellect.** We are transformed by being with a Person.

*“And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”* – John 17:3

4) **How to be with Jesus** is one of the most important things we can learn, and then pass on to other apprentices.

5) **God comes to us through:**

- + **The Scriptures:** Meditate on them day and night – Psalm 1:2
- + **The Holy Spirit:** He is always with us – John 14:16-17
- + **Worship and prayer:** Pray without ceasing – I Thessalonians 5:17
- + **The creation:** The heavens are telling the glory of God – Psalm 19:1
- + **The healing silences:** Re-prioritize life’s commitments – Psalm 62:1-2
- + **The Church:** Christ’s physical Presence on earth – Ephesians 1:22-23
- + **The Lord’s Supper:** The body and blood of the Lord – I Corinthians 11:27
- + **The events of daily life:** Learn how to respond to them correctly – Romans 8:28

6) **Jesus (also the Father and the Spirit) lives in us** – John 14:17, 20, 23. God’s Presence is not usually discernable to the human senses. Though we cannot see, hear, touch, taste or smell Him, He is still there. That is why we walk by faith. Of course, being God, He can reveal Himself at any time and in way He chooses. We learn to base our decisions on the fact that He is always there. – Matthew 28:20

7) **To Jesus, the seen world was only one part of universal reality.** As His apprentices, we learn to establish our lives on His worldview. We mature from having faith *in* Jesus to growing in the faith *of* Jesus.

#### 4 – We learn to live out the reality of our baptism.

1) **Jesus lived this rhythm:** He gave up His own life/He received from God a new life.

*Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name... – Philippians 2:5-9*

2) **Jesus taught this rhythm:** We give up our old life/we receive from God a new life.

*Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.” – Matthew 16:24-25*

3) **The apostles lived this rhythm:** *But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. – II Corinthians 4:7-12*

4) **The apostles taught this rhythm:** *... I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. – Galatians 2:19b-20*

5) **This is the rhythm of baptism:** *What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For it we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.... So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. – Romans 6:1-6, 11*

6) **Note how the apostolic proclamation of the gospel was formulated:** Repent, be baptized, receive the Holy Spirit. – Acts 2:37-38

7) **Perhaps the contrasts between the old life and the new life** that so frequently appear in Scripture are remnants of early baptismal instructions. (see Webber, Robert. *Worship Old & New*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 43

8) **From the earliest Church history** baptism was viewed as initiation into Christ.

9) **Allowing our baptism to work in us means:** We make daily decisions in harmony with what is true: We have been placed by God in Christ. Our old person, formed by self-will, died when Christ died. We were raised by God to a new life when Christ was raised. This new life is a life of grace, a life in the Spirit, a life in which self-will does not work, a life in the Kingdom of God, a life of indescribable fullness and joy. But it is a life we must receive and grow into – ye, even strive after. – Philippians 2:12-13; 3:11-14

10) **Daily decisions to obey create the environment** for the crucified life. Habitually living the crucified life makes space for the Spirit to set in the resurrected life.

11) **Another expression of this rhythm is weakness/strength...vulnerability/power.** *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.* – II Corinthians 12:9

12) **What happened when we were baptized?** Was our baptism only an occasion on which we bore testimony to our faith? Or do the words of Scripture lead us to understand that in God a transaction took place? Our baptism anchors us in history – both ours and Christ's. It sets an overall framework for ongoing transformation into Christlikeness.

## **5 – We learn to rely habitually on the Holy Spirit. – John 14:15-17**

1) **Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would come** to give life in fullness. – John 7:37-39

2) **Jesus said it was good that He go away** so that the Spirit could come. – John 16:7

3) Jesus sent **the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth.** – John 16:12-14

4) **Note again the formulation:** Repent, be baptized, receive the Spirit – Acts 2:38

5) **The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus** – Romans 8:9

6) **The Spirit does the work of transformation in us.** As we make decisions to obey, we make space in our souls for Him to do His transforming work. – Galatians 5:22-23

## **6 – We learn to obey, and we learn how to obey.**

1) **Jesus taught that we are to obey God.** That means it is possible – John 14:15.

"I cannot decide in my own strength to make myself holy. But ***I can decide to obey.***"  
– Leanne Payne

2) **There may be areas where, for now, we are unable to obey** (i.e. forgive your enemy). But if we make the decision to learn, Jesus will teach us how.

3) **We are not speaking here of perfection, but of victory.** Daily confession of sins is appropriate. It is a powerful spiritual discipline that advances our growth in holiness.

4) **Increasingly we live in the awareness of** our own weakness and vulnerability, and the power God is working in us to live in victory over sin. – Philippians 3:10-16

5) **The ability to obey God is a profound grace.** It allows us to function properly. It opens the way to live with God in His kingdom. It makes possible the healing of our souls. Its fruit is fulfillment, meaning and joy. Obedience is for our benefit, not God's.

6) **To obey God requires that we be transformed.** We do not arrive at obedience by mustering up more will-power. That only yields repeated failure and ultimate despair.

*“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may become clean.”* – Matthew 23: 25-26

*My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you.* – Galatians 4:19

## **7 – We are being transformed into His likeness in each component of our person.**

1) **We learn to obey God by allowing Him to transform us** into the kind of person who is like God and therefore behaves like God.

2) **Jesus forgave His enemies on the cross.** It was not surprising. It was simply an expression of the kind of person He was on the inside.

3) By the time we realize we need to be formed in the image of Christ we have already been formed by environments of sin. **Now our need is to be transformed.**

4) **The human person has great capacity to learn and store knowledge.** This learning and storing begins in the womb. Much of our learning is subconscious and intuitive. Before the infant comes to a clear self-awareness, he/she has learned and stored away large quantities of knowledge, responses and behaviors; i.e. family and cultural behaviors, language, etc. This process continues throughout life.

5) **From the moment we were conceived, we have been immersed in an environment of sin:** the sin of our parents and the environments which formed them, the sin of our siblings and other family members and the environments which formed them, the sin of our peers and the environments which formed them, and the sins of our people and our world. Before we ever become aware of it, we are formed in and by sin.

6) It is “in our members” that sinful compulsions are stored. Think of these as learned behaviors – habits – deeply imbedded in the parts of our person.

*I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do .... It is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.... Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.... So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. – Romans 7:15-23*

7) **However we are to understand the sinful behaviors that are imbedded in us, it is crucial that we not view them as being beyond transformation.** It is clear from Scripture that we are not their prisoners. Christ has not abandoned us to a life of defeat.

*Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.... For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. – Romans 7:24-25; 8:2*

8) **Christians often think of the human person as having three components:** spirit, soul and body – I Thessalonians 5:23

9) **The Scriptures use various formulations to describe the human person.** The following understanding of the components of a human person, reflected in Mark 12:28-31, draws upon Dallas Willard's *Renovation of the Heart*:

+ **will** (heart, spirit) – These three terms are understood as describing the same reality – the executive center of the self. Here life direction is set. We trust the Holy Spirit to set into our wills Godly ability to make decisions to obey. This Spirit-given ability stands in sharp contrast to our own will-power, which will only lead to a cycle of failure and despair. Decisions to trust and obey make room for the Spirit to further the work of transformation.

+ **thoughts (mind)** – The mind is usually depicted as composed of **thoughts** and **emotions**. We normally have far more control over our thoughts than our emotions. The healing and ordering of the person follows as we make decisions to place our thoughts on God and His ways. We embrace spiritual disciplines to keep them there. Over time, our emotions progressively follow.

+ **emotions (mind)** – God has emotions. Our emotions are fundamentally good – God given. But sin has twisted and damaged our emotions, and thus unrestrained release of emotion without discernment can quickly lead to chaos and destructive behavior. We live in a society that elevates emotions without discernment. To feel something is to validate it. The way of Jesus is not to repress emotions, but to transform them.

+ **body** (strength) – The different components of the person affect one another. For example, what we decide to do with our body will have an effect, positive or negative, on the other parts of our person. This is a key understanding in relationship to spiritual disciplines. Conversely, many illnesses of the body are caused by disorder in our thoughts, emotions and social context.

+ **social context** – Created in the image of God, we are social beings. Wounding and disorder in other parts of our person, i.e. in our emotions, lead to dysfunction in our social context. This in turn negatively impacts our thoughts, emotions, body, etc.

+ **soul** – The soul can be understood as analogous to a software program whose function is to keep all components of the person integrated into a healthily functioning a whole. One consequence of sin is a disordered soul. One part of us fights against another, i.e. our emotions against our will. Many are out of touch with our souls. Sin has resulted in deep inner pain, and we have responded to this pain by “blocking out” to avoid it. Hence we are often unaware why we do much of what we do. As Christ heals us, our souls come into increasing order and wholeness in God.

10) **Spiritual disciplines serve to train the components of the self.** They operate much like physical disciplines athletes use to train the body. They carry no inherent merit. If they lead to spiritual pride they should be dropped immediately. When undertaken in faith and obedience, they make space for the Spirit to enter our lives with His transforming power.

**Spiritual formation in Christ is** the process whereby the six basic aspects in every human life are increasingly organized around God as they are restored and sustained by Him. It results in loving God with all the heart, souls, mind and strength, and the neighbor as oneself. The person is fully integrated under God. – Dallas Willard in *Renovation of the Heart*

## **Some Sources:**

*The Gospels* – The apostles, Jesus’ first apprentices, record His activities and teachings  
*Acts, Epistles, Revelation* – The apostles interpret and give expanded perspective to Jesus’ teachings

*Moses, all the Prophets, all the Scriptures* – They speak of Him – Luke 24:27, 44

*Imitation of Christ* – Thomas a Kempis

*The Divine Conspiracy* – Dallas Willard

*Renovation of the Heart* – Dallas Willard

*Hearing God* – Dallas Willard

*The Spirit of the Disciplines* – Dallas Willard

*The Cost of Discipleship* – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*The Celebration of Discipline* – Richard Foster

*The Healing Presence* – Leanne Payne

*Restoring the Christian Soul* – Leanne Payne

*Listening Prayer* – Leanne Payne

*Of Water & the Spirit* – Alexander Schmemmann