



Session 6 – Trust Not Technology

As We Wrap Up

If you're looking for secret formulas, gimmicks, quick fixes or easy steps, this series **is not** for you. This teaching series and this journey **IS** for those who long for genuine, intimate, ***True Spirituality***.

1. Has This Teaching Been for You?

*The answer is **YES** if . . .*

- You are spiritually hungry.
- You long for more of God.
- You are tired of “status quo” Christianity.
- You are spiritually stuck.
- You long to break free from some habitual sin.
- You are ready for a challenge.
- You are discipling others.

2. What Is This Teaching About?

First of all, it is not about being religious, keeping rules, developing programs, church growth, self-actualization, or spiritual formulas for success. Rather, it's about helping you answer five of the most important questions in your life.

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- How do you give God what He wants the most?
- How do you get God's best for your life?
- How do you come to grips with the real you?
- How can you experience authentic community?
- How do you overcome the evil aimed at you?

In other words, it is about *living on the edge*; it's about stepping out with courage as you dare to experience true spirituality.

3. Why This Teaching NOW?

Recent research has shown that church programs are not producing mature Christians. Sincere Christians have tried lots of dead-end, theologically flawed, and quick-fix spiritual approaches that have left them . . .

- Performing and exhausted
- Feeling guilty and ashamed
- A prisoner of false expectations
- Disappointed and disillusioned
- Angry and bitter
- Leaving the church
- Quietly going through religious motions with little sense of God's power or presence.

4. How Is This Teaching Different?

It provides an actual *profile* for becoming more like Jesus every day. The profile is . . .

- *Biblical*: an exposition of Romans 12; God's executive summary of the profile of an authentic Christ-follower.
- *Relational*: spiritual maturity is achieved by growing in five key relationships, not by keeping rules.
- *Grace-based*: a Romans 12 disciple grows out of an understanding of Romans 1–11; it's not

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performance-oriented.

- *Faith-focused*: spiritual maturity is achieved by learning to trust God, not “try harder.”
- *Practical*: discipleship provides the “how-to” of spiritual growth, not simply the ideal.
- *Measurable*: Romans 12 provides specific metrics to help you determine if you are making spiritual progress.

You also need to know that this teaching is a “doorway,” not a final destination. You will be launched on a journey toward becoming a Christian who is living on the edge. In the Notes for each session, you’ve found resources and questions to help you personally process and apply what God is doing in your life.

On our interactive Web site (LivingontheEdge.org), you will discover clear spiritual pathways to help you grow. Here, you will be able to share your journey with others, receive personal coaching to make it over barriers, and be given practical tools to help you help others.

Romans 12 is the START HERE for the Christian life. It’s not everything, but if you’re stuck—START HERE; if you are a new believer and unsure how to grow—START HERE; if you are a mature believer and are looking for a pathway to disciple others—START HERE.

Are you ready for the journey of your lifetime?

My Romans 12 Journey

My simple question was met with blank stares and silence.

I was speaking to a large gathering of pastors in Nigeria about the purpose of the church as defined in Matthew 28:19: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . .”

So, I had asked them, *What is a disciple?* I didn’t want a definition, but I wanted them to tell me what an authentic follower of Christ looks like. Just like their cobelievers I had spoken to around the world, they struggled to give a clear, measurable, biblical profile of a disciple of Jesus Christ.

It was then I had one of those amazing experiences where God puts things in your mouth that aren’t in your notes. I said, “If there was a giant server up in heaven and you logged on to www.heaven.com/disciple, do you know what would come up on your laptop?” They all leaned forward in anticipation and I was praying silently that the answer would be as profound as the

question I had not planned on asking. Then out of my mouth I heard, “Becoming a Romans 12 Christian.”

At the Spirit’s prompting I asked them to close their workbooks and open their Bibles to Romans 12. It was the first chapter I had ever memorized, more than thirty years earlier, the first Christian commentary I had ever studied, and I had taught this passage many times before, but never in the way I shared it with them.

That was the beginning of God’s orchestration of my life to take all I have done in the last twenty-five years of ministry and ignite it around my deepest passion—spiritual maturity. Below you’ll see an overview of what I shared with these dear pastors.

The Profile of a Romans 12 Disciple Is . . .

Surrendered to God (v. 1)

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of -God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

Separate from the world (v. 2)

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Sober in self-assessment (vv. 3–8)

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs

to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Serving in love (vv. 9–13)

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Supernaturally responding to evil with good (vv. 14–21)

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

The Big Picture

Romans 12 is an executive summary (the Cliffs Notes) of what a fully mature follower of Jesus looks like. It's the Apostle Paul's synthesis of Jesus' teaching on discipleship.

Note carefully:

1. *Its focus is on your relationships:*

- Your relationship with God (v. 1)
- Your relationship to this world's values (v. 2)
- Your relationship with yourself (vv. 3–8)
- Your relationship with believers (vv. 9–13)
- Your relationship with unbelievers (vv. 14–21)

2. *It's about grace.* Romans 12 follows eleven chapters that give us the clearest and most detailed account of Christ's work on our behalf.

3. *It's practical and measurable.* Romans 12 is filled with specific commands (to be fulfilled through the Spirit's power) that set the bar for maturity in each of those five relationships.

A Special Word to You

In the last several years I've had the privilege to crisscross America and go around the world to minister with fellow pastors who long to see their churches produce Christ-like followers who live out their faith day in and day out.

It is no secret that something is terribly wrong. Most Christians do not live like Christians. Most churches (with wonderful but rare exceptions) are struggling. Pastors from all backgrounds admit they do not have a definition of the question "What is a disciple of Jesus Christ?" And few churches have a clear, systematic process for maturing their members.

My hope and prayer is to partner with pastors everywhere to help you not only define but develop grace-filled, winsomely holy, and loving followers of Jesus Christ.

You don't have to take my word for it. In case any of us need any more motivation or doubt the critical nature of this issue, I want to share four quotes from Christian leaders whom God used to keep the fire burning in my soul.

A historical perspective. . .looking at the priority of spiritual maturity sixty years ago. . .

Our most pressing obligation today is to do all in our power to obtain a revival that will result in a reformed, revitalized, purified church. It is of far greater importance that we have better Christians than we have more of them. Each generation of Christians is the seed of the next, and degenerate seed is sure to produce a degenerate harvest not a little better than but a little worse than the seed from which it sprang. Thus the direction will be down until vigorous, effective means are taken to improve the seed. . . .

To carry on these activities [evangelism, missions] scripturally the church should be walking in fullness of power, separated, purified and ready at any moment to give up everything, even life itself, for the greater glory of Christ. For a worldly, weak, decadent church to make converts is but to bring forth after her own kind and extend her weakness and decadence a bit farther out. . . .

So vitally important is spiritual quality that it is hardly too much to suggest that attempts to grow larger might well be suspended until we have become better.

—A. W. Tozer

A contemporary perspective. . .traveling around the world in the 21st century to “take the church’s spiritual temperature”. . .

Q: You know this growing church probably as well as any Westerner does. I wonder how you evaluate it.

John Stott: The answer is “growth without depth.” None of us wants to dispute the extraordinary growth of the church. But it has been largely numerical and statistical growth. And there has not been sufficient growth in discipleship that is comparable to the growth in numbers.

Q: Where do we evangelicals need to go? We’ve been through quite a trip in the last fifty years.

John Stott: My immediate answer is that we need to go beyond evangelism. Evangelism is supposed to be evangelicals’ specialty. Now, I am totally committed to world evangelization. But we must look beyond evangelism to the transforming power of the gospel, both in individuals and in society.

This problem is not new! This pandemic is an unprecedented opportunity to change this!

A megachurch's self-assessment after twenty-five years of ministry . . .

But the research findings are also extremely clear, *the church should do everything it can to increase the number of those who are fully surrendered followers of Jesus Christ . . .* the potential for Kingdom impact is huge.

The most recent empirical research on the lifestyle and behaviors of those who claim the name of Christ. . .

We consistently find that the vast majority of teenagers nationwide will spend a significant amount of their teen years participating in a Christian congregation. Most teenagers in America enter adulthood considering themselves to be Christians and saying they have made a personal commitment to Christ. But within a decade, most of these young people will have left the church and will have placed emotional connection to Christianity on the shelf. For most of them their faith was merely skin-deep. This leads to the sobering finding that the vast majority of outsiders in this country, particularly among young generations, are actually de-churched individuals.

A Proven Pathway to Becoming Like Jesus

Will you be part of the solution? Will you let God transform your life in such a way that it is a magnet for those who don't know Christ? Will you become a Romans 12 Christian? Will you surrender your life to God? Will you become separate from the world? Will you have a sober self-assessment? Will you serve others in love? Will you supernaturally respond to evil with good?

If you follow this simple (but by no means easy) pathway, God will start to transform your life. He is ready to use you to lead in helping to transform His people into Romans 12 Christians. Will you answer His call?