

FOLLOWER 3

## WHITE WATER

### SUMMARY

**Week 1 Follow:** disciple, apprentice to Jesus. Jesus called us with a “come follow me” and sent us with a “go and make disciples” command.

**Week 2 Formation:** unintentional formation = conform intentional formation-transform. What is forming you? What are you intentionally doing to be formed by Jesus?

## WHITE WATER

What sweeps you away?

*Let me emphasize this: As you yield to the dynamic life and power of the Holy Spirit, you will abandon the cravings of your self-life. When your self-life craves the things that offend the Holy Spirit you hinder him from living free within you! And the Holy Spirit's intense cravings hinder your self-life from dominating you! So then, the two incompatible and conflicting forces within you are your self-life of the flesh and the new creation life of the Spirit. But when you yield to the life of the Spirit, you will no longer be living under the law, but soaring above it! The behavior of the self-life is obvious: Sexual*

*immorality, lustful thoughts, pornography, chasing after things instead of God, manipulating others, hatred of those who get in your way, senseless arguments, resentment when others are favored, temper tantrums, angry quarrels, only thinking of yourself, being in love with your own opinions, being envious of the blessings of others, murder, uncontrolled addictions, wild parties, and all other similar behavior. Haven't I already warned you that those who use their "freedom" for these things will not inherit the kingdom realm of God! But the fruit produced by the Holy Spirit within you is divine love in all its varied expressions : joy that overflows , peace that subdues , patience that endures , kindness in action , a life full of virtue, faith that prevails , gentleness of heart , and strength of spirit . Never set the law above these qualities, for they are meant to be limitless. But the fruit produced by the Holy Spirit within you is divine love in all its varied expressions : joy that overflows , peace that subdues , patience that endures , kindness in action , a life full of virtue, faith that prevails , gentleness of heart , and strength of spirit . Never set the law above these qualities, for they are meant to be limitless.*

—Galatians 5:16-22

Sometimes no matter how hard we try or how much energy we exert to stay the course, do the right thing or hold our resolve, we are all too easily swept away in a moment or more subtly over time by forces of culture all around us OR by forces inside our own heart.

Five steps forward six steps back. We have days when we truly are being more loving, experience great joy and live in a space of peace.

## **THE PLATEAU**

Even when we think we have conquered and truly are walking the way with Jesus, we still have deeper, darker spaces in our character that my apprenticeship to Jesus still has to touch.

For me, it's my anger, my critical spirit, my anxiety, my comfort attachments, and my habits that border on addictions sometimes. Things that have been caused by hurts and family issues that go back generations, that I would prefer to bury and hide than bring them into the rhythms of discipleship.

During the plateau, I am applying the Christian formula. I am going to church, doing my bible reading, and praying for my family and others, and I am, by the world's standards, a good person. But this superficial formula was just not working on the deeper layers of my soul.

These deeper layers are affected by the external pressures of life and culture that start to seep in and trigger some of these shadow spaces and mix with the internal shapings of my character.

*\*Instead of becoming more like Jesus I was becoming less like him. \**

Many reach a point in their spiritual journey and feel stuck, stagnant or restless.

Stuck in self-defeating habits, counter intuitive to discipleship and growth.

**Its not that we dont want to become like Jesus or that we are not trying to become like Jesus - we just don't know how.**

*And how could the apprentice know more than his master, for only after he is fully qualified will he be at that level.*

—Luke 6:40

## **BEING TRAINED BY JESUS**

Jesus wants us to become like him, and he has a training program that will help us explore the depths of our minds, bodies, and souls.

**The most profound discipleship-making element is love.**

*So I give you now a new commandment: Love each other just as much as I have loved you. For when you demonstrate the same love I have for you by loving one another, everyone will know that you're my faithful followers.*

—John 13:34-35

That discipleship-making element needs to seep into every part of us. It needs to transform the deepest parts of us.

*Jesus answered him, "Love the Lord your God with every passion of your heart, with all the energy of your being, and with every thought that is within you. This is the great and supreme commandment".*

—Matthew 22:37-38

**The alternative - is stagnation, frustration, and ineffectiveness.**

## **THE LOVE DISCIPLINED FOLLOWER**

### **Intentional Formation**

Spiritual formation is not a Christian thing, it's a human thing.

Most of our formation is unintentional, it just happens.

We are shaped by our habits, the stories we believe, our relationships, and our environment. All of these form us over time and through experience.

## **THE SHAPE WE ARE IN**

We have already been formed into a shape BEFORE we even know of Jesus. Therefore, being formed into a follower of Jesus is counter-formation.

To reform our shape into being like Jesus, we must live intentionally and thoughtfully and be conscious of counteracting the many forces that unintentionally malformed our souls.

We need the practices of Jesus that posture our hearts in a new orientation (REPENTANCE) and towards a never-before-seen direction (PURPOSE).

## **COUNTER PRACTICES**

To counter our habits, we need the practices of Christ.  
To transform our relational depth, we need community.  
To counter the stories we believe, we need the teachings of Jesus to fill our minds with truth.

To counter our environment, we need to live aware of and in connection with the Holy Spirit, who is the animating center of our lives and is the ultimate force of all transformation and intentional reorientation (Repentance).

These counter practices form our souls slowly over time. (Especially through time of suffering - formed and forged)

**This is intentional formation - a life architecture of discipleship to Jesus that is deliberately designed to be more robust than the forces all around us and the internal forces of our own hearts.**

Jesus desires to form us to be like him.

*Beloved, we are God's children right now; however, it is not yet apparent what we will become. But we do know that when it is finally made visible, we will be just like him, for we will see him as he truly is. Look with wonder at the depth of the Father's marvelous love that he has lavished on us! He has called us and made us his very own beloved children. The reason the world doesn't recognize who we are is that they didn't recognize him. And all who focus their hope on him will always be purifying themselves, just as Jesus is pure.*

— 1 John 3:1-3

This will require us to organize our days around intentionally following Jesus and finding deep joy in our daily lives, with him.

## **1. TURNING HABITS INTO PRACTICES**

If our habits are forming us and are doing something to us, forming lust, anxiety, and greed, causing loneliness and isolation then we need to change our habits.

We need to be intentional about our practices and form habits based on the life of Jesus.

Practices that slow us down. That decrease busyness into an increase of our awareness and intentionality.

We must eradicate harmful habits and make room for God to come into our lives and transform them from the inside out.

## **Practices - next week.**

Sabbath, Prayer, Fasting, Solitude, Generosity, Scripture, Community, Service, and Witness.

## **2. RELATIONAL TRANSFORMATION THROUGH COMMUNITY**

If our relationships are forming us and our view of the world, our value system, and our daily behavior are being affected by our peer group, our family, and our spouses / partners, it is essential that we harness our relational wiring to become more like Jesus through community.

*Confess and acknowledge how you have offended one another and then pray for one another to be instantly healed, for tremendous power is released through the passionate, heartfelt prayer of a godly believer!*

—James 5:16

*\*Community is our school of love, forgiveness, and getting over ourselves—to love and be loved, to forgive and be forgiven. \**

It is the place that stretches our grace and where grace is applied to us. It's a place where the greatest transformation happens, but only if we are willing to work through the fear of being hurt by it. We blame and move on before we pause, reflect, and press through to levels of forgiveness not often reached, letting hurt form us.

### 3. THE STORIES IN OUR HEADS

If the stories we believe deeply form us and cultural narratives that come to us from Hollywood and other media hotspots, social media, schooling, and educational environments affect more than the teachings of Jesus - we need to take charge of the thoughts and stories we believe.

How do we become more intentional about the stories we come to believe? We fill our minds with teaching (truth).

*Thomas said to him, "Master, we don't know where you're going, so how could we know the way there?" Jesus explained, "I am the Way, I am the Truth, and I am the Life. No one comes next to the Father except through union with me. To know me is to know my Father too. And from now on you will realize that you have seen him and experienced him."*

—John 14:5-7

Jesus was a Rabbi & teacher of truth. He came to fill our minds not with self-deduced stories and vain imaginations but with the truth.

Fill us with his sense and divine view of our reality so we can live in tune with the creator's vision and intentions for us.

*Stop imitating the ideals and opinions of the culture around you, but be inwardly transformed by the Holy Spirit*

*through a total reformation of how you think. This will empower you to discern God's will as you live a beautiful life, satisfying and perfect in his eyes.*

—Romans 12:2

We fill our minds with truth through a variety of ways: scripture, teachings, preaching, reading, meditation, contemplation, and more.

Thinking God's thoughts takes an intentional humility.

*As high as the heavens are above the earth, so my ways and my thoughts are higher than yours.*

—Isaiah 55:9

As we think God's thoughts after him, we renew the mind.

We must curate our consciousness.

We must intentionally control the flow of thought. What we give our attention to we become.

## **4. THE STAGE OF LIFE**

The stage on which our habits, relationships, and stories play out is the environment we are positioned within to transform.

*It wasn't that long ago that you lived in the religion, customs, and values of this world, obeying the dark ruler of the earthly realm who fills the atmosphere with his authority and diligently works in the hearts of those who are disobedient to the truth of God.*

—Ephesians 2:2

*And I will send you the Divine Encourager from the very presence of my Father. He will come to you, the Spirit of Truth, emanating from the Father, and he will speak to you about me. And you will tell everyone the truth about me, for you have walked with me from the start.*

—John 15:26-27

**The animating center of our genuine, true, and deep transformation is the Holy Spirit.**

The more we leverage spiritual practices, being truly at peace with the Holy Spirit's empowering presence inside us, our minds become a beautiful place to live.

Through the practices, diving into community, and teaching, we are opening up more profound and deeper layers of our inner being to God, who frees, heals, and transforms us.

## **5. BLESS YOUR HEART**

Grace is His capacity to transform us to be what we were meant to be and do what we were meant to do.

The more intentional we become about following Jesus and practicing the presence of God, and living in step with the Spirit, the more God himself becomes our primary environment -our home.

*But Christ proved God's passionate love for us by dying in our place while we were still lost and ungodly!*

—Romans 5:8

But he answered me, “My grace is always more than enough for you, and my power finds its full expression through your weakness.” So I will celebrate my weaknesses, for when I’m weak I sense more deeply the mighty power of Christ living in me.

## 6. TAKE YOUR TIME

All of this happens over time.

*“Spiritual growth is the slowest of all human movements.”*

—James Houston.

Jesus’s metaphors about spiritual growth are all slow. Trees, vines, and crops grow over seasons and years.

Change is a long, slow process.

*As long as earth exists there will always be seasons of planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night.*

—Genesis 8:22

We have to be patient and stay with Jesus. We can’t lose hope for transformation.

## 7. THE POWER OF SUFFERING

*\*Transformation happens most through suffering.*

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The experiences that we fight to avoid and the pain and

suffering that are inescapable in this life can be our crucible. They can form and forge us into people of love, joy, and peace.

*But that's not all! Even in times of trouble we have a joyful confidence, knowing that our pressures will develop in us patient endurance. And patient endurance will refine our character, and proven character leads us back to hope. And this hope is not a disappointing fantasy, because we can now experience the endless love of God cascading into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who lives in us!*

—Romans 5:3-5

Experiences can form or deform us. They can make us soft and gentle or hard and cruel. They can open us or close us off. But when we intentionally open our pain and suffering to God, He will not only meet us in it but also form us through it into being more like him.

*But he answered me, "My grace is always more than enough for you, and my power finds its full expression through your weakness." So I will celebrate my weaknesses, for when I'm weak I sense more deeply the mighty power of Christ living in me. So I'm not defeated by my weakness, but delighted! For when I feel my weakness and endure mistreatment—when I'm surrounded with troubles on every side and face persecution because of my love for Christ—I am made yet stronger. For my weakness becomes a portal to God's power.*

—2 Corinthians 12:9-10

## **THE CALL TO FOLLOW**

Jesus' "Come follow me" invitation is a call to be intentional about becoming more like him, organizing our lives around his practices, community, truth, and, ultimately, God himself.

## **RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE**

Formation has to begin in our context. It's waiting for you in your daily life. Our calling has us figuring out the practices in your daily context, muddling through the messiness of community, and wrestling with the full impact of Jesus' truths.

The transformation is stronger if you do it in the arena the Holy Spirit creates for you.

## **THE START OF YOUR NEW DAY**

Read scripture daily.

## **SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER**

Are you stuck in your spiritual growth, habits, emotional patterns, or relationship with God?

Have you been actively participating in spiritual formation over the years?

How have you understood the role of the Holy Spirit in your spiritual formation?

Have you ever had an experience of opening your pain and suffering to God? What was produced?