

What Is A Disciple?
Lesson 1
A New Creation
Romans 6

When someone joins the military they go through some form of retraining process. This is usually referred to as basic training or boot camp. I call it a retraining process because people enter the armed forces with a certain way of thinking, acting, and reacting. But in their new lifestyle they have to obtain a completely new way of thinking, acting and reacting. Therefore they go through a strenuous retraining process so that in the heat of battle the correct decision will come to them in the moment even though it might not have been the one that was natural to them prior to enlisting.

The Christian life is much the same way. We are in the midst of a battle even though it is not against a traditional enemy and it is not fought with traditional means (*Ephesians 6:12-13*). But this battle is of ultimate importance and not winning it has the highest of costs. That is why we too have to go through a retraining process. Granted, when we come to Christ we are already equipped with the tools and power that we need to fulfill the mission God has called us to (*Colossians 2:10*), but we still have a lot of growing to do. This is because living for God in our world requires us to be radically transformed (*Romans 12:2*) and that transformation is a process. A process often referred to as sanctification. This is steadily growing towards perfection in Christ. Christ told us to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect (*Matthew 5:48*). We never will actually arrive at that perfection this side of Heaven (*1 John 1:8*) but we must strive to get closer to it each and every day. The only way to accomplish this goal is by taking part in something called discipleship.

The root of Christ's calling on our lives is for us to be disciples and make disciples. He not only called us to this (*Matthew 28:18-20*) but He also modeled it for us. For three years He invested in 12 guys. They did life together and He trained them in what the word of God truly meant, who He was, and what it meant to live for Him and make Him known. We need someone to do this for us and we need to be a part of doing that for someone else. This discipleship relationship is vital to success in the Christian life and is something that is desperately needed in the church today.

That is why I have written this study. I want to equip you with the tools you and the person who you are discipling and/or the person who is discipling you can grow in your walk with Christ. Therefore if you are trying to do this study alone you are doing it the wrong way. You need to put it down and ask God to help you seek out someone to go through this process with you. Once you have found this person then you are ready to begin.

This study will not be easy as the discipleship process and the Christian life are not easy (*John 16:33*). This is also not an exhaustive study, as we will only begin to scratch the surface of all the beautiful truth that God's word has for our lives. But this will get you heading in the right direction as you begin to realize just how drastically different our

lives as followers of Christ must be from the rest of the world. With that being said, let's begin.

Take a moment and think about your life before Christ. Jot down some of the words, phrases, or maybe even experiences that come to mind.

If we were honest we would probably list out feelings like anger and loneliness, sins that we struggled with, or we might just describe our lives as just daily going through the motions. The reason that I have you do this exercise is because before we can even begin to understand what our lives should look like as followers of Christ and how we go about living those lives, we have to remember who we were before we came to Christ. This helps us appreciate the life change we have experienced, regardless of whether our past was filled with extreme darkness or if we were fairly decent people.

But life change may be an understatement of what happens when we come to Christ. When we come to Christ, as we will see in this lesson, we are in fact completely new creations. Let that wash over you for a second. You are a completely new creation in Christ. Our old selves are gone and there is a completely new one that is born in Christ. To understand this we are going to look at Romans 6. I want you to begin by reading Romans 6:1-7

What are some of your initial thoughts and feelings about this passage?

There is a lot of truth jam packed into these few verses that help us understand the fact that we are a new creation in Christ. Because of this we will walk through these verses one step at a time.

What is the key verb in verse 1?

There are only a few verbs to choose from and I suppose you could choose any of them

and justify your answer. But to me the key verb is “continue.” This is because in order for us to continue in something we had to already be doing it. So when Paul, who is writing this passage, poses the question of whether or not we should continue sinning this must mean that we were living in sin in our old lives.

Most of us have no problem acknowledging this. We may have a very clear habitual sin or addiction that we have struggled with in the past. But for some of us we led fairly “good” lives before we came to Christ. The problem is that none of us can truly be good though (*Romans 3:10-12*). We have all sinned (*Romans 3:23*). We must accept this truth. But let me explain a little more how we can understand that this is true. The Ten Commandments are God’s law. See if you can list them out. If you cannot then look them up in scripture (*Exodus 20*).

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

If we have broken any one of these commandments we are guilty of breaking God’s law. And if we have broken one of God’s laws we are guilty of breaking them all (*James 2:10*). Granted it probably would not take you long to find one of these laws you have broken, but think about this. In our old life we were doing things on our own, our way, and in our own strength. In essence we had set ourselves up to be God. This is not good. These choices not to follow God’s law are what we call sin. And because of our sin we were guilty before God (*Romans 2:6-7, Hebrews 9:27*).

But then there is another keyword in verse 1 that gives us some hope. That word is grace.

What do you know about grace or what are some examples of grace that you know of?

Grace is a free gift that we receive which we did not deserve and cannot earn (*Ephesians 2:8*). Because of our sin we deserved death and separation from God. But God in His infinite love sent Jesus to die in our place even though He did not deserve death so that we could be forgiven and have a relationship with God (*2 Corinthians 5:21*). Jesus took our sin on Himself and died in our place. Let that sink in. This is very powerful stuff.

Now let’s go back to the passage. Paul asks, “...if we should go on sinning so that grace may increase?” What do you think is meant by this?

In real practical terms this deals with an issue that many people who claim to be followers of Christ face, and obviously people in Paul's target audience, were facing. They think they can pray a prayer and "come to Christ" and then go on living the same way that they did in the past. And since God's grace is never ending, which it is (*Mark 3:28-29*), they are covered because the grace God pours on them will increase. This misses the entire point of salvation and becoming a Christ follower and I would honestly question if people like this ever became Christ followers. Why can I say this? If we look at verse 2 Paul clearly says that if we have come to Christ and received His grace then we have died to sin.

Obviously if you are reading this page you have not physically died. But a certain death has happened. That old life where you lived for yourself, pursued sin and the pleasures of this life, did things your way, sought your own dreams and goals died. And a new life began that is completely committed to God and His ways, plans, and purposes. So if we are truly followers of Christ, His disciples, then we cannot possibly go back to the old way of life, the life of sin, since that life died (*Luke 9:62*).

So just as Christ died for our sins and then rose from the dead to walk in a new glorified body, we are the same way. We died to our old self and our life of sin to rise and walk in a glorious new life that seeks to honor God in all we do. This is what baptism symbolizes. After we come to Christ and our baptized we are saying publicly that the old self is dead and buried and we are now a new creation. Verses 3-5 repeatedly highlight this idea. It is almost like Paul wants to make sure we understand the importance of this key concept because he knew that this is what everything boils down to and we cannot understand anything else about our lives in Christ until we get this one big idea.

Now look at verse 6 again. How does Paul describe our relationship to sin before we came to Christ?

Now in verse 7, how does Paul describe our relationship to sin after we come to Christ?

Before we come to Christ we were slaves to sin. I do not know how much you know about history but slavery is an awful portion of the history of our world and sadly is still in existence in our world today. It is a life that I would never want to be a part of and I would never wish this lifestyle on any one else. But in our lives before Christ we were in fact slaves to sin. And I see that type of slavery as the worst picture of slavery you could imagine. We were in bondage to our sin and being beaten and abused by it.

But there is another interesting thing about slavery. Once places like Great Britain and the United States began to do away with slavery they never brought it back. I do not

know of any former slaves going back and begging to be put back into slavery once they were freed. Why then, once we are freed from the slavery of sin, would we ever want to back to that? In Christ we have true freedom that nothing else can compare to and we should never desire or allow ourselves or anyone else to go back to that old life.

This is another reason why we have to remember who we were before we came to Christ. The reason is that we never want to slip back into that old way of life. That life is dead and the life we now live in Christ is greater than all we could imagine.

Now read verses 8-14.

What are some of your initial thoughts and feelings about this passage?

What is the promise in verses 8-9?

The promise in these verses is extremely important. Many Christians can grasp the idea that they are dead to sin and that their old life is dead. They can also grasp the idea that they have a new, eternal life in Christ. The problem is that most Christians think that this new life does not start until they die physically and go to Heaven. This leads them to live a life that is driven by the idea that we are just supposed to stay out of trouble as much as possible, go to church as much as possible, and wait around to die. This is simply not the case though. Christ came to give us life, and life to its fullest (*John 10:10*). He not only came to show us how to die, but also how to live. We have work to do and I think that is the beauty of these two verses. The fact that not only do we share in Christ's death, laying down our will for the will of God, but we also share in His life, a life spent serving others and spreading the message of God (*Matthew 20:25-28*).

What problems could arise or have already come up because of Christians only thinking about death and Heaven instead of life?

What things could change if Christians decided to also share in Christ's life here and now?

We see all these ideas even clearer in verses 10-11. First there is the important truth that Christ died to sin once and for all (*Hebrews 9:22-28*). He is the ultimate sacrifice and there does not need to be another one. He was the perfect, spotless lamb who died for the sins of the world (*1 Peter 1:19*). But He is also lived an incredible life for God the Father (*John 6:38*) and continues to do so. That is right, Christ is alive so that we too can be alive. Death has lost its power (*1 Corinthians 15:55*) and life reigns.

Take a moment and right down some of the things that Christ did in His life.

Now, with those things in mind look at verse 11 again. We are to be united with Christ's purpose in our lives. Christ died for sin so that we could die to sin. He rose from the dead and lives so that we too may live. And we are to live as He lived (*John 13:15*). For example, you may have written down how Jesus fed the 5,000. We too are supposed to feed the hungry. You may have written down how Jesus told others about God, for example telling Nicodemus he had to be born again. We too are supposed to be telling others the beauty of the Gospel that we have been discussing. So remember that not only do you lose your old life when you come to Christ, although I would not really consider that life a loss, but you gain a new life that has power and is fully devoted to the work of God (*Romans 12:1*).

What does verses 12-14 say should not rule over us?

We are once again reminded that sin has no part in our lives. That was the old self and the old self is dead. I know it is kind of weird to think about the fact that you in a sense died even though you are still alive but this is very important. Just think of it this way. Growing up we all have things we latch onto and swear we will never let go of. For instance, I confess I had a blanket that I could not live without. But eventually I had to realize that the blanket was not all that great. It provided no real fulfillment or companionship. Also, I began to realize there were some things I wanted to do and some ways I needed to grow and that would never happen with a blanket. Granted this was on a small scale since I was still young but you get the idea. Eventually the blanket was dead to me. I realized it was useless and served no purpose in my life anymore. Our lives before and after Christ are the same way. Before Christ we are hanging on to a way of living and thinking that we think we will not survive or be successful without it. Then we see this whole new world and way of life that is only possible through Christ. Once we see the possibility and the true power and greatness of it all other things seem insignificant and useless (*Philippians 3:8*). Our old way of thinking is dead to us because

we have no need for it and we press on to the only life that is worth living, a life fully devoted to God.

I believe Paul's transitions back to this idea at this point because he knows his readers will be excited about living life for God and experiencing life as they never imagined. But he also knows that if we allow sin back into our lives it will mess this process up (*James 1:15*). He knew that sin interrupts our fellowship with God and our ability to serve him so he warns his readers then and now to not let sin come back into our lives. We are going to do something with our lives. Our hands are going to create something. Our feet are going to go somewhere. But our time is short and there is only so much we can do (*James 4:13-15*). Therefore we must choose if we are going to use our time and talents for sin, unrighteousness, or for God and the purposes that He has for us, righteousness.

What is meant by, "...not being under the law but instead being under grace?"

In case you forgot the law is the Ten Commandments and God's standard is perfection. We of course cannot attain that perfection because on our own we will always fail. Therefore sin is master over us because in our flesh we are weak. But grace is the free gift of God that brings us salvation. And with it we get the Holy Spirit (*Galatians 3:14*), the power of God living inside of us that both seals as God's child for all of eternity (*Ephesians 1:13-14*) but also empowers us to do God's work here and now (*John 14:12*). Therefore we can overcome sin through the power of Christ Jesus that we have because of the Holy Spirit (*Romans 8:37, 1 Corinthians 10:13*). Plus, even when we do mess up we are automatically have the opportunity for forgiveness and a fresh start again (*1 John 1:9*) which means sin cannot gain control back over our lives unless we choose let it through habitual sin. It is like we are covered in grease and sin keeps trying to latch onto us but instead slips off. The only way it could get a hold of us is if we choose to grab onto it and hold it up ourselves. But why would we want to grab onto that insignificant useless way of life we lived for ourselves when we already have Christ?

Read verses 15-22.

What are some of your initial thoughts and feelings about this passage?

What are some traps that you think this passage warns Christians about falling into?

I want you to know that as followers of Christ we have a very real enemy, an enemy that wants to destroy our lives (*John 10:10*). Ideally he would keep us from coming to Christ altogether, but if he can not stop that he will do everything he can to keep us from doing God's work, to rob of us our joy, to cause us to live a life that turns others from Christ, and in essence destroy us. This enemy is Satan and He is very sneaky. Sometimes he comes at us with an all out attack but more often than not he plants a lie in our brain and slowly and steadily causes that lie to entangle us so that by the time we realize what has happened we feel it is too late (*Ephesians 6:12*). In this passage I think that Paul warns us about some of these lies and gives us the correct alternative in each situation.

The first lie is in verse 15. Many Christians buy into the lie that we get saved and then we can keep living however we want to. They take the idea that since we are under grace and cannot lose our salvation (*Romans 8:38, John 10:29*), we should take advantage of that fact to live as recklessly as possible. This leads them down a road of pain and destruction. Not to mention that they miss out on all that God wants to do through them. And honestly, when I see people misusing the free gift of grace we get through the sacrifice of Christ Jesus, I question whether or not they truly got saved at all. While it is not our place to judge in this way since we are in not position to pass judgment (*Matthew 7:1-4*), it is hard for me to believe that someone would live this way if they really understood what Christ did for them and the life that God is offering them. Paul quickly refutes this lie by saying, "May it never be!" This train of thought has no place in the life of a follower of Christ.

Have you bought into this lie? In what ways?

How has that affected your life?

What do you need to repent of and change right now?

In verses 16-18 we get another reminder that we are a new creation in Christ. The old self that was a slave to sin is now dead. But I believe we see another lie that many people buy into. This lie deals with Lordship. A lot of people have no problem with calling Christ Savior. I mean who could blame them? The free gift of grace, a clean slate, Heaven, and you don't even have to do anything to earn it. That is a pretty great deal.

But that same group of people has a big problem with calling Christ Lord. This is where you truly die to yourself and your own goals and desires and let Christ take control of your life (*Philippians 2:5-10*). This is what we have been talking about, truly making Christ Lord. The reason for this is because people want control of their own lives and they see two choices. Either they can give the control of their lives to Christ or they can be “free” from any control from the outside and continue living their “own” life. In verse 16 we see this to be far from the truth. Something will be Lord of your life. Regardless of how free and independent you think you are, something is going to control your life. So your choices are actually to be a slave to sin, which is the true slavery, the kind that we mentioned not wanting to wish on anyone. Or you can be a slave to Christ and make Him Lord of your life, which is actually the ultimate freedom (*Galatians 5:1*). We see this highlighted by Paul saying that either you are a slave to sin which leads to death, and who wants that? Or you can be a slave to Christ which leads us to righteousness, which means living life the way God intended and knows is best for us (*Jeremiah 29:11*). It seems like a pretty easy decision when you look at it this way. But it is not for most of us. For most of us this is a daily struggle and that is okay, because whom you will be a slave to is a daily decision (*Luke 9:23*). Therefore you must be committed to the right kind of teaching, the study of God’s word and the discipleship relationship you are forming right now, so that you can make the right decision day in and day out.

Have you bought into this lie? In what ways?

How has that affected your life?

What do you need to repent of and change right now?

What habits can you form daily to make sure you make the right choice of who will be Lord of your life each day?

While there are many lies from Satan, some of which we will see later on in this study, we have come to the last lie that I see dealt with in this passage. You will have to bear with me though as we will have to jump back and forth in verses 19-22 to see exactly what is going on.

In verse 20 Paul writes about how when we were a slave to sin we did not have to worry about righteousness. This is because when we are living for ourselves we are unconcerned with the things of God. We can live each day however we please. But as we have seen again and again in this passage, that is really no life at all and is definitely not freedom. In fact it is the worst kind of slavery and it leads to death. But here is where the lie comes in. Have you ever heard the phrase the grass is greener on the other side? This deals with the idea that people always tend to think that things are better somewhere else or for someone else. This plays out in the Christian life with the fact that many Christians will find themselves at times beginning to think that their old life was better than the life they are now living in Christ. They will think that the Christian life is burdensome and will long for the “freedom” that they had before. What is sad is that usually this comes in times of struggle and despair that were actually brought on by them slowly turning back to sin. But instead of realizing that their feelings of being burdened were caused by sin they think they were caused by what they believe are the rules, restrictions, and demands of following Christ. Do not get me wrong. The Christian life is not easy. We will face trials and struggles (*John 16:33*). There will even be times where we have trials and burdens that come about and are no fault of our own (*James 1:2-4*). Following Christ will cost us everything (*Matthew 16:24*). But it is the only life worth living and we can never turn back to our old self. That self is dead, thankfully, and there is no purpose or need to ever try to revive it. Because as we see in verse 21, those old things lead to death and have no benefit for us.

Another thing that drives this lie is feeling defeated. Many people just think they cannot follow Christ. The great part is we cannot on our own (*Philippians 4:13*). We must rely on the power of the Holy Spirit inside of us. But we do have the capacity to live passionately for something. Look now at verse 19.

What were some things you were a slave to in your old life?

How would you describe the passion you went after those things?

I have been a slave to a lot of things in my life. I have a very addictive personality and am an all in or nothing kind of person. But we all are this way. It just takes finding that thing that grabs our hearts and interests. This is important because when you begin to believe that you cannot passionately follow Christ with all that you are that is a lie. You have the capacity to follow Christ with all that you are you just choose not to. Instead you choose to waste your passion, time, and talents on the things of the world. Whether it is alcohol, drugs, sex outside of marriage, pornography, sports, work, working out, music, video games, etc. You have things that you are passionate about. The problem is they are not the things of God. We are supposed to do away with those things that are not of God (*Hebrews 12:1-2*). Then we are supposed to take that passion and energy and devote it to righteousness that results in sanctification. Sanctification is the process of us

growing spiritually until we attain that perfection that we are called to. It is a long process but it is what we are to devote ourselves to. It takes us daily looking at what little parts of lives our lives still must be worked on and asking God to do that work in us. It takes us daily realizing that we can only serve one master, God or sin, and that we must make the right choice (*Matthew 6:24*). And it is completely worth it because the outcome is eternal life, an eternal life that begins now.

Have you bought into this lie? In what ways?

How has that affected your life?

What do you need to repent of and change right now?

What are some things that cause you to feel burdened or defeated?

What habits can you put in place to either avoid this from happening or overcome these feelings when they do happen?

What things in you need to be worked on so you can work towards sanctification?

Read verse 23.

What are some of your initial thoughts and feelings about this passage?

In this last verse Paul sums up all that he has been teaching in this chapter and the Gospel itself.

What is a wage?

What is a gift?

In case you did not know a wage is something that you earn for work that you do. And what do we earn for the work of sin? Death. Because of our sin we deserve death and separation from God. But there is hope. God does not want death for us but instead wants to give us life. Catch that, He wants to give it to us. It is a gift, the gift of life that begins now and lasts for all eternity. And how do we get this gift? It is through trusting in Jesus Christ for forgiveness of our sins and salvation, and making Him Lord of our lives (*Romans 10:9*). The old life that leads to death is done, and we put on our new lives in Christ. What a beautiful picture and incredible gift. Today, what will you choose? Death? Or an incredible life as a disciple of Christ?

One last thing, who do you need to share this message of life with today? Sharing the Gospel and building disciples is the heart of what our lives are supposed to be about as followers of Christ (*Matthew 28:18-20*) and sharing the Gospel is not that complicated. I suggest sharing your story about your life before and after Christ and then walking someone through Romans 6:23 as I did with you. Today, seek God for wisdom, power, and courage, and share the life-changing message of Christ with someone.