



PURSUING HOLINESS

A 5-WEEK, VIDEO-DRIVEN DISCIPLESHIP
CURRICULUM FOR MEN

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CURRICULUM FOR MEN**

Leader Guides

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Video: Rick Burgess

Video Production: Chris Adler

Leader Guide Authors: Andy Blanks, Alex Childs, Zac Condie, TJ Gilliam, Clay Wyatt

Executive Editor: Andy Blanks



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BY RICK BURGESS



PUBLISHED BY IRON HILL PRESS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MAN CHURCH

DISCIPLESHIP INTERIOR

DISCIPLE MEN, CHANGE EVERYTHING.

There is a discipleship problem affecting Christian men today. Too often, men are absent from both the church pews and from the vital work the church is doing in the world. These men are not engaged spiritually in their homes and aren't making a Kingdom impact in their workplace. And it all points back to one major issue:

Many men aren't being disciplined.

But when men ARE being disciplined, powerful things happen as a result. They impact the church, their family, and culture. We have seen the influence godly men can have. The purpose of The Pursuit curriculum is to equip and empower men to become the man God has called them to be.

WHAT IS BE DISCIPLES ?

Be Disciples is a 40-week, video-driven curriculum designed to help men discover what it means to be a disciple. Be Disciples takes eight traits of disciples from Scripture and unpacks them through video and small group Bible Study.

Rick Burgess, best-selling author and co-host of the nationally syndicated radio show The Rick & Bubba Show, starts off each session with a 10-15 minute video introducing the session's focus. Then, for each small group session, there is a leader guide to help facilitate a meaningful time of discussion and Bible study.

The reason men aren't living a more authentic faith is simple: they have yet to embrace the call to real discipleship. By leading a group through Be Disciples, you're a part of the growing tide of leaders who are looking to awaken men to embrace their calling as Christ-followers.

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Main Passage: 1 Peter 1:13-16

Purpose: To embrace the idea that our lives must reflect the holiness of God.

Session Snapshot: It's easy to call yourself a Christian. However, it's much harder to live out the Word of God in your life. In this lesson, we observe God's clear call on every Christian's life to be set apart from the world to reflect His good and glorious nature. The path to holiness can only be accomplished through God's redemptive work in every one of our lives.

DIGGING IN

Jump into the session by watching this week's video.

- **Rick said that men tend to dumb down spiritual standards while not compromising in any other areas of their life. Why do you think that is?**

- **How have you viewed the call of holiness? Would you say it's been a burden to you or an invitation into a greater life?**

- **What first steps would you need to take to grow in personal holiness? How is the Word of God instrumental in bringing about this call in our lives?**

- **Think of someone in your life who exemplifies being a disciple of Christ. What's been their story, and how does their walk inspire you?**

God doesn't mince His words with us about what He intends and expects from us. As Rick mentioned in Ephesians 1, we see that God's intention before creating the world would be that we would stand before Him, holy and blameless. It's a good thing that he provides a way for us to do that because we are powerless to accomplish that on our own!

OPENING THE WORD

1 Peter 1:13-16

Author: 1 Peter was written by Peter, one of Jesus' most trusted disciples and one of the key leaders of the growing movement of Christ-followers.

Timeframe: 1 Peter was likely written between 54-68 AD.

Purpose: 1 Peter was written to a people under persecution, likely under the reign of Nero. Peter calls the Church to persevere under trials because eternal life awaits them. He encourages them that God's promises to His people will endure and should be the basis of their hope.

- **What are some occupations where someone would need to have a sober mind prepared for action while on the job? What's at stake when these professionals aren't sober-minded and prepared?**
- **What is at stake when we don't take the call of holiness seriously in our own life?**
- **What is the “grace” that Peter writes about that will be revealed at Jesus' coming?**
- **Rick mentioned earlier that we can tend to be grace abusers. Why should the richness of God's grace toward us in Christ not cause us to abuse it?**
- **Verse 14 calls us to forsake the passions of our former ignorance. What were those passions for you?**

We all have pasts, and we all have a sinful nature that still lives within us. In Romans 6-7, the Apostle Paul wrestled with how the Spirit and flesh were at war within us. You're not alone in whatever struggle you're in. To be honest, there will be a battle within us until we see Jesus face to face, but we can take refuge in the fact that Jesus has given us victory over sin. His call to holiness is not impossible. It just takes humility on our end to admit that we can't do it in our strength and a willingness to let the Spirit live through us.

Re-read 1 Peter 1:14-16

- **What does it mean to you that God is holy?**

- **What are some practical demonstrations of holiness?**

Peter quotes Leviticus 11:44 in verse 16. We need to know that the call to be holy was not a new concept introduced by Jesus in the Gospels or later in church history. In Genesis 17, God called Abraham to circumcise his descendants because God called this family to be set apart and holy from the rest of the world. As we know, Abraham was the forefather of Israel who was constantly called to walk in holiness. God is holy, and because we're in His family, it's our joy and privilege to embody His holiness.

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

- **One key application from our lesson today is to discern the difference between cultural Christianity and biblical Christianity.**
 - Cultural Christianity isn't Christianity at all. It's a work-based religion that focuses on checking a few boxes, and mixes a little Jesus in, but it serves as an escape from living the fruit-filled, sacrificial life God has for you. Biblical Christianity is a call to die to oneself so that one can also live.
- **The second key application from our lesson today is that we need to prepare ourselves for the spiritual battlefield that we walk in.**
 - Most of us don't wake up praising Jesus & shouting, "Let's go kick in the gates of hell today!" It would be awesome if that were our natural inclination, but it normally takes our heart being warmed up by God's Word and time set aside to talk with the Lord before we can adequately face what's in front of us. Temptations are bound to happen, and we can't be unprepared.
- **The third application is to walk with the Lord in a community.**
 - Satan would love to isolate you and distract you from the church. The only real way we can grow in holiness is by locking arms, encouraging one another, calling each other out when needed, and being present. As men, we don't think we need godly male friendships when in actuality, it's what could be holding us back from true life change.

Main Passage: 1 Peter 3:16, 1 Corinthians 5:9-10

Purpose: A disciple of God pursues holiness and honors the grace extended to him by the Lord.

Session Snapshot: We have a clear call on our lives and how we are to live. Aren't you glad that the Lord didn't leave us to figure out what we should do but gave us clear directions through Scripture? Today, we will look intentionally at holiness and the grace that has been extended our way.

DIGGING IN

Jump into the session by watching this week's video.

- **In today's culture, telling someone you are a Christian does not mean a lot because there are different types of definitions of the word "Christian" out there. They are not biblically or theologically sound. What are some definitions or observations you have heard or made of how today's culture defines the word "Christian"?**

- **Rick said in the video, "Don't call yourself a Christian if you are not a disciple." That is a powerful statement. What are your thoughts on that statement?**

- **Although you have defined this before, we must get a clear picture of a disciple. What or who is a disciple?**

- **Rick told a story of a man that came to him to tell him that “Today is the day I am going to surrender every part of my life.” Consider this statement for just a moment. What would keep you from surrendering every part of your life?**

We have a clear call on our lives and how we are to live. Aren't you glad that the Lord didn't leave us to figure out what we should do but gave us clear directions through Scripture? As we study, let's look intentionally at holiness and the grace that has been extended our way.

OPENING THE WORD

1 Peter 3:16

Author: 1 Peter was written by Peter, one of Jesus' most trusted disciples and one of the key leaders of the growing movement of Christ-followers.

Timeframe: 1 Peter was likely written between 54-68 AD.

Purpose: 1 Peter was written to a people under persecution, likely under the reign of Nero. Peter calls the Church to persevere under trials because eternal life awaits them. He encourages them that God's promises to His people will endure and should be the basis of their hope.

Read 1 Peter 3:15-16

- **Scripture says, “you also be holy in all your conduct.” Why is this such a challenge for us? Do you believe it is possible to live this way?**
- **Why is it important to understand that the one calling you to holiness is truly holy Himself?**
- **Verse 16 says, “Since it is written,” a reference to Leviticus. Peter tells us that just because the Gentiles were grafted into the church, the Lord’s standard for holiness has not changed. In the OT, the Jews were to follow the Law, but now we know that Jesus has fulfilled that Law for us. Knowing that, how do we practically approach holiness in our own lives?**

In the video, Rick references 1 Corinthians 5. Paul is giving a direction to the church. He understands holiness and is a champion of the local church. In this passage, Paul is saying we are to remove those that continually choose sin without remorse or repentance. Not those who are repentant or struggling or are seeking help, but those that, in a way, worship sin more than they worship Jesus.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:9-10

- **In verse 9, Paul says, "I am unworthy." Why do you think he said that?**
- **Verse 10 is so important. "But by the grace of God, I am what I am." For those of you found in Jesus, what are you now?**
- **The next phrase in verse 10 says, "his grace toward me was not in vain." Paul talks about how hard he worked to take the Gospel forward because of that grace. He had left his old life behind and was living in a way that when the Lord looked at Paul, he knew that His grace was not given in vain. When God looks on our lives, what does He say about the grace that has been given to you? What, if anything, needs to change.**

We have such a great example here in Paul on what it means to pursue holiness and live under grace. There is this internal drive for men to go, do, achieve, and crave more. None of those are bad. But more than anything in our lives, we should pursue holiness so that when the Lord looks at us, He knows that His grace was not given in vain. We are called to live holy, work hard, and point others to Jesus.

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

- **This week, keep a mental running note of your conduct. Where did it seem natural for you to have a conduct that honored the Lord? Where was it a struggle? Where to did you find yourself in a place that you didn't know exactly which way was right? Find a time at the end of each day to work through these questions.**
 - To pursue holiness, one must remain vigilant in the processing of decisions and actions. This will take discipline.
- **What structures or systems do you need to establish to aid you in pursuing holiness?**
 - In our pursuit of holiness, we must have both a dependency on the Lord and a plan. Consider the importance of accountability, community, and personal Bible study and worship. Challenge men to aim at pursuing holiness.
- **Third, we must know who we are.**
 - Each day this week, write down three things about who you are in Christ. This could be your name, abilities, character, dreams, and more. After you write them down, pray and ask God to help you, as a disciple, pursue Him more by embracing who and how He has made you.

Main Passage: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Purpose: To help men understand that when it comes to matters of lust and sexual immorality, they are called to redouble their efforts at pursuing personal holiness.

Session Snapshot: We live in a culture that is saturated with sexual imagery and sexual immorality. It's hard to escape the world's influence when it comes to this idea. Many of Paul's first-century audience would have felt the same way. And so Paul's words to them echo through the centuries and find us dealing with much the same issues. Paul's words to the Thessalonians are about as straightforward as you can get: as disciples of Jesus, our holiness when it comes to sexual matters is something we cannot overlook or let slide. This session will challenge men to reconsider their efforts in this area of their lives.

DIGGING IN

Jump into the session by watching this week's video.

- **Have you ever considered your relationship with God in light of your pursuit of holiness? Rick makes an interesting point: if you do not desire to pursue holiness, should you reconsider your relationship with Christ?**

- **Rick mentions the idea of Jesus making sure that His audience knew the cost of discipleship and that many of our churches don't follow His example in this area. How do you respond to this? What has your experience been with the leaders in your life accurately portraying the reality of what it means to follow Jesus?**

- **Consider: what does the fruit of your life say to those around you about your relationship with Jesus?**

- **If it is God's will that you pursue holiness, and you have not been very serious about this in your faith life, how do you come to terms with your posture of obedience to God?**

- **We're going to get into the real heart of Paul's teaching to the Thessalonians, namely, his caution against sin of a sexual nature. But let's wrap up our questions here by dealing with this idea of the relationship between an authentic faith and the pursuit of holiness. Why do you think it's so essential that disciples of Jesus take the day-to-day striving for holiness so seriously?**

- **Why do you think this has been a concept often misapplied in church culture?**

We have a call to pursue holiness in every area of our life. It is God's will for us, His children. As Rick points out, this desire is an essential component of disciples. We're going to dig deeper into Paul's letter to the Thessalonians and see how this specific call looks concerning our sexual morality.

OPENING THE WORD

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Author: Since the early church period, the Apostle Paul has been the acknowledged author of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, though there have been recent (and failed) attempts to challenge this authorship.

Time frame: 2 Thessalonians was probably penned from Corinth in 49–51 A.D., shortly after 1 Thessalonians.

Purpose: The Thessalonians were under the false belief that the “day of the Lord” had arrived. They were greatly confused about the second coming, resurrection, and so on. They were scared and confused. Paul wrote the letter to help calm their fears and straighten them out, doctrinally speaking.

- **Summarize what Paul is saying in verses 1-2. What is he doing here?**

- **Verse 3 is very straightforward. What does Paul say is the will of God?**

- **Let's make sure we're clear on one thing: what is the only means by which we, sinful human beings, can be made holy?**

- **Sexual morality has always been something that man has fought against. What does Paul say in verses 4-5 is the key to overcoming sexual temptation?**

- **Paul ties this self-control to our identity as Christ-followers. Why is this important?**

- **Verse 7 is a great summary verse. It could be used by itself to cover so many different areas. But Paul means it here to speak directly to sexual purity. We tend to think of sexual sin on a scale, don't we? At the top is adultery. At the bottom is lustful thoughts. But God doesn't see sexual sin this way (or any sin). All sexually immoral thoughts and actions are sins in God's eyes. Why does Paul go to great lengths in verse 8 to clarify who we wrong when we sin sexually?**

This isn't new to us. We know as Christ-followers that sexual purity is something we all need to strive for. But through Scripture, God speaks to us over and over again about the seriousness of sexual sin. God fully knows how He wired us to enjoy sexual intimacy. His design was for our sexual gratification to always occur in a monogamous, faithful marriage relationship. Satan has twisted this in such powerful ways that we must make especially sure we're guarded in this area. As we speak about personal holiness, we must focus on this one specific area of our lives. Let's talk about HOW we go about pursuing sexual holiness.

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

- **The key to sexual purity for many of us is good boundaries.**
 - How do most men get tripped up when it comes to their thoughts and actions? For most men, sexual impurity isn't something they necessarily seek out. It's something they stumble into and then give into. Having good boundaries is key. What are some boundaries you have in your life to protect your sexual purity?
- **If you're stuck in a sexual sin habit, such as pornography use, the best way for you to kick that habit is by bringing it out into the light.**
 - Secret sin thrives because it's secret. Bringing sin, especially sexual sin, into the light robs it of much of its power. Who in your life can you confess sexual sin to who will hold you accountable? How badly do you want to be holy? Isn't it time to do something about this problem in your life?

Main Passage: 1 John 3:4-10

Purpose: To understand that all Christ-followers must pursue holiness and flee habitual sin.

Session Snapshot: All Christians will struggle with sin, as no one other than Christ alone has been sinless. However, what does your relationship with sin look like? If you abide in Christ, your attitudes toward sin and righteousness will follow a very clear pattern. If we are going to be men of God who pursue holiness and righteousness, our lives cannot be marked by patterns of habitual and ongoing sinful practices.

DIGGING IN

Jump into the session by watching this week's video.

- **Rick talked about how one of the goals of the Reformation was to remove certain forms of legalism. Why is it important to be wary of legalism?**

- **In what ways does legalism run counter to the message of the Gospel?**

- **On the other hand, what is the opposite of legalism? How can it be harmful if we swing too far in *that* direction?**

- **What did you think of Rick’s illustration of having a wife that you only showed love to on some Sundays when you felt like it? Was any part of that convicting? How so?**

- **Many outside of the church (and some within!) would hear “obedience” as a harsh, negative term. How would you explain to them that there is another way to view it?**

If we have surrendered our lives to the Lordship of Christ, obedience is not optional. Let’s spend a few minutes considering John’s argument about what our obedience or disobedience says about our standing with Christ.

OPENING THE WORD

1 John 3:4-10

Author: The Apostle Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to the Church in Corinth.

Time frame: Paul wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia around 55 or 56 AD, a year or so after writing 1 Corinthians and a year before he wrote his letter to the Romans from Corinth.

Purpose: According to the ESV Study Bible, the main theme of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians was "the relationship between suffering and the power of the Spirit in Paul's apostolic life, ministry, and message."

- **To understand these verses clearly, we must grasp what the word "practice" means in John's context. How would you define the act of "practicing" here?**

- **What does John mean when he says that sin is "lawlessness"?**

- **How does it change your view of sin when we understand it this clearly?**

In these first two verses, John sets us up with a definition of sin so that we understand the seriousness of it. It is no trivial matter; sin is open rebellion against God and His Law. He also quickly reminds us of God's grace—the good news that our sin has been dealt with. But IF we are recipients of this grace, our lives should change. In the next few verses, he's going to make it clear: we cannot continue in rebellion against God. If our posture towards sin does not change, there's a problem.

1 John 3:6-8

- **Why does John say that someone abiding in Christ can't keep sinning, and that if someone does keep sinning, they don't know Christ?**
- **How should believers process teaching like this, hearing that we should not keep on sinning, yet knowing that we are imperfect and still prone to sin?**
- **John puts people into two broad categories: either aligned with the devil and pursuing sin, or aligned with the Lord and pursuing righteousness. Do you think it's this black and white? Why or why not?**

1 John 3:9-10

- What is “God’s seed” that abides in us, and how does it keep us from making a practice of sinning?

- Do you think believers who struggle with sin should begin to question if they have been “born of God”— to question their salvation?

- Why is it so important for believers to flee from sin and pursue righteousness?

The natural man pursues sinful practices, but the man who has been reborn turns from sin and pursues holiness because of God’s transformative work in his life. If that transformation is not taking place in our lives, it is indicative that maybe we have not experienced renewed life in Christ. All who have been born of God should be producing the fruit of holiness as we flee from sin and strive for righteousness.

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

- **One key takeaway is that when we pursue sinful practices, we rebel against God's good and perfect Law.**
 - Sin is not a trivial matter. Even though it can be defined as “missing the mark,” we must acknowledge it as more than just a mere stumbling. It is a defiant rebellion against God and a challenge of His authority. Adam and Eve chose this route when they listened to the serpent instead of God, and they faced serious consequences. We must see sin as weighty and not something to be dismissed lightly.
- **Second, if we continue to dwell in habitual, ongoing sinful practices, this is evidence of our alignment with the prince of this world instead of the King of Kings.**
 - Our relationship with sin ultimately determines whether our hearts are aligned with the Lord or with the devil—the one who wants to kill, steal, and destroy us (John 10:10). If we are developing patterns of ongoing, habitual sin with no desire to repent and pursue righteousness, we must consider the difficult question as to whether we truly know Christ as our Lord and Savior.
- **Third, when we chase after righteousness and bear fruit, this is evidence—both to ourselves and the world—that we are redeemed children of God!**
 - It is a beautiful picture of Christians pursuing holiness and bearing fruit in Christ. We are called to be a city on a hill, shining brightly with the glory of Christ and reflecting that glory to the world (Mt. 5:14-16)! Let us pursue holiness and testify to the world about the gospel of God's grace (Acts 20:24).

Main Passage: 2 Timothy 2:20-26

Purpose: To describe the characteristics of a life filled with the Holy Spirit and how God can use that life to bless others.

Session Snapshot: Holiness is living a life that is set apart for the glory of God. It is the habitual practice of choosing God over choosing sin. Paul describes the characteristics of a heart pursuing holiness and shows us how God uses such a heart for His glory.

DIGGING IN

Jump into the session by watching this week's video.

- **How have you seen in your life a change in appetite for things of the world since you have become a follower of Christ?**

- **Why do we continue in habitual sins even though we know those things are wrong?**

- **How do we get to a point where sin is repulsive to us and our desire to sin changes?**

- **Do you regularly hear the Holy Spirit's conviction and counsel regarding your daily decisions when choosing to sin or not sin? Why or why not? How can we better hear the voice of the Holy Spirit as we pursue holiness?**

- **How can we pursue a holy life but with the wrong motives? What areas of life are you more concerned about how you appear to others rather than honestly pursuing holiness for God's glory?**

Pursuing a holy life that is set apart for the glory of God is the focus of many instructional letters of Paul to other individuals as well as to churches. In Paul's writings to his protégé' and friend Timothy, he gives us specific characteristics of a life that is pursuing holiness.

OPENING THE WORD

2 Timothy 2

Author: Though in the last 200 years or so there have been efforts by some scholars to shed doubt on Paul's authorship of 2 Timothy, their arguments aren't very compelling.

Time frame: Most scholars believe Paul wrote the letter to Timothy, his apprentice in ministry, between Paul's first and second imprisonment in Rome, although some scholars believe that Paul penned 2 Timothy while in his final imprisonment before he was executed.

Purpose: In 2 Timothy, we see Paul passing along his final words to Timothy. 2 Timothy can be thought of as a personal note from an older man awaiting his death to a young, son-like figure. It's personal, tender at times, encouraging, and practical.

2 Timothy 2:20-26

- **What does it mean to be useful to God?**

- **In one of his letters, Paul describes a brother in Christ, Philemon, as once useless but becoming useful (Philemon 1:11). What makes a person useless to God?**

- **When Paul is talking about “vessels,” he compares a Christian to a household serving piece such as a plate, cup, or bowl. What do you think Paul is talking about in verse 20 when he writes about honorable versus dishonorable serving pieces in a person’s home?**
- **Paul gives several attributes of the honorable vessel in this verse; what’s the first one he mentions?**
- **What does it mean to be “clean” for God’s work?**
- **What does Paul indicate we should flee from in verse 22?**
- **What are such passions?**
- **What are we encouraged to pursue in verse 22?**

- **Why are we told to pursue love and peace in addition to righteousness and faith in verse 22?**

- **What is Paul's command to Timothy concerning dealing with foolish controversies and why?**

What characteristics does Paul mention about the useful servant of Jesus in 2 Timothy 2:24 as he concludes this instruction on being a useful vessel?"

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

- **Paul is painting a portrait in this passage of what a useful servant to God looks like. Paul mentions that we must be clean and set apart to be useful to God.**
 - God can use anyone or anything for His purposes, but to be useful for God's work, our hearts must be purely devoted to Him. A divided heart trying to continue in habitual sin while also appearing righteous is not a clean and pure heart. To be set apart means to be holy. That is the call we are issued as useful servants of God. Our plea to God, therefore, should echo David's words in Psalm 51:10: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."
- **The next application point is that a useful follower of Christ flees youthful passions and avoids foolish controversies.**
 - We are called to run away from the sins of sexual immorality, lust, pride, greed, and self-assertion. These habitual sins divide our hearts' devotions and prevent us from being obedient and holy. We are also called to avoid conversations that are pointless and useless and cause strife.
- **Lastly, the heart of a useful servant to God reflects righteousness, faith, love, peace, kindness, patience, and gentleness.**
 - When we flee from habitual sins and, instead, pursue God, we see God reflecting Himself through us. We display righteousness in our lifestyle choices and are faithful to Him. Our hearts are at peace with God and at peace with others, and we reflect His love to others. Our actions are motivated by our love for Him. We reflect God's gentleness even in a hostile world adamantly opposed to Him.