

# SYNOPSIS OF *DISCOVERY, God's Answers to our Deepest Questions*

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The great commission that Jesus left us is, "Go therefore and *make disciples* of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you . . ."

Jesus is, of course, the greatest model of what a disciple should be. Though he was equal to the Father, He became completely dependent and obedient to the Father for our sake. His dependency is so clear in John 5:30 when He states: "**I can do nothing on My own initiative.** As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just because **I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.**" Also in John 14:10 (Phillips) He states: "**The very words I say to you are not my own. It is the Father who lives in me who carries out his work through me.**" Then Paul says that God's good purpose for us is that we become conformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:28-29).

Therefore, two ultimate goals we have for people who go through *Discovery* is that 1) they clearly understand that as they are being conformed to the likeness of Christ they are to be, like Jesus was, **desperately dependent upon God for everything**, and 2) they grow into a personal, intimate, and dependent relationship with God to a depth they possibly have not experienced before.

God gave us in Romans a biblical model of how to accomplish these goals. Paul had never been to Rome but he says in the first chapter that he longed to visit them so they might be established. So he sent them a complete doctrinal statement of what we need to know to become established in our relationship with God. This was probably the same foundational bible study he used when he established other churches. For eleven chapters he gives evidence as a basis for trust by outlining the things we need to know about God and about ourselves before he ever asks us to do anything in Romans 12:1-2.

For this reason *Discovery* covers some of the major themes in the first eleven chapters of Romans that focus on becoming a disciple, with Romans 12:1-2 being the heart or hub. In these two verses Paul defines our responsibility and God's responsibility in our new relationship.

Each chapter of *Discovery* builds upon the previous one, focusing on our **dependency and our need to give up control and trust God.**

**CHAPTER 1 – “WHAT KIND OF A RELATIONSHIP DOES GOD WANT WITH ME?”** We need to evaluate if what we do in our Christian activity is out of duty, guilt, or what others have told us to do. We should determine if our Christian life is more of a career that makes us feel good about ourselves (pride) rather than following God in a personal, intimate relationship.

**CHAPTER 2 – “DO I MATTER TO GOD?”** “The truest thing about us is what God says about us.” Understanding our significance—that He formed us in the womb, thinks about us constantly, and wants to be personally involved in our lives—is the foundation for realizing the depth of His love and that we can trust Him. Since we have no human models of this kind of unconditional love, God has to supernaturally make this real to us if we are to **give up control** and trust Him in illogical, unfair, and tough circumstances in life.

**CHAPTER 3 – “IS GOD REALLY IN CONTROL?”** Understanding God’s sovereignty (His power, wisdom, and freedom, encompassed by His goodness) is necessary to recognize the depth of His love and protection for us. *Only a Person (God) who is in complete control and in need of nothing can love unconditionally.* Knowing that God is sovereign and good gives us security, hope, and trust. Our ability to “present ourselves” or **give up all control**, which He later asks us to do, is based on our knowledge, confidence, and trust that God loves us and is in control of everything (1 Chronicles 29:11).

**CHAPTER 4 – “DOES GOD HAVE A PURPOSE FOR MY LIFE?”** God’s purpose for believers is to conform us to the likeness of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29) God does what He does because of who He is. Since He is love, and love in action serves others, He created us to share His existence with us in a personal, relational way. God did not have to create us because He is totally complete within Himself and in need of nothing. The fact that He has no needs can be an area of struggle if we do not understand His sovereignty. Our old nature causes us to think we can, and should, do things for God to make Him look good or glorify Him. But His unconditional love for us is never dependent on what we do or do not do. He does not even need us in ministry to others, but shares His ministry with us as a vehicle for us to get to know Him as He demonstrates Himself by blessing others through us. Jesus said He did nothing on His own initiative but acted and spoke only as the Father directed Him. Then He instructed us to live in the same way. Only when we **give up control** and become submissive and **dependent** on God, as He was with the Father, does He change us into His likeness and lead us in ministry and all activities of life.

**CHAPTER 5 – “HOW DOES GOD REALLY SEE ME?”** “The truest thing about us is what God says about us, not what we think about ourselves.” Unless we have a correct biblical understanding of our depravity—what our rebellion (sin) did to us—we will never understand or accept our need to **totally depend** on God or understand and appreciate the cost of the cross. If we do not understand that before our redemption we were completely bankrupt and spiritually dead we are prone to see our relationship with God as a partnership, making our own decisions and then asking Him to bless our efforts. We once

were slaves to sin but now we have been set free from the necessity to sin. Only being **desperately dependent** on the Lord, however, will keep our flesh—which is controlled by pride and ego—under control.

**CHAPTER 6 – “WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ABIDE?”** The Vine and branches illustration in John 15:1-5 lets us know the depth of God’s love and commitment to us by His desire to transfer His very likeness into our being. He wants to give us His very nature (the fruit of the Spirit – Galatians 5:22-23) so that we can experience Him in perfect oneness and reflect His character. Realizing our depravity and that we were spiritually a “dead branch” when grafted into Christ reinforces our need to **totally depend** on Him (“Apart from Me you can do nothing” – John 15:5). As we abide in Him and **give up control**, He replaces our deadness with His likeness.

**CHAPTER 7 – “WHAT IS MY PART AND WHAT IS GOD’S PART?”** In Romans 12:1-2 Paul, as God’s messenger, asks us for the first time in the book to do something. He urges us to present ourselves because we are already acceptable as a result of God’s grace at the cross. Presenting ourselves (**giving up control**) is the only way we can demonstrate our worship and honor of Him. Our responsibility is to present ourselves—attitudes, desires, actions, past, future, everything we are (an active verb – we do it). Then it is God’s responsibility to 1) disconform us from our deadness, and 2) transform us into His likeness (passive verbs—He does them). This is the only way we discover His purpose or will for our lives. Transformation is a process and is accomplished as we present ourselves and live in a daily, abiding, **dependent** relationship with the Lord.

**CHAPTER 8 – “HOW SHOULD I RESPOND TO DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES?”**

Understanding that God is interested in the pressure and suffering we face in this sinful world is important. But it is more important to know that God is focused on changing us on the inside (our attitudes and all the self-centered deadness that we brought into the relationship). Our human attitudes are the core of who we are and God wants to transform us, to replace our old attitudes with His attitudes (His mind). This is a chapter that looks again at our need to **give up control** (supplication) so that God can share His likeness (such as love, peace, self-control, etc.) with us.

**CHAPTER 9 – “HOW CAN I KNOW GOD’S WILL FOR MY LIFE?”** Knowing God’s will or leading in our lives starts with asking ourselves if we really trust that He knows what is best and if we will **give Him total control** and follow His leading by presenting ourselves. He has demonstrated His leading of others in the past and promises to lead us as well. God knows what paths are best in accomplishing His transformation purpose. He leads us in His general will for everyone as revealed through His Word, and in His specific, individual will for us through the leading of the Holy Spirit. His personal leading can include circumstances, giving us His mind and desires, and peace.

**CHAPTER 10 – “HOW SHOULD I PRAY?”** God has provided the most intimate part of any relationship by making Himself available every moment of our lives through the privilege of prayer. We have the ability to share with Him joy, appreciation, fears, hurts, questions, anything on our hearts and minds. We are so significant to our Creator that He is willing and wants to be that available and personal with us. He is immense enough in His sovereignty to be available to millions at the same time, yet to us personally as if we were the only one talking to Him. If *apart from Him we can do nothing* of eternal significance, and **we are not to take initiative** on our own in our relationship with Him, then this has to include prayer (John 15:7). Here again we are to **give up all control** and trust God’s prompting about what we should pray for as we abide in Him. (“Pray on every occasion, as the Spirit leads.” – Eph. 6:18 TEV) The Lord’s (disciples’) Prayer is a model of areas He will prompt us to pray about.

**CHAPTER 11 – “HOW DO I KNOW IF MY FAITH IS GROWING?”** How do we measure our maturing progress of becoming more like Jesus? Do we trust God today (**give Him control**) with more areas of our lives and attitudes quicker than we did a month ago or a year ago? Is our faith stronger because we have trusted His sovereignty and presented things that have allowed us to see His demonstration of love, power, grace, and sufficiency? Do we see our attitudes conforming to His likeness? The first thing in the process of growing in faith is when we exercise our responsibility to present something to the Lord. Then when we see God demonstrate Himself to us in the situation, it gives us more faith and confidence to present and trust Him in the next circumstance where we need His mind or attitude. This is all part of the process of God disconforming us from the world system and transforming us into the likeness of Christ.

Every chapter of *Discovery* gives us the evidence and confidence to **give God control** of our entire lives so that He can conform us to His image. All we have to offer is self-centered spiritual deadness and the ability to **give up control and depend on** a loving personal God. What an amazing God who, because He is love, desires to share His nature and existence with us. Praise and honor be to Him!

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