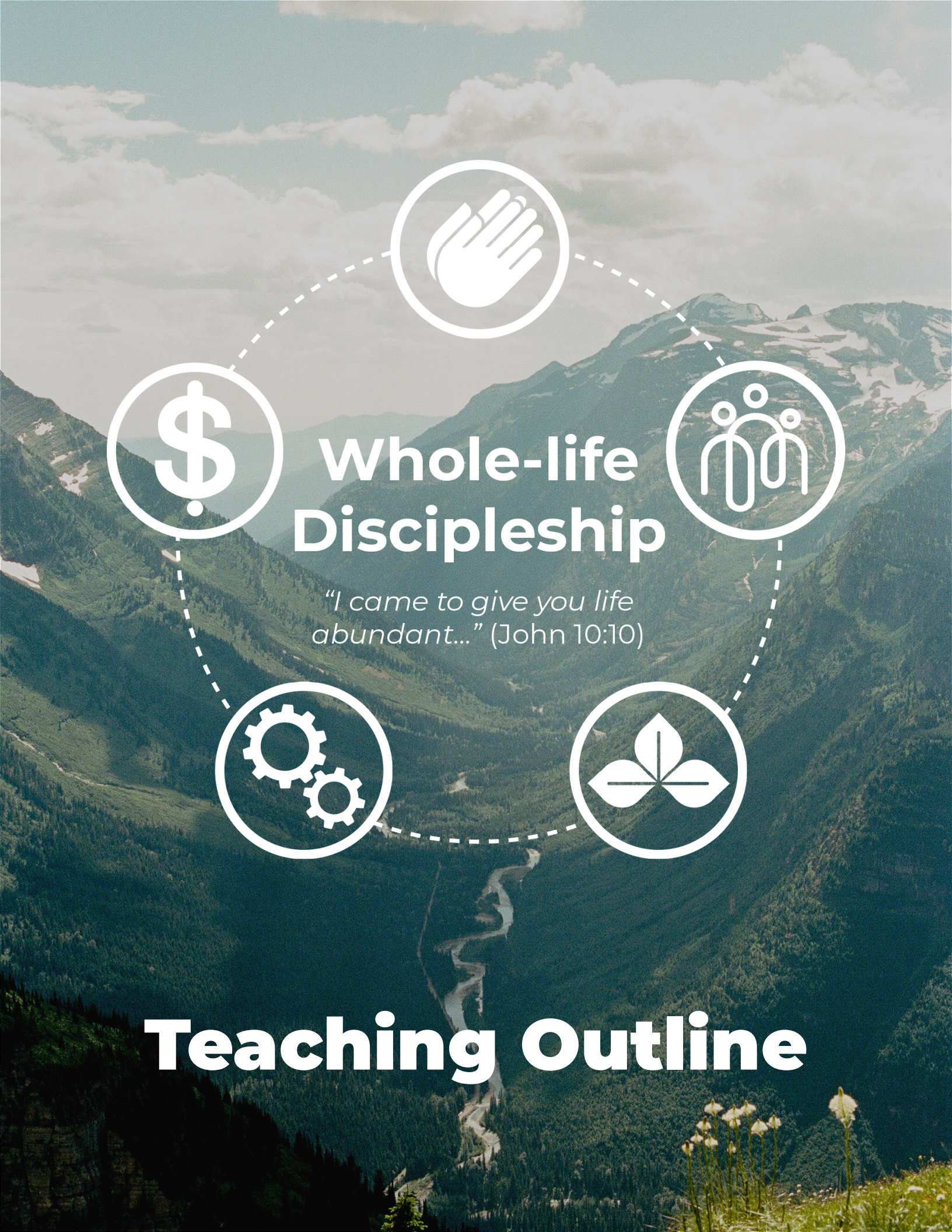

Whole-life Discipleship

"I came to give you life abundant..." (John 10:10)

Teaching Outline

What is "whole life" discipleship?

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came so that they would have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10 NASB).

In "whole-life" discipleship, the focus of John 10:10 broadens from only focusing on faith to including other dimensions of "abundant life" or flourishing such as relationships, wellness, vocation, and finance.

Whole-life discipleship helps:

- Close the GAP on family flourishing.
- Transform spectators into servants.
- Redefine the church's image as people who care.
- Impart a Spirit-empowered faith to next generations.

Missional churches are equipping "saints" and transforming communities through whole-life discipleship (Ephesians 4:11-12, 2 Timothy 2:22).

Missional churches engaged in whole-life discipleship are BREAKING all of the 80/20 BARRIERS!

- Approximately 80% of US churches are plateaued or declining.
- Approximately 80% of US churches are "come and see" focused and have NO community-facing ministries (food bank, MOPS, Celebrate Recovery, Financial Peace University, etc.)
- Approximately 80% of US church members are "spectators" and not "serving." They are consumers, not contributors.
- Approximately 80% of US "next generations" view organized religion as a "formality" or irrelevant/unnecessary.

Care4Pastors: Whole-life Discipleship Prayer Strategy

- Flourishing PASTORS live out Scripture's promised abundance across the five life "journeys" that each of us travels (John 10:10).
- Thriving CHURCHES equip followers of Jesus across these five dimensions of discipleship such that God's Word and ways are reflected in all of life (Romans 12:2).
- Transformed COMMUNITIES are possible as community-facing ministries across these five areas meet seekers at their points of need and training leaders to "impart not only the gospel but their very life" (1 Thessalonians 2:7–8).

Spirit-empowered disciples live His Mission through pouring our life into others, making disciples who in turn make disciples of others.

CLICK HERE to watch a video of Dr. Ferguson explaining the reasons behind becoming a "Spirit-empowered disciple!"

CLICK HERE for a complete listing of 40 outcomes of a spirit-empowered disciple!

Disciple-Making Redefined

"For the equipping of saints for works of ministry/ service" (Ephesians 4:12).

A redefinition of disciple-making needs to be experienced as God's Spirit transforms His saints for the work of ministry. Rather than defining discipleship in terms of **knowledge acquired** or **activities attended**, we suggest describing it as follows:

"Humble servants with expectant faith, who are empowered by gratitude, give priority to ministry to the Lord, ministry of the Word, and ministry of His love and gifts thus becoming ministers of reconciliation."

- Disciples of Jesus are humble servants. *"I am among you as one who serves"* (Luke 22:27).
- *"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart"* (Matthew 11:29–30).
- *"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet"* (John 13:14).
- *"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time"* (1 Peter 5:6).

Questions for Reflection:

1. Are you known as a servant among those who know you best?
2. Would your spouse, children, friends, and those who work alongside you describe you as humble?
3. Is your life characterized by making sacrifices for those who are closest to you?
4. Do you serve your wife or husband, children, and friends?

Reflections:

- The Spirit's ever-present work will reveal our subtle and not-so-subtle ulterior motives. For example, we might be living to gain approval or to avoid failure or rejection.
- These **motivations** must be **exposed**, and **brokenness** must be **experienced**.
- A life based on dutiful compliance and diligent striving must be exposed as a life of self-effort.
- The Spirit's gracious work begins as we recognize that *"God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).
- Mature disciples never get over the wonder of being loved!

5. Are your loved ones the first to benefit from edifying words and daily expressions of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Ephesians 4:29; Galatians 5:22–23)?

How will we sense that the Lord is transforming us into humble servants?

- Prideful self-reliance gives way to healthy inter-dependence and genuine community
- The Spirit's sanctifying work of humility will be seen in the **vulnerability** of our heart and the **approachability** of our life.
- Disciples of Jesus are humble servants with an expectant faith.
  "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6).
- Believers are consistently challenged to focus "not on what is seen, but on what is unseen" (2 Corinthians 4:18).
- "Do not be worried about your life...for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things" (Matthew 6:25, 32).
- Expectant faith in the disciple's heart embraces the glorious truth that "since the Father knows, we do not need to be anxious." Jehovah-Jireh will provide, just as surely as He does for the lilies and birds.

How will we sense that the Lord is at work in this transformation of expectant faith?

"With humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3).

- Our fearful "taking" or demanding of attention and care from God and others will be replaced by secure trust in Him.
- Selfishness will give way to the greater blessing of giving, since *"It is more blessed to give than to receive"* (Acts 20:35).
- First John 4:18 reminds us that God's perfect love casts out all fear. The devoted follower of

Jesus has come to enjoy such a sweet, loving relationship with the Lord that he or she is freed from anxiety because of His care. Fear is removed through the experienced security of His love.

Disciples of Jesus are humble servants with an expectant faith empowered by gratitude.

"The love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Corinthians 5:14 KJV).

It was Christ's love that empowered believers in the early church, motivating them to endure significant hardships with joy and even to embrace death. Profound gratitude to a loving God equipped Paul and the early church for a lifetime of wholehearted devotion and service.

How will we sense that the Lord is at work in this transformation of gratitude?

- God's Spirit cultivates grateful hearts in His people as we experience and embrace our identity in Christ. The apostle John referred to himself as the disciple Jesus loved. He was not boasting or exalting himself above others. Rather, John was in awe of this wondrous truth.
- Believers who accurately perceive themselves as the "disciple Jesus loves" are ready to serve God and others out of humility and deep gratitude. We will know that the Lord has begun to deepen our heart of gratitude as we are able to more fully embrace our identity as the beloved of God (John 13:34).

Imparting a Spirit-empowered Faith to Next Generations

Flourishing in FAITH might involve:

- Listening to and hearing God for direction and discernment (1 Samuel 3:8–9; Luke 10:38–42; Genesis 18:17; 1 John 2:27).
- Entering often into Spirit-led praise and worship (Psalm 2:11; 103:1; Matthew 11:25).
- Disciplined, bold, and believing prayer (Ephesians 6:18; Jeremiah 33:3; 1 John 5:14–15).

Flourishing in WELLNESS might involve:

- Practicing thanksgiving in all things (Psalm 100:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; 2 Corinthians 6:10).
- Rejoicing regularly in my identity as "His Beloved" (Song of Solomon 2:4; Ephesians 1:6; Psalm 127:2).
- Consistent practice of self-denial, fasting, and solitude rest (Matthew 6:17; 16:23; Psalm 46:10).

Flourishing VOCATIONALLY might include:

- Living a Spirit-led life of doing good in all of life—relationships and vocation, community and calling (Acts 10:38; Matthew 5:16; Luke 6:35). See also Romans 15:2.
- Demonstrating His love to an ever-growing network of "others" as He continues to challenge us to love "beyond our comfort" (1 John 2:4; 4:20).
- Championing Jesus as the only hope of eternal life and abundant living (Acts 4:12; John 10:10; 14:6).

Flourishing RELATIONALLY might include:

- Ministering His life and love to our ***nearest ones*** at home and with family as well as faithful engagement in His body, the church. (1 Peter 3:7), See also 1 Peter 3:1 and Psalm 127:3).
- Taking courageous initiative as a peacemaker, reconciling relationships along life's journey (1 Thessalonians 5:13; Ephesians 2:14; 4:31–32; James 5:16).
- Discerning the relational needs of others with a heart to give of His love (Ephesians 4:29; Philippians 4:19). See also Luke 6:30.

Flourishing FINANCIALLY might include:

- Faithfully sharing of time, talent, gifts, and resources in furthering His mission (Colossians 1:25; Luke 12:48; 1 Corinthians 4:1–2).
- Startling people with loving initiatives to give ***first*** (Luke 6:38; 23:24; 23:42; John 19:27).
- Ministering His life and love to the "least of these" (Matthew 25:45; James 1:27).