Series Road Map: Less is More

**Series Overview:** We hear it all the time, “less is more”. We all that one guy who has way more than us already but always seems to get more. But then we find ourselves wanting after everything around us, too. When we don’t have Christ as our very center, we attach ourselves to insane amounts of stuff. We crave things that we don’t need, and that we don’t even enjoy. Jesus calls us to simplicity, because the answer to our cravings is actually quite simple: Jesus.

**Weekly Overview:**

* We as people given free will have the capability to make choices and pursue what we choose. However, that can often times clash with our calling to be followers of Jesus and submit ourselves to what Jesus wants for/from us.

**Grab the Room (Intro):** Facts about choices

**Tension (What’s the Struggle): Why should I give up my life and desires to pursue that of Jesus?**

**Text (+ Supporting Text):** Luke 9:23, Romans 12:1-2, Galatians 2:20, Galatians 5:24

**THP: Less of the Self is More of Jesus**

**Supporting Points (Not Required):**

**Application (Call to Action):**

·  Each day, say a prayer of repentance and ask Jesus to take control of your life and specific desires you have.

* Find an accountability partner that will check in on you regularly and that you can keep an account with of how you have been choosing to surrender your will for Jesus

**INTRO/HOOK:**

\*Tell a quick overview of all of the choices you have made in your day up until this point\*

Woke up and decided whether or not I was going to hit the snooze button

Made the decision to shower – not wash my hair but condition it

Made the decision to brush my teeth and eat \_\_\_\_\_\_ instead of \_\_\_\_\_\_

ETC

What decisions did you make today? Many of you have made very similar choices to what I chose to do throughout my day – hopefully one of those is at least the decision to shower. But each of you have chosen to be here tonight instead of doing whatever else you could be doing. And by now you have probably already chosen whether or not you’re going to lean in and pay attention to this message or if you are going to sit there with your phones out watching the clock so we can ‘get on with it.’ My point is, we make A LOT of decisions ALL of the time – some researchers say up to 35,000 remotely conscious decisions a day. Some more conscious than others because some decisions matter more than others, or they have bigger consequences – good and bad. Like if you’re going to read your Bible, or if you will show up to that party where you know things are going to be happening that you should probably stay away from, or whether or not you are going to look at that website on your phone again. The same one you said you were done with last time. You may have heard the phrase, “There are three things promised in this world – life, death, and taxes.” I would add ‘decision making’ to that list because it is something you just can’t avoid. You can choose to avoid making decisions but even that is a choice! And your choices matter

**PRAY**

We have been in this series called “Less is More” over the last two weeks and are wrapping it up here tonight. In our time together so far, we have talked about how much STUFF we really have and getting rid of those tangible items in our lives in order to truly live a life of essentialism when walking with Jesus. Last week we discussed the desire for us to belong to SOMETHING and we took on the challenge of belonging to God’s family instead of trying to belong to the world even though that means the world will hate us. Tonight, we are focusing a little bit more on ourselves and what WE do and stand for each and every single day. But how do we know the correct way to live? How do we know what we’re instructed to ‘choose?’

Great questions – and in fact that reminds me of being in your shoes as a middle/high schooler. Some of you have probably heard me talk about this before but my favorite time of the school year was syllabus week. We get to meet our teachers, see people we haven’t seen in a while, get excited about having classes with our friends, but most importantly – there was NO WORK. And something each teacher had for us was a guide of what to expect from the class and what our responsibilities would be during the next 10 months – called the syllabus. And I remember one interaction with my Spanish teacher in the middle of the year where I had asked her a bunch of questions, was confused on my homework assignments and had missed some deadlines all while telling her it was her fault because she didn’t tell us every day what to do. And she responded with the simple question of “Did you read the syllabus?” I hadn’t. And in that syllabus was the answer to all of my questions plus the description of the homework assignments and when they were due. This information was all at my fingertips. I often times like to equate the Bible to that. I see it as a syllabus from God about how we are called to live our lives. Don’t you want that for yourself? Don’t you want to get to the end of your life and be able to look back and be content with the choices you made, big and small, because it was pleasing to God? Why don’t we absolutely flock to a place where we can find answers like “How do we know how to choose the correct way to live?” and “What decisions does God instruct us to make?” So, lets open up the ‘syllabus.’

**Scripture**

Luke 9:23-27: “Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose their very self? Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.””

How’s that for making decisions? Jesus tells his disciples that if you CHOOSE to follow him, which I personally highly recommend but we’ll get to that later, then you must ‘deny yourself.’ What does it mean to deny yourself? Well, we are people, men and women created by God for a purpose. Throughout our lives, we obviously have the ability to choose in many different ways and we call that free will. Also keep in mind that we are sinful beings, meaning that sometimes we just ignore God, fall short of the mark, and do what we want instead. So, those choices that we make are often times likely to not exactly be what God would approve of. This is what Jesus is asking. Through our sinful nature, through our imperfections he is asking us to put what WE want and crave to the side in pursuit of what Jesus wants for us. And to pick up our cross. Friends, this is an invitation to stop running from your weaknesses and insecurities and instead live securely in the name of Jesus. Our cross here is the deepest, darkest, and potentially the most shameful part of who we are. It’s the things we hide from EVERYONE – anger, shame, pride, an addiction, your sin struggle. We are called to address those things daily and choose to follow Jesus.

“But \_\_\_\_\_\_, why in the world would we do that? Why would we stop doing something that I like and that feels good to me? That sounds really controlling. NO THANKS!”

**TRUTH** I know this can sound that way. It can sound like we are just pawns in the world expected to fall in line and not enjoy life and never mess up. But let me offer you a perspective. Jesus knows everything. He knows you; He knows me, He knows what each person in this room struggles with and loves you to a level no one can fathom. I mean, He endured a sinner’s death that he didn’t deserve for you and me. He cares about what happens to you – to say the least. And He wants what is best for you. He isn’t asking each of us to follow Him so that He can be the guy with the most followers, or to win the popularity contest. He is inviting you into a life of a disciple so that you may experience that love for an eternity spent with Him. He knows the dangers that await down the river if you choose to get in this hypothetical boat now. He knows that your decision to have sex with that guy or girl that you think is hot could very well turn into shame within a conversation later in life with the person you are going to marry. He knows that just one sip now of that drink at the party you shouldn’t be at can grow into a crippling addiction that could destroy your family from the inside out. He knows the dangers of decisions we make so often as a sinful person and is telling His people, through His syllabus to put those desires aside, trust in Him and be a light onto others. Deny yourselves and pick up your cross DAILY because **LESS OF THE SELF IS MORE OF JESUS. REPEAT.**

The less we trust in those selfish desires and wants, the more we can show Jesus to the world through our actions and lifestyle. Through our choices that we make on a daily basis. The next part of that passage points out that we are being asked to not only follow Jesus and surrender these specific desires but to surrender our entire lives. He is promising that the life you THINK you want to live is not worth it compared to what He is offering. If you want to truly experience life and life to the FULL – you must be willing to lose your idealistic life here and now. Whatever you think you want from life, surrender that to Jesus and align yourself and TRULY allow Him to take control. **LESS OF THE SELF IS MORE OF JESUS.**

Romans 12:1-2 says: Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

You and I are being called to make a choice. To not allow ourselves to fall victim to what others in the world fall victim to. To understand that we need to not, that we CANNOT do this life lone. That more than the stuff we can accumulate, more than the desire to belong, and more than that one thing that just feels so good and give us what we think we need, we need Jesus. This is the truth. Not a truth. Not an individual’s truth or just my truth. It is THE truth. **LESS OF THE SELF IS MORE OF JESUS.**

\*Personal story of when you experienced this transformation of the mind after full surrender\*

I told you earlier that I “highly recommend” accepting the invitation to follow Jesus. And I don’t just say that because I get paid to stand up here and convince you. I don’t just tell you that because I have to because I’m up here on stage. I tell you this because I have experienced that transformation from the renewing of my mind after choosing Jesus over myself. Nothing about me physically changed, but I had a whole new mindset. I had been in a life of addiction, pride, and lust. I thought that I NEEDED things and so I would go after them myself. What Jesus did was he took that need, exposed it to me, and has taken away the burden and the pressure of providing for myself everything I need. He has allowed me to walk freely in my brokenness and shortcomings by trusting in His name and His name alone. I don’t really even trust myself at this point which might sound bad but the reality is that in EVERY choice I make, my goal is to have Jesus at the center. So, I asked people to help me with this. It’s funny when Jesus shows you stuff and then immediately you have to act directly against that to get help. Pride has always been a big struggle of mine and the FIRST thing I felt that Jesus asked me to do was to set that aside specifically and ask for help. I needed accountability. And now I have multiple men in my life who are able and willing to ask me how I’m doing with the daily decision to follow Christ over my own desires.

I just want to say to you that a transformation like that is available to you all as well. It isn’t a promise that you won’t ever struggle with a specific thing and it’s definitely not a ticket to living a perfect life. You can ask my friends, my family and my girlfriend and they would tell you that I am DEFINITELY not perfect. But that’s okay. This transformation also isn’t just going to happen overnight. What you have to understand is that there has to be a desire within yourself, that only you can create, to deny yourself and take up your cross daily. No one else can decide that for you. Choice number 35,001 of the day: what are you going to do?

Galatians 5:24 says, “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

Last week we closed by offering those of you who were ready to join into God’s family. So for those of you that did last week and for those of you who had already before that, this is for you. It is exactly what we have been talking about all night – letting your passion and desire for Jesus outweigh your selfish passions and desires. You’ll be surprised at how much being Jesus centered will benefit you if this is the road you take. You will experience true rest found in Him through the practice of sabbath. A gift to you from Jesus. You will experience a transformed way of thinking and approaching decisions and interactions from a place of love and mercy that will be evident to those around you and will set you apart from the world. A gift to you from Jesus. You will experience eternal life living with the one who set you free. Praising and worshipping for His glory but for our benefit. A gift – to you – from Jesus.

**APPLICATION:**

So how do we get this done? I want to give you two things to put into practice and your daily rhythms that will move us towards a life of lessening ourselves to experience more of Jesus.

First, I’m going to invite you into the practice of daily repentance. If you aren’t aware of what it means to repent – it is the verbal confession in prayer to God of a shortcoming from that day. And that confession follows a genuine desire to turn from that sin struggle and desire that resulted in that shortcoming and fix your gaze onto Jesus and Him alone. This isn’t just saying sorry because you have to, it is a daily recognition and admittance to wanting to change and be sanctified in the name of Jesus.

Second, I am going to ask each of you to find a Christian mentor and an accountability partner. Both of those things can come in the form of one person. There needs to be someone with more life experience than you who is willing to meet with you and talk through this process and faith journey. Maybe you are thinking of someone in particular or maybe you already have that person – that’s great. It should be someone outside of your family. And all of these relationships between mentor and mentee are going to be different because we all need different things from that relationship. This is a great way to bring someone else in on this process of denying yourself. We need someone in our lives to help us talk through the hard choices we make and someone who will continue to point us to Jesus in every situation. Get together with that person regularly until the end of the school year and see what fruit comes from that. Give that person an insight into your brokenness and give an account to them of times you choose Jesus versus times you choose yourself. Don’t do this life alone.

**INSPIRATION**

The second half of that passage from Luke talks about not being ashamed of the name of Jesus. Friends, we have the knowledge of the best news ever – there is NO need to be ashamed of that. I mentioned last week that there should grow in us, a desire to show Jesus to others in multiple ways. There should be a want to go out and serve and reach the lost because of what we have been given through each of those. Go and submit your desires to God even though people will call you crazy and stupid. Go and show others how Jesus has transformed you and your way of thinking through the renewal of your mind. Go because **LESS OF THE SELF IS MORE OF JESUS.**

**PRAY**