

# Introduction

One day, as Jesus was speaking to a crowd, a woman cried out: “Blessed is the womb that bore You, and blessed are the breasts that nursed You!” Jesus replied by saying:

Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it. (Luke 11:27-28)

When I first read these verses, I thought: “Now that seems like a random thing for someone to say right in the middle of Jesus’ teaching.” However, Jesus didn’t see it that way. He knew this woman was genuinely moved by His words, and this prompted Him to express how *anyone* can be blessed. Without question, Jesus’ mother was incredibly blessed to give birth to the Messiah and to nurture Him. However, the reason Mary was so blessed is because she herself heard and obeyed God’s word (Luke 1:38, 45), and this is the theme for this entire discipleship curriculum:

**God holds out the most incredible promise of blessing for all who hear and obey His word.**

The connection between discipleship and God’s blessing is not hard to see. A disciple is a “learner” or “follower.” Jesus said in Matt. 10:27: “My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me.” To follow Him, we must hear and obey what He speaks, and this is what God promises to bless.

As I write these words, my oldest grandchild has reached the venerable age of two and a half (yes, halves matter at this age...). I’ve noticed how often his mother (my daughter) looks directly into his eyes and says: “I want you to listen and obey.” I asked her one day: “Did you realize those words are the theme of the books I’m working on?” She had not made the connection, but it’s a powerful one. If only my grandson could see as she sees, he would understand that everything

she speaks to him is only for his benefit. And so it is with God's words. Everything He speaks to us is only to bless us.

This leads me to share the passion behind this series of books. It begins with **the blessing we can all know**. The thought of hearing and obeying God's word moves many of us to ask: "What will He require? Will it be too hard for me?"

One of the things I have been most surprised by in my quest to hear and obey is how much simpler my life has become. Of course, this is because of my tendency to do so many things God never intended for me. In following Him though, I have found myself doing *less* and experiencing far greater peace.

This is not to say God asks no challenging things of me. However, as I look back on the times I have obeyed, the cost can't compare with what I've gained. And every time I have not obeyed, what I have "gained" can't compare with what I've lost.

Above all, the greatest benefit I have experienced is the overwhelming sense of His favor in the blessings He gives. As we will see, this favor is the essence of every blessing He gives, and when we have been touched by it, we can't be satisfied with anything less.

There is another passion behind these books. It's **the blessing we can share with others**. I'm thinking now about a man I have great respect for. One evening he shared with me the struggle he was experiencing in the new season of his life. He had just retired, and he couldn't find a way to make good use of his time. This surprised me because I knew God had used him in many ways. One of my first thoughts was: "You can make disciples!" What greater thing could he do with his experience and the time available to him?

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus said:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

This mission may seem overwhelming, but just one thing is necessary. We must hear and obey what He speaks. Again, this is what a disciple does, but it's also what God blesses, and when we experience the blessing that comes from it, making disciples is not just something we can do; it's something we can't help but do.

This is what was most in my heart when my friend told me how much he was struggling. The blessing he would find as he learned to hear and obey would be so great he wouldn't be able to keep it to himself. He would have to teach others how to hear and obey, and this is how he would make disciples.

I don't know of anything our world needs more than this. Have you ever asked yourself: "Is there any way things could get crazier?" Or have you thought: "What could I ever do to make a difference in our world?" I have these thoughts often, and I'm always drawn to the same conclusion. The only thing that will make a lasting difference in our world is the mission Jesus gave us.

We must make disciples.

I have a picture in my mind of the time the apostle Paul first set foot in the city of Corinth. It was during his second missionary journey, around the year 51 AD. In that day, this city was known for its blatant immorality. If you were to consult a dictionary, whether in hand or online, you would find the word "corinthianize," which means "to live a promiscuous life." What then was Paul's reaction when he first entered this city? Did he say: "Look at what this world is coming to!" I don't think so. I think he said: "Look at who's come to the world!"

This is our message, and it's the spirit with which we must share it because the message and its power are still the same.

And there is still another passion behind these books. It's **the blessing we can bring to God**. This is the greatest blessing we can ever know, so how can we do this? It begins with *receiving* His blessing. This is what moves us to bless others, and this is what brings such great blessing to Him. We experience all of this when we engage in the mission He gave us.

Are you looking for a mission? If so, this is it. There is no greater mission because this mission comes from Him.

Perhaps you have felt for some time that you need to engage in Jesus' commission to make disciples, and you may be wondering if this curriculum can help you do this. If so, I would encourage you to think in the opposite direction first: "Is this a tool someone could use to disciple me?" I say this because we all need others to pour into us before we pour into others—and *as* we pour into others.

Is there someone who has made a significant difference in your life spiritually? It may be a coach or a teacher. It might be a friend or a parent. Would you be willing to seek out this person's support, prayers, and counsel as you endeavor to grow as a disciple? If you can't think of anyone who fits this category, would you ask God to guide you to someone who can fill this need?

Jesus called *disciples* to make disciples. Therefore, any discipleship curriculum is only a *tool* for disciples to use. And Jesus called His disciples to make disciples *of Him*. Therefore, the one you seek needs to be someone who can help you know and follow *Him*.

There are discussion questions at the end of each chapter. In the appendix you will find the chapter titles for all the books in this series. And our website ([www.livingintheblessing.com](http://www.livingintheblessing.com)) has resources for

small groups, teaching videos to accompany each chapter, and testimonies from people who are experiencing the blessing that comes from hearing and obeying.

All Scripture citations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Berean Standard Bible. This translation is produced by Bible Hub, which you can find at [www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com). This site includes multiple translations of the Bible, as well as an easy way to understand the words of Scripture in their original languages. The name of this translation is based on the words of Acts 17:11. During Paul's second missionary journey he came to a town called Berea. The people of this town were "noble-minded" because they carefully evaluated Paul's teachings to see if they were consistent with the Scriptures. This is my strong encouragement to you as well. I hope you will evaluate everything you read in these books in the light of the Scriptures. As you do this, I pray you will grow to know, not just the words God has spoken, but the God who has spoken them.

This curriculum is born out of the deep conviction that the eternal God is a God who speaks, and He has fashioned us with the ability to hear what He says. When we hear and obey, we experience unspeakable blessing, which moves us to bless others, and in doing so to bless Him. To the extent these books aid you in any way to this end, I will consider myself most greatly blessed.

Chet Taylor  
Ephesians 3:20-21