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FOREWORD BY MATT CHANDLER

GOOSPEL

CENTERED

Discipleship

Jonathan K. Dodson

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SAMPLE
CHAPTER

FOREWORD BY MATT CHANDLER

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Discipleship

Jonathan K. Dodson

 **CROSSWAY**
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Gospel-Centered Discipleship

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FOREWORD

As a pastor, I constantly pray and engage the people of the Village Church to keep what is “of first importance” at the center of their thinking, in both their justification and their sanctification. Over the years, I have become painfully aware that people tend to drift away from the gospel soon after their conversion and begin to try their hand at sanctification. In other words, they operate as if the gospel saves them but doesn’t play a role in sanctifying them. In the end, people become exhausted and miss out on the joy of knowing and walking with the Spirit of God. They miss out on intimacy with Jesus.

This is why I think Paul keeps preaching the gospel to people who already knew it. He does it in Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. Over and over, he preaches the gospel to people who know the gospel. Why does he do that? He tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:1–2: “Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received”—*past tense*—“in which you stand”—*perfect tense*—which tells us that the Corinthian disciples stood in the gospel in the past and continued to stand in the gospel. We see that the gospel was received, and now it is holding them up. So the gospel not only saves me, but it also sustains me. Paul continues: “and by which you are being saved”—*present tense*. The gospel is good news for our past, it continues to be good news for our present, and will remain that way for all eternity.

The book you are holding is of significant help in keeping the gospel of first importance. Jonathan is going to clearly and biblically unpack how the gospel plays the lead in not only how we are saved, but also how we are sanctified. I have used this

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material in small group discipleship for over a year and am grateful that it is now being published. I have witnessed a great deal of fruit in my own life as well as in the lives of those I walk closely with. The chapter on the Holy Spirit was especially powerful for me, and I have found myself going back and reading it over and over again.

As a pastor and a man who desires to lead other men into maturity, I wish there were more resources like *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*. Dodson's Spirit-led, gospel-centered, organically relational, and authentic book is such a rare jewel. I am grateful for Jonathan. He is a good friend and an even better ally in the gospel. God has used him to teach me much, and I pray the Spirit would use this book in your hands to challenge and change your heart and the way you view and *do* discipleship.

Matt Chandler
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INTRODUCTION

This book is the result of my struggle as a disciple of Jesus. Over the past three decades, I have failed in countless ways to obey and honor Jesus. I have wandered the wasteland of religion in an attempt to earn the unearnable favor of God. I have chased the pleasures of the world, in an attempt to satisfy my infinite longings with finite things. Neither the legalistic rules of religion nor license from rules in worldly living have satisfied. These twists and turns on the path of discipleship have not honored Christ. Yet, despite my failures, year after year the desire to honor and obey Christ has not withered. In fact, it has grown amid failure.

Along the way, I've come to understand that following Jesus *alone* is not really what it means to be a disciple. Both the church and the parachurch taught me that being a disciple means *making* disciples. I was told that this meant two primary things. First, I should be active in “sharing my faith.” Second, I should find Christians who are younger in the faith to demonstrate how to be older in the faith. It took me quite a while to realize that this practice of making disciples was incomplete. Discipleship is not a codeword for evangelism, nor is it a hierarchical system for spiritual growth, a way for professional Christians to pass on their best practices to novice Christians. *Making disciples requires not only “sharing our faith,” but also sharing our lives—failures and successes, disobedience and obedience.*

Professional vs. Novice Discipleship

Real discipleship is messy, imperfect, and honest. I wanted clean, “perfect,” and limited honesty. I preferred to disclose

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only my successes, to pass on my accumulated wisdom and knowledge while hiding my foolishness and ignorance. It's not that I wasn't making disciples; people gobbled up my platitudes and piety. The problem was the *kind* of disciples I was making, disciples who could share their faith but not their failures.

Why did I embrace this kind of discipleship? Who was to blame—the church or the parachurch? Neither. It was my fault. Although I didn't understand it at the time, my motivation for obeying Jesus had shifted from grace to works. It progressed from attempting to earn God's favor, to gaining the favor of my disciples. "Discipleship" had become a way to leverage my identity and worth in relationships with others. I was comfortable on the pedestal dispensing wisdom and truth. The more disciples I made, the better I felt about myself. My motivation for discipleship was mixture of genuine love for God and lust for praise. I sincerely loved God and wanted others to fall more deeply in love with him, but my motives weren't always pure. I quickly became a disciple who lacked authenticity and community.

Don't get me wrong, there were good intentions and good fruit from these relationships, but in a sense, I was still following Jesus *alone*. The professional/novice relationship created a comfortable distance from admitting my failures in genuine community. I stood at the top of the stairs of discipleship, peering down at those who sat at my feet instead of sitting in the living room with my fellow disciples, where I belonged. I put the best foot forward and hid the ugly one. As a result, *disciple* became more of a verb than a noun, less of an identity and more of an activity. The center of discipleship subtly shifted from relationships centered on Christ to an activity centered on what I knew.

The Gospel Is for Disciples, Not Just “Sinners”

Fortunately, the gospel is big enough to handle my failures, and Jesus is forgiving enough for my distortions of what it means to follow him. In fact, the gospel of grace is so big and strong that it has reshaped my understanding of discipleship. As I continued to “disciple” and read the Bible, I was struck by the fact that the disciples of Jesus were always attached to other disciples. They lived in authentic community. They confessed their sins and struggles alongside their successes—questioning their Savior and casting out demons. They continually came back to Jesus, as their Master and eventually as their Redeemer. As the disciples grew in maturity, they did not grow beyond the need for their Redeemer. They returned to him for forgiveness. As they began to multiply, the communities that they formed did not graduate from the gospel that forgave and saved them. Instead, churches formed around their common need for Jesus. The gospel of Jesus became the unifying center of the church. As a result, the communities that formed preached Jesus, not only to those outside the church but also to one another within the church.¹ I began to realize that Jesus is not merely the start and standard for salvation, but that he is the beginning, middle, and end of my salvation. He is my salvation, not just when I was six, but every second of every day. In the gospel, Jesus gives me himself, his redemptive benefits, and the church to share those benefits with. As it turns out, the gospel is for disciples, not just for “sinners”; it saves and transforms people in relationship, not mere individuals who go it alone.

It slowly became apparent to me that the gospel of Christ was where I was meant to find my identity, not in impressing God or others with my discipling skill. Refusing to share my

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life with others, especially my failures, was a refusal to allow the gospel of Christ to accomplish its full breadth of redemption in me. Very simply, God was leading me into a kind of discipleship with the gospel at the center, a constant, gracious repetition of repentance and faith in Jesus, who is sufficient for my failures and strong for my successes. The wonderful news of the gospel is that Jesus frees us from trying to impress God or others because he has impressed God on our behalf. We can tell people our sins because our identity doesn't hang on what they think of us. We can be imperfect Christians because we cling to a perfect Christ. In this kind of discipleship, Jesus is at the center with the church huddled around him. We give and receive the gospel of Jesus to one another for our forgiveness and formation. In sum, discipleship is both gospel-centered and community-shaped.

Gospel-centered discipleship is not about how we perform but who we are—*imperfect people, clinging to a perfect Christ, being perfected by the Spirit*. As a result, I no longer stand at the top of the stairs but sit in the living room, where I can share my faith and my unfaith, my obedience and disobedience, success and failure. As we give and receive the gospel, we don't linger in imperfection, unbelief, disobedience, and failure. The Bible repeatedly tells us to fight. We have to fight to believe this gospel. Otherwise, we will slide back into individualistic, indifferent, or professionalized discipleship. This fight is a fight of faith. It is a struggle to believe what the gospel truly promises over what sin deceitfully promises. We need to remind one another that Jesus has not called us to performance or indifference but to faith in him. We need relationships that are so shaped by the gospel that we will exhort and encourage one another to trust Jesus every single day. We need gospel-centered discipleship.

Gospel-Centered Discipleship (and How the Book Unfolds)

Knowingly or unknowingly, everyone puts something in the center of discipleship. In fact, everyone has a habit of putting rules in the middle of their relationships. Some like to keep the rules while others prefer to break them. I want us to replace the center (not necessarily the “rules”) with grace. This grace originates with the Father, flows through the Son, and settles on us in the Spirit. We can’t get to it without going right through Jesus, which is why discipleship is Jesus- or gospel-centered. Discipleship is about trusting Jesus, believing his gospel. While this may sound simple enough, the problem is that we all struggle to understand what trusting Jesus or believing the gospel really looks like. In addition, the notion that we should fight for this belief is rare. I have tried to show how we can believe the gospel and why it is every bit worth fighting for. Why and how we believe the gospel is the burden of this book.

Here is how the book unfolds. Part 1 forms the skeleton of a disciple by providing a definition for discipleship. Chapter 1 situates gospel-centered discipleship within the broader framework of disciple making, paying particular attention to the distinction between “evangelism and discipleship.” Is this a helpful or harmful distinction? How does gospel-centered discipleship address it? Chapter 2 builds on the definition of discipleship by identifying its clear goal—the image of Jesus. We all care about image, about the way people see us. Often this image falls short of Jesus, yet, we are willing to fight for it. How can we fight for the noble, beautiful image of Christ to be revealed in us?

Part 2 addresses the heart of a disciple. Chapter 3 explores where we go wrong in our fighting by focusing on misguided motivations in discipleship. In turn, chapter 4 calls us away from

these extremes into gospel-centered motivations for following Jesus. With the gospel at the center of discipleship, we can live as Jesus intended—with faith in Jesus to produce the image of Jesus. Chapter 5 explains where these motivations come from—the power and presence of Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, the Spirit has been widely neglected by many Christians. Without the Spirit we cannot believe the gospel.

Part 3 tackles the practical aspect of discipleship by showing how we can apply the gospel in community and on mission. With proper motivations in place, chapter 6 turns to the communal nature of discipleship. If we aren't careful we'll start fighting on our own. Failure to grasp the community focus of the gospel can cut us off from the grace God gives through the church. This reminds us that discipleship is a community project because the gospel redeems people. Jesus created and redeemed us as people in relationship not individuals in isolation. Instead of fighting alone, we can fight with the church. Chapter 7 offers a practical way to apply the gospel in everyday life. It is a call for fight clubs—small, simple, reproducible groups of people who meet together regularly to help one another beat up sin and believe the gospel. Fight clubs have been crucial in my life and in my church. I hope and pray that you'll find them helpful, too, that you'll form a fight club and start fighting with the church for faith in the gospel. Finally, chapter 8 explains how to nurture and multiply truly gospel-centered disciples in your church or ministry.

On one hand, this book was very easy to write. As if guided by a “muse” to bring my thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and experiences together in written form, I often watched words flow freely onto the screen. Periodically, I was provoked to heart-enthralled worship as I struck geysers of insight, repentance, and joy.

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On the other hand, this book was, at times, difficult to write. For one, I had to taste the bitterness of my own sin as I reflected on my failures. In addition, I faced the challenge of writing something that is neither purely practical nor theological, but both. I would like to write a biblical theology of discipleship; however, several helpful ones have already been written.² *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* by Michael J. Wilkins and *The Gospel Commission: Recovering God's Strategy for Making Disciples* by Michael Horton both address this topic. Therefore, in this book I have labored to integrate theology with everyday practice and put it into accessible form. For that reason, I have included theological sources in endnotes, in the hope that many will read them. Finally, I pray that you will read this book in conversation with your heavenly Father, pausing to reflect, repent, and rejoice wherever the Holy Spirit prompts you. As you read, may God not only prompt but also cause you to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18)!

PART ONE

Defining Discipleship

2

THE GOAL OF DISCIPLESHIP: FIGHTING FOR IMAGE

Everyone fights for goals. Moms fight for their kids to feel loved. Athletes train hard to break records and win titles. Salespeople work long hours to make the sale. Goals motivate. Similarly, if a disciple's goal is worthwhile, we will fight to reach it. This chapter will identify the goal of discipleship and how to obtain it. As the goal of discipleship comes into focus, it will be important to know what kind of fighting to employ. The word "fight" calls to mind a variety of images.

Fighting cuts across both genders. In general, men like a fight. They tend to think of physical combat, perhaps a high school fight, ultimate fighting, or movies like *Rocky*. More than ever, fighting imagery collects around digital media.

According to a recent statistic, the online gaming industry exceeded movie rentals in 2009. Virtual fighting is among game favorites. The overnight success of games like the World of Warcraft and Grand Theft Auto demonstrate that our desire for a fight is far from gone. In a game called *DeadSpace*, the goal is not merely killing but dismemberment. Consider www.666games.net, a website entirely devoted to violent games like *Whack Your Boss*, the *Torture Game 2*, and *Orchestrated Death*. The 666 Games tagline reads: "Welcome to 666 *Games*,

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we serve you the most violent, brutal, sadistic and bloody flash games on the Internet. *Always keep in mind it's just digital violence*" (emphasis not added). Is this the kind of combat men have been created for? Killing our digital bosses, torturing virtual people, and orchestrating death? Is our fighting pointed in the right direction? Josh Jackson, editor of *Paste* magazine, cautions our unthinking participation in violent media:

Violence in the media is a terrible thing. Except of course, for those great battle scenes in The Lord of the Rings. . . . I am really repulsed by the idea of torture-porn flicks like Saw and Hostel, and don't understand how anyone could enjoy watching them. And I'm bothered by games like Grand Theft Auto that put you in the shoes of a gangster. Yet I gleefully watch Samuel L. Jackson burst onto the scene like the vengeful hand of God and lay waste to pathetic junkies in Pulp Fiction. . . . From the Bible to the work of Cormac McCarthy, the best stories are filled with conflict, and often that takes the form of violent antagonists and heroes who fight for justice.¹

What sets biblical fighting apart from digital fighting? One distinctive is that biblical fighting calls us to fight for a noble cause—justice, for instance. Alternatively, digital fighting calls us to fight for entertainment. At best, virtual fighting procures a fictional justice. At worst, it functions as a kind of voyeurism, a medium through which men escape the responsibilities of real manhood for the rush of irresponsible entertainment. Men who have nothing to fight for in real life live out their fighting desires through the video screen. This voyeurism isn't remotely manly, but it does reveal the innate, sometimes suppressed desire to fight for something worthwhile. Deep down, men long for a noble fight.

Women also fight. They generally fight to be unique, recognized, or beautiful. At best, this kind of fighting reveals a longing

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to be noticed and loved. At worst, this fighting is a competition between women in fashion, beauty, and influence. Competitive beauty makes self the center of attention. Being noticed isn't inherently bad,² but when the desire to be noticed, appreciated, and adored is so strong that it causes you to compete against other women, it distorts femininity. It is difficult to be content with our appearance because we receive a thousand messages a day that tell us to improve our beauty. This reminds me of the Oakley sunglasses advertisement that shows supermodel, Kareena Dawn, running with a pair of \$130 shades on. The billboard reads: "Perform beautifully." The sign says it all. True beauty is a competition. You are up against supermodels and airbrushed women. So take all the help you can get, even if it includes running with \$130 shades when you can only afford \$10. The principle driving this kind of beauty is a principle of *performance*. Perform well against one another and you will gain the title of beautiful; you will get the attention of others. Perform poorly, and you fail to be beautiful and fail to be noticed. This is a great lie from the pit of marketing hell. True beauty is not a competition based on performance. In fact, competition actually distorts beauty around a false notion of feminine identity. What women need to fight for is true beauty.

So you see, everyone fights for something. The desire to fight isn't masculine or feminine; it is human. Deep down we all want to be noticed, for our lives to count for something. We want to be beautiful or noble. The problem is that we direct our fighting desires toward the wrong things. We work hard at being noticed or entertained. We fall short of beauty and nobility. What would happen if, instead of spending hours in front of the video screen or mirror, we spent hours in front of the gospel? What if we fought for a more noble cause, a more beautiful image?

Fighting for Image

As a wayward college student, I needed a cause more noble than piety, and a beauty more breathtaking than any woman could offer. I needed to fight for the nobility of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, and to be ravished with the image of his glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6). Although I was unaware of it, I was fighting for an image that was far from noble and breathtaking.

We are all concerned about our images. Hipsters work hard to look like they don't care about image. Professionals work equally hard to look like they do care about image. We all project our values through the way we present ourselves. In writing this book, I am tempted to make writing decisions that reflect an intellectual image, instead of writing in a way that will best serve you. We all face the temptation to project false images of ourselves because we find the real image inadequate. This is easily done with social media. Our online image is often different from our offline image. With our Facebook statuses, we can project how we want others to see us, not who we truly are. Blog posts can be shrouded in airs of intellectualism, edginess, or humility. If we are honest, our real image is nowhere near as attractive as we want it to be. We want to be more beautiful, more successful, more creative, more virtuous, more popular, and more intelligent than we actually are. We all have an image problem. The problem, however, is not that we lack beauty, success, creativity, virtue, popularity, or intelligence. The problem is that we believe the lie that says that obtaining those images will actually make us happy. Believing the lie, we fight rigorously to obtain (or retain) our images of choice.

We discipline ourselves to lose weight, climb the vocational ladder, learn new techniques, make moral decisions, or strive to

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be in the know, all to gain the images we so desperately want. We fight and scrape to obtain our desired perception. Why? Because we believe that being perceived a certain way will make us truly happy. We fight with whatever it takes—money, time, sacrifice, overworking, and the occasional white lie. In doing so, we believe a lie. We express faith in what is false. We rely on the unreliable. Only after we realize our tendency to build our identity on things that are untrue and unreliable, can we begin to sink our identity into what is truly reliable. Nobility and beauty travel along the lines of truth. If none of the images above truly satisfy, what kind of image should we be striving for? What offers true beauty and a truly noble cause?

The Image of God

Christianity is about image. It affirms that we were created in God's image (Gen. 1:26–28), disfigured in our fall with Adam (Rom. 5:12–21), and are in desperate need of renewal. This image constitutes our essential dignity as human beings. It is an imprint of the Creator's divine nature, which includes our ability to rule and relate. Apart from the redeeming work of God to restore our image, we rule and relate in very distorted ways. We rule over instead of for one another, and we relate out of a distorted sense of what will truly make us happy. As a result, we treat God and others with contempt and disregard. The good news is that God wants to restore our image in Christ (2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10). He promises a restored image in Jesus, who is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15). He holds up the image of Jesus as most glorious, and through the gospel, opens our eyes to his never-ending beauty (2 Cor. 4:6). Only by looking to Jesus can our disfigured image be restored and our contemptuous disregard forgiven. When we look away from ourselves and

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into the face of Christ, we behold “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). This gospel knowledge corrects our vision so that we not only behold but also become the image of the glory of God in Christ. True nobility and beauty converge in the image of Jesus.

It is a fundamental truth that we become what we behold.³ Children become like their parents; interns become like their mentors. If we behold the beauty of Christ, we become beautiful like Christ. While it is true that our first glance into the face of Christ restores our image (Rom. 5:1–3; 8:29–30), it is also true that we drift back into fashioning our own distorted image. We slip into our own distorted forms of masculinity and femininity. The gospel calls back to look at Jesus over and over again. A disciple of Jesus is a person who so looks at Jesus that he or she actually begins to reflect his beauty in everyday life. The gospel gives us the eyes to see Jesus as well as the power to look like him. It changes us into the image of his glory: “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.” (2 Cor. 3:18). This transformative vision comes from the presence and power of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17–18), who we will discuss at length in chapter 5. For now, suffice it to say that gospel-centered disciples rely on the Spirit, who focuses our hearts’ attention on Jesus, where beholding results in becoming like him. This is a goal worth fighting for.

The gospel also offers the hope of final transformation. One day our dusty image of Adam will be transformed entirely into the heavenly image of Christ: “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven” (1 Cor. 15:49). This transformation, however, does not come without a struggle. Any image takes hard work, and in the

words of J. P. Moreland, “Grace is opposed to earning not to effort.”⁴ If we are to enjoy the breathtaking beauty of Jesus, we must put effort into the noble fight of faith.

The Fight of Faith

We have observed that everyone fights for an image, but not all images are equal. The image of Christ is far superior to anything else in its nobility and beauty. Therefore, it is worth the fight. Alternative images will eventually fail us, but the image of the glory of God shining out of Jesus’s face will not. Goodness, thinking about this makes me want to so fight for faith in the gospel that God’s glory bursts right through me. What, then, does it look like to fight for the image of Christ?

The fighting imagery used in the New Testament varies. Sometimes the imagery is associated with warfare, “wage the good warfare” (1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Cor. 10:3–4). Other times it draws on athletic or boxing imagery: “Fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12). Both of the original Greek words in these verses tap into imagery associated with a kind of fight. The primary word for “fight” in the New Testament is *agonizo*, from which we get the word “agonize.” It means “to contend, struggle with difficulties and dangers antagonistic to the gospel.”⁵ Paul uses *agonizo* throughout his letters to communicate the struggle associated with believing the gospel (1 Cor. 9:25; Col. 1:29, 4:12; 1 Tim. 4:10; 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7). Biblical fighting, then, is a spiritual contending to believe the truth of the gospel. This contending is reflected in Paul’s repeated reminders to Timothy to fight for faith in the gospel:

- “*Fight the good fight of the faith.* Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” (1 Tim. 6:12)

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- “This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son . . . you may *fight the good fight*, keeping faith and a good conscience.” (1 Tim. 1:18–19 NASB)
- “I have *fought the good fight*, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (2 Tim. 4:7)

Like Timothy, we have been called to “take hold” of eternal life. There is urgency to our faith. True faith struggles to pry our hands off the old life and keep them on our eternal life. Biblical faith fights to believe the gospel to such a degree that it is reflected in our practice. Disciples fight to believe *that Jesus’s death and resurrection is our death and resurrection*. His death is our death and his life our life (Romans 5; Galatians 2). As a result, the lie-believing, image-distorting life is dead, and in its place we have received a truth-believing, Christ-adoring life (Eph. 4:20–24). Because of our tendency to return to the old image, we walk by faith until we see Jesus, when faith will correspond with sight (2 Cor. 5:6–7; Gal. 2:20). Until then, we fight, contend, and struggle. Believing the gospel is not a passive, one-time decision; it is an active, continual fight for faith in what God says is noble, true, and good.

Refusing to fight has devastating consequences. Think of a fight where one person refuses to attack. The opponent disfigures the reluctant fighter. Paul reminds us that surrendering the fight wrecks us: “This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son . . . you may fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme” (1 Tim. 1:17–20 NASB). If we cease to struggle, we can end up in the hands of Satan.⁶ The fight matters.

The Goal of Discipleship: Fighting for Image

Real faith is fighting faith. Once the fight begins, we must never stop fighting. We must “not lose heart” (2 Cor. 4:1, 16) in this great and glorious struggle. Gospel transformation comes through pain, struggle, suffering, and staring your ugly sin right in the face. The trick is to stare it down with truth. Nobody sins because they want to be deceived. We sin because we believe what sin offers is true. We believe that being sexually aroused will bring us personal satisfaction or being socially in-the-know will bring us meaningful acceptance. So, we look at porn and gossip about others. If we really believed that porn and gossip were based on lies that don’t satisfy, we wouldn’t participate in them.

Sin lies to us. We need to get in the habit of talking back with the truth. Instead of expressing faith in the lies of sin, we need to have faith in the truth of the gospel. The gospel is “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). It is the heart-warming, mind-renewing truth that the image of the glory of God in the complexion of Jesus is all we need to be truly satisfied, completed, and accepted. We receive it by faith, over and over again. When we labor to look at Jesus, we begin to look like him, to be transformed into his image. This is why the fight of faith is so important. It is based on the truth and it truly changes us. Although the fight of faith is humbling and hard, it is worth it. It is a good and glorious fight.

In summary, disciples of Jesus are called to fight, not in physical or virtual combat, but for the noble cause of everyday faith in Jesus. We are called to beauty, not through performance, but by beholding Jesus. We fight to behold the image of the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ. This faith fights, not for perfection but for belief. We fight to believe that Jesus is more precious, satisfying, and thrilling than anything

Defining Discipleship

else this world has to offer. This is faith in the gospel—the grand announcement that Jesus has defeated sin, death, and evil through his own death and resurrection and is making all things new, even us. When we believe the gospel, we get to enjoy the promises of God’s grace, peace, and joy. When we don’t believe the gospel, we move away from these things. Most of all, we move away from Jesus, who is worth our every effort, every gaze, and every belief.

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FOREWORD BY MATT CHANDLER

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