

So, who is in the crowd today?

My guess is anyone with anything that interferes with your walk with God - we all have areas of our lives that need healing!

Those with ***relationship issues*** - perhaps hurts from their past that hinder current relationships. Also, those with various ***addiction*** issues, such as alcohol & drug abuse, smoking or the most common one of our day, ***lust & pornography***. Some may be here today for ***depression or anxiety*** concerns, weight or body image issues.

Issues such as ***fear and trust*** can be problems with ***reaching out to others***. Anyone who feels ***“stuck”*** or are working to ***maintain the recovery*** God has already provided. Finally, some came today to ***support*** loved ones fighting these battles.

Today, I’m going to review lessons we teach at Disciples In Motion. When I created this ministry, I researched all of the big recovery ministries out there – Celebrate Recovery, AA, NA, and others. They are all good and helpful groups.

One concept though that I found lacking – the centrality of Jesus. So, at Disciples In Motion we teach a person, not principles. Principles are good and helpful. A person, Jesus ***doing those principles*** with others is even better!

There is something attractive about Jesus. The way he loves those who are hurting, makes me want to be around him. He is powerful. He knew the right thing to say or ask, at the right time, in the right way, that led to amazing results. As a professional counselor, I’m astonished at this.

Here are some names given to Jesus:

Almighty, Alpha and Omega, and Advocate
Bread of Life and Deliverer
The Good Shepherd
King of Kings and Lamb of God
Light of the World, Lord of All, Our Mediator and Messiah
The Mighty One Who Sets Us Free
Our Hope and Peace
The Risen Lord
Sacrifice for Our Sins and Savior
Supreme Creator Over All
The Resurrection and the Life
The Door, The Way, The Truth and The Word
The Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace

Pretty impressive! So, we built our recovery model around him. If someone has an issue with it, we just send them back to Jesus for a conversation.

The first devotional we teach is Jesus' Creative heart to heal. Jesus healed a lot! And he was creative about it. Sometimes we get stuck in thinking how to change. There are some very loud voices out there about recovery. Let's listen to Jesus'.

Consider this about Jesus and the many people He interacted with in his three years of ministry – Jesus performed very few miracles that did not include a healing.

Check these out:

Jesus healed a man who had never spoken, so he could talk and connect with others - Do you sometimes feel like you don't quite connect?

Then he restored a man's speech and hearing.

Jesus took a woman who had a bent spine for 18 years and straightened it out – have you ever felt bent out of shape?

Then Jesus came across a guy who had been an invalid for 38 years - who had been apparently making excuses - and with a little questioning and faith healed him so he could walk again - in full view!

Here's a question: Do you make excuses about issues in your life? Like... I'll struggle with lust for the rest of my life...it's my thorn. I used to think that.

Love this one - The invalid man carried by four friends through a roof – interrupted Jesus' BT and, because of all five of them and their faith...Jesus healed the man.

Then one time in front of really angry religious people, Jesus healed a guy with a shriveled hand, on the wrong day, the Sabbath, and restored it to normalcy – wanna feel normal again? – good, then go to Jesus.

And if that wasn't enough, Jesus did it again in Luke 14 with a guy that had “abnormal swelling” in front of the Pharisees and sent him on his way.

Then there were the demon-possessed people! A naked guy running around tombstones cutting himself - I see it in school all the time – kids cutting themselves - and after an interaction with Jesus the man was clothed and in his right mind – growth as a Christian is not only a change of behavior but a change of your heart and mind.

Jesus also healed a boy who was out of control – again typical high school – as well as another guy who was friends with the demoniac – for those of us who have felt like our lives were out of control.

A non-Jewish woman's daughter was sick – Jesus kind of dismissed her and then she challenged him, and Jesus, a bit shocked at her response stated that she

demonstrated “such great faith.” A little honesty can go a long way! Don't worry, you can't shock Jesus by being honest!

A man born blind got his sight restored and then two guys together received their sight and then another two men - took a little ruckus to get Jesus' attention – Jesus spit on their eyes, showing his effective and creative heart to heal us.

Maybe we are influenced too much by what everyone else says about how to make changes in our lives - have you bought into the ideas of the world about changing such as *once an addict, always an addict or everyone else is like this so it's OK, or God just made me this way* - Maybe you need to do something to get Jesus' attention!

One time the gospel writer couldn't keep up with the numbers of healings so he just summed it up by saying: *All who were sick in the villages, towns and countryside and in the marketplaces were healed!*

A guy with leprosy was healed and then ten guys with leprosy got healed and only one returned – Jesus healed whether people were thankful or not.

Peter's mother in law – she got up and served him afterwards – by the way, the normal response is gratitude. Are you still grateful after all these years?

A woman – with blood hemorrhaging – after spending all she had on doctors, sought Jesus out, despite a potentially embarrassing situation, to be healed – ever felt like you've tried everything?

Malchus' ear – he was in the wrong place, wrong time– it was totally Peter's fault. It is not so much an issue how you got where you are today – Jesus' heart is to heal you, not to explain how things got the way they are. ***Don't spend so much time and money trying to figure all the ends and outs and whys – focus on getting better!***

Centurion's servant – long distance healing – even before the internet - because someone else who cared.

Another royal's son healed remotely - no class warfare with Jesus!

Finally, the big ones: Jesus actually raised people from the dead! His friend, Lazarus, the widow's son, and Jarius' daughter.

And then another summary statement: *Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind.*

And these are just the ones written down!

Jesus healed in the early morning, around the noon hour, at night and then late into the evening – 24/7.

Jesus ***spit on people's eyes, spit on their tongues, stuck his finger in ears, touched their eyes, spoke, commanded, cried, scoffed, ignored, touched and got touched, and prayed*** – if nothing else He was creative!

He healed every age, gender, socio economic type guy, political stance, prominent or low life person; it did not matter what your religion was - in fact the less religious people seemed to get more healings - think about that one!

Jesus healed if it was your fault or if you had nothing to do with your problem – he was an equal opportunity healer.

Jesus healed whether you responded in gratitude or not – some went and told everyone and others just went on their way, unthankful.

What about you? How will Jesus demonstrate his creative heart to help you?

So that's our first goal. To restore people's faith that Jesus is still in the healing business and that he is creative in doing so.

Now for our second devotional, we're going to have a crowd participation event!

INNOCENCE & IDENTITY: TWO LIVES RESTORED

Discussion Question: Think about the last time you felt innocent: what memories does it stir? How did you view the world around you? How did you view yourself?

Luke 8:40-56 - The amazing heart of Jesus to restore our innocence. He healed the bleeding woman, after she had spent all she had on physicians and then he radically changed two parents whose daughter had died – by bringing her back to life as others laughed at the situation.

Innocence - restore and redeem, to bring back to a state of purity, clear conscience

Jesus creates innocence by changing our identity.

Identity: Satan robs our identity by causing us to question our identity and lying to us - John 10:10 a *liar* - his *native language is lying*. His #1 attack on us is lying.

We come to believe and live our Christian lives based on his lies. One such lie is "once an addict, always an addict." Nothing can be farther from the truth – you will never find this in the Scriptures! Don't buy this lie.

Consider some of the lies you have come to believe.

Discussion Question: What negative names or identities have you been given as you deal with your problem?

Lies produce shame...not a great motivator! *Shame is rooted in our view of our worthiness before God and generally leads only to further struggle with sin.*

Discussion Question: What are names we find in the Bible that God uses to describe us? (usually can find 50 plus)

These names from God are the truth about me as a Christian - not the lies Satan throws at me. It is incumbent on me to trust the words God uses to describe me and not give into the shame of my behavior? Your identity is not the sin you've been involved in...that is not Biblical - ***your identity is rooted in the cross and the justification found there. We decide to accept the words God uses to identify us.***

BROKENNESS & DENIAL: A MAN RECOVERS AFTER 38 YEARS

This is a matter of having a broken spirit so that God can work and reveal himself in new and effective ways. No matter the reason a person struggles, they have a need to present themselves broken before God and to become an instrument in his hands.

John 5:1-8

A guy who had been an invalid for 38 years (who had been apparently making excuses) and with a little questioning/faith Jesus healed him. For whatever reason, this man had not changed in so many years...Jesus changed his life, did something for him at no one else did...What was it that held this guy up for 38 years? We don't know for sure but...

All of us have had periods long or short of denial; Blame game, deep emotional pain, years of failure, not in touch with the severity, not ready for what may lie ahead, shame and guilt if we dive back into sin - there are many things that keep us in denial and away from brokenness.

Brokenness is a state before God in which you humble out, surrender and acknowledge what God already knows to be true - that you cannot change without Him: as much or as many times as you've attempted...the guy that said quitting smoking was easy - he had done it many times!

Group Discussion Question: What does brokenness look like in your life?

See your sin for what it is – Ezekiel 14:1-6 Explain the iceberg example. We must go beyond being convicted about our behavior and get down to the idol worshipping part of our problem – what are we fundamentally serving?

Comfort? Control? Significance?

Also, place a stake in the ground. Often, we must also do something radical – a way to get out of the fog - to make a statement to ourselves, others and God. (A filter for your computer, confession, beginning a program...)

We think we have to hit **rock bottom** before we change – we get to **decide** what rock bottom is!

Brokenness of spirit, we see God for who He is: loving, merciful, compassionate, forgiving and visionary...a Healer; God just keeps loving me during my sin – Romans 2:4

My sacrifice Oh God is a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, you God will not despise. Psalm 51:17

MIRACLE & CHANGE: LEGION CHANGES HIS COMMUNITY

Miracle and Change is all about Biblical repentance. Our role is to stay engaged in the process, to draw close to God and others and work their program as best they can - God brings about change.

Mark 5: 1-20 this is my guy – out of control, addicted ,and harming himself and others.

This is what our addictive behavior looks like: scary - others scared of us or we begin to fear where we might go in bondage - like Paul-*I know the good I want to do but I do that which I don't want to do* - out of control - sin can progress to where it is abusive and harmful isolated - we don't want to be around others, moody and irritated.

Legion was **out of control and ignored** by everyone who knew him. **He was isolated.**

Jesus was interested in Legion's **name**. Remember our lesson a few minutes ago?

Jesus cares about who we are, what we are all about; even when sin isolates us and makes us feel unworthy.

The people of the town found Legion, **dressed** and in his **right mind**. Jesus granted him repentance – a change of mind.

Repentance means to **change the way we think** and not simply to change **our behavior**. What lies have you bought into in regard to your problem? Change begins with repentance – a change in our thinking!

Jesus speaks to change our thinking. He speaks powerfully to clear up those lies of Satan - what is Jesus saying to you? Here are a few things He says...

"I love you, I died for you, I accept you right now and have dreams for you that do not include your sin and hurt...he says come to me with your hurts because I am the bread of life, the light of the world, the resurrection and the life, the true vine, the way, the truth and the life, the door, the gate and the good Shepard."

Jesus speaks into our hearts the solution to our life's problems - you see it all throughout the gospels - he speaks simplicity into life's complexities with words that cut right to the core of who we are and what we need for change. Ever feel like your life is complex? It is! Jesus speaks simplicity into your complexity.

Jesus speaks truth into our minds, to clear up the insidious lies we've come to believe and live - lies that keep us from living the life God intends for us.

Scriptures speak very clearly how God identifies us as we saw earlier...Jesus speaks truth to us.

Repentance is a radical change in our mind and heart. It is possible for everyone at any time for any reason. It is essential for living life in freedom instead of burden - laden obedience.

Even science has come around to Romans 12 on the transformation of our thinking. It's called neuroplasticity – the ability of your brain to actually create new physical changes to think differently. When we repent and choose a godly approach, our brain actually changes shape, new neural pathways are formed and we think differently.

A great book on this is *Switch on Your Brain* by Dr. Caroline Leaf.

So, take heed of the powerful words of Jesus and join with the demoniac in having a right mind.

TRUST & FEAR: JESUS CHALLENGES A WOMAN'S FAITH

Trust always produces a desire to follow Jesus more closely! We try because we trust. Let's look at a fearless woman:

Matt 15:21-28 A Fearless Woman

Review the story, discuss the audacity of this woman to question Jesus, ***how Jesus challenged her faith*** and how her faith shone through because of her intense desire to see her daughter healed.

When you begin to find recovery, Jesus may challenge your faith and fears (just like He did with this woman) so your faith will grow; many people stop at this point of their recovery and quit.

You must be able to push through this challenge by trusting, in order to find recovery.

Our recovery journey may mimic this woman's. We encounter fear as we reach out to Jesus in recovery. Our faith overcomes our fears and we begin to trust (God and others) in a greater way – *trust is faith in action*.

Identify your fears as they relate to your addiction and recovery.

What are some of the fears you've faced so far? Fear: of failure? of the past? of being alone? of not having enough? of someone being angry with you? of looking foolish? of being misunderstood? of having to be perfect if you *do* change?

This woman **loved** her daughter more than her fears – so she engaged Jesus until something changed. What do you love more than your fears?

Jesus grows our faith by challenging us...this is the very point of growth - don't quit!

Faith overcomes fear. This woman was commended for your faith. Greater faith leads to greater trust. Trust is faith in **action**.

Finally, God's love motivates us to continue to grow in our faith and trust. We travel from fear to faith and trust and find ourselves understanding and growing in God's love, overcoming our fears.

Expect your **faith** to be tested and pass the test!

1 John 4:13-18 *This is how we know we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.*

God's Spirit is **always** at work in you - this fact alone can change fear into confidence. Take your fears to God in light of his love for you. Perfect the love of God *in your life* to drive out fear.

Read 1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

The love of God drives out fear.

FORGIVENESS & POWER: A BROKEN WOMAN FORGIVEN

Forgiveness addresses the issue of our motivation to change - not out of fear but out of gratitude and reverence.

Desmond Tutu and Apartheid in South Africa – forgiveness changed a whole country!

Forgiveness is central to many of Jesus' healings. Forgiveness addresses the issue of our motivation to change – not out of fear but out of gratitude and reverence.

Luke 7:33-50 - A Sinful Woman Forgiven

Forgiveness Illuminates the Heart of God: Forgiveness is:

- God's desire to **bond** or **connect** with us.
- Demonstrates God's kindness and compassion at it's best.
- The central theme of Jesus' message and is most clearly seen in the cross that he died on - could there be a **greater** demonstration?

Forgiveness Changes Us: Our sinful behavior places a dark mark on our souls, "*our sins, which are many.*" Think about the ways God's forgiveness has changed you so far. That's not a one and done issue but ongoing.

Romans 2 says "*God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance*"

Forgiveness motivates us to **quit** sin – Titus 2:12 – grace teaches us to: *say "no" to ungodliness and worldly passions.*

We are **radically** changed when we come in touch with the forgiving hand of God.

Forgiveness Changes Others: Forgiveness allows us to show **mercy** to others. When we experience forgiveness, others notice and it changes them. We treat people differently because we're different.

Forgiveness **attracts** others to God.
And finally, forgiveness **motivates** us to serve!

Psalm 130:4 *But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.*

RELATIONSHIPS & COMMUNITY: FIVE GUYS' FAITH

Friendships are clearly essential for recovery. A wise man (Solomon) once thought so. He said: *Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.* Ecclesiastes 4: 9-10

Mark 2:1-12 An amazing story! Shows our need for healing, the faith of friends and of course the boldness and compassion of Jesus. "Some men" and then four - takes many to help us in our recovery.

We do whatever we need to do to get healing: Demand, inconvenience friends, make a mess, push, take a chance, even interrupt Jesus in the middle of His ministry - these guys did this right in the middle of a crowded Bible Talk and Jesus was happy to be interrupted! We always, at some level need friends...often, up to four really good friends, committed to our recovery.

We rely on the faith of friends - having deep, caring friendships as you seek recovery is not an option...and if you are a friend you understand and are humble to the need to coordinate with others to help...

Sometimes we can find one friend who is all we need...most of the time we need a variety of friends; we need *many advisors* as the Proverbs say – Let's look at the "names" of his four friends:

1) Relater

Proverbs 15:21 *Folly brings joy to one who has no sense, but whoever has understanding keeps a straight course.*

We all need somebody who **understands** us; who has been where we are and can help us to see our way out.

2) Listener

Pr. 18:13 *To answer before listening— that is folly and shame.*

Make the most of your **fellowship time** - don't settle for meaningless talk that takes you nowhere.

3) Truth-Teller

Proverbs 23:23 *Buy the truth and do not sell it—wisdom, instruction and insight as well. –*

No matter what else is going on in our lives, we all need **truth**.

4) Friend

Proverbs 17:17 *A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.* As we live **life**, we need a friend.

So, we appreciate those who serve us and *It is incumbent on us to initiate with our mentors – we must direct the relationship in many ways.*

Is there a need for reconciliation of a relationship? Our issues often leave a trail of broken or hurt relationships. Take this time to consider repairing a relationship!

Are you one of these four types for someone else? If so, who? **Community** occurs when we are involved in serving others in need!

Recent research indicates that addiction is closely tied to not only biological factors, but isolation as well. Of course, the church can be the perfect community to be a part of to help in this area.

Conclusion: This man received the message of forgiveness and how it is connected to his healing. He did little to achieve his healing...totally dependent on others and God. In light of your forgiveness...Are you forgiving? Isolated? Using your own power?

A MAN RECOVERS HIS SIGHT: RECOVERY MOVING FORWARD

Think about this guy. Everyone challenged him. How did this happen? What about your parents? Was this your fault? Who is this man?

I love his answer – as for who this man is, I don't know, Ask him. But I do know this: *I once was blind but now I see.*

Points to the personal and unique hand of Jesus to help us.

And Jesus' message to the man? *Believe. Just believe.*

So here we talk about your ongoing recovery in your normal social environment – what will sustain your gains so far? People come up with really good ideas on how to continue their recovery.

In conclusion, I would like to share the foundations we teach those that attend Disciples In Motion.

These hallmarks are fundamental and foundational. They never pass away or lose meaning. Those that make them a daily reality, get better.

FOUR HALLMARKS OF DISCIPLES IN MOTION

Each Hallmark is vital to making progress - use the example of a four-legged chair each leg is important for the chair to work. The Hallmarks represent the responsibility of the member to do their part. This is the “rubber meeting the road” part, and where many find their freedom.

I. Walking with Jesus – nothing is more important than your desire and ability to grow in your walk with Jesus during this time. Discover newness with Jesus!

We don’t get better and then approach God, but we draw close to Jesus with our problems and sin, to find his mercy, love and eagerness to help us.

Jesus embodies God. He makes sense of God by his life, teachings and his heart for helping us. Hebrews 1 speaks of him being the exact representation of God – Jesus is how we walk with God.

Jesus attracts us to God by the cross. Understanding and drawing close to the cross puts our problem into perspective and brings about the motivation and power to change.

II. Working a Program - Following a scripture-based program is essential in your road to recovery.

This seems to be the most difficult job for many - working a program. Christians need education to overcome the lies of Satan - I'm shocked at some of the longstanding lies people (and me) operate for years! Satan lies – it is his native language! We come to believe and live by his lies and these (cognitive distortions or maladaptive thinking) keep us in a cycle of defeat.

A program is your way out – you must be working a program so you can escape the lies.

I've found that there are plenty of good materials out in the market so I teach how to access the most effective and useful programs for them. A program gives you the opportunity to sit at someone's feet and get his or her best take on an issue.

I explain that the best way to find a program is to

- 1) spend time in prayer and seek counsel about your issue;
- 2) find a Christian bookstore and spend at least an hour or so looking through Tables of Contents and perusing the pages of several books until you “connect” with an author - something clicks with you and this seems like a good approach and style for your problem – that is the book.

Some members use a private counselor or a support group. The important thing is that they are working their program during the week.

III. Engaging a Mentor – Participation in your family group is both essential and encouraged. All recovery is social in nature and that's how God created us – to be with each other.

While most have a mentor in the church, many are not utilizing them very well. We teach that the important thing is to find a mentor who “gets you” and is willing to walk with you during this journey of change.

Consider bringing the mentor to at least one meeting so they can get a feel for the environment of change.

IV. Nurturing a Dream - We don't do recovery for ourselves alone. There is purpose behind our recovery. What is yours? What dreams have been diminished due to your problem? How will you re-build your dreams for God?

We don't change primarily for ourselves – wanting to look better or to be a better leader. These may be good motivations to bring us to change but sustainable and long-lasting change must be to make God look better – bringing him glory – change is an opportunity to allow Jesus to shine. Dreams motivate!