

## Module 4: An Overflowing Cup

*This module is entitled, “An Overflowing Cup,” and it’s all about the true meaning of an abundant life. We hear that phrase all the time when talking about faith, including in the name of this curriculum. But how many of us have actually taken the time to think about what an abundant life looks like, what’s necessary for it to exist, and where it comes from? Truth is, abundant life is a grace-filled, undeserved gift, and we have free access to it at any point. Through the teachings in this module, we are going to talk about why following Jesus is worth it, why God finds it necessary to give us rules, and what love “in action” looks like. We have received the love of Jesus and His transforming grace, so we really need to dive into what it looks like to access and desire it above anything else. He pursues us unflinchingly and without end. Jesus is better than anything else, because He is the source of love and the model of a perfect relationship, which our human relationships shadow. When we are filled up by the Giver, His love in us can overflow into our earthly relationships.*

- **Teaching 1: The Deeper Need**
  - *Theme: The Deeper Need is referring to the desire in our hearts to look for happiness and fulfillment anywhere other than Jesus. It’s referring to our natural tendency to veer off God’s path and into the path of the world. Sometimes, it starts happening before we consciously realize it. Sometimes, the world’s path looks better. Sometimes, following Jesus is costly. Sometimes, we may even question if it is worth it. All throughout the Bible, we see men and women who struggle while believing in the Gospel, who give everything, even their lives, to follow Jesus. Yet often we expect a life free of suffering when we become Christians. Truth is, there will be suffering, pain, and rejection, no matter how we live this life. And we get the choice – we can either do the hard things with Jesus or without Him. A Christian life doesn’t promise us an easy walk, but it does promise us one that is worth it. Following Jesus is worth it, and through this message, we are going to talk about why that’s the case.*
  - **MAIN QUESTIONS:** Is following God worth it? In the midst of suffering, is believing in Jesus really worth the fight for our hearts?
  - **Main Points:**
    - *The cost of decisions* - When students begin to contemplate a commitment to Jesus and realize that that decision may cost them something they’re not sure they want to give up, they begin to ask... is it really worth the sacrifice?
    - **Luke 9** - The disciples are at the top of the mountain after a long day of travelling and instead of getting up there and relaxing, they’re now at the top, and they’re discouraged and exhausted.

Maybe that's where you're at. Maybe you're suffering, exhausted from all of it, and just tired. Next in Scripture, we see that the disciples fall asleep, and Jesus begins to pray. Eventually, the disciples wake up to an epic scene. He is shining brightly, even when they are asleep. Catch that – He doesn't start shining brightly when they notice Him. He does it regardless of their acknowledgement. When they wake up, He is shining, and He gives them a look at what He really looks like.

- *The same is true for us - even when we miss God's glory because we are so focused on our suffering. He's still shining, waiting for us to wake up and see it (shift perspective from earthly to heavenly).*
- Ask yourself an honest question: Are you giving up a present thrill for your long term good? Are you choosing your long term good by sacrificing something that would be fun or feel good in the moment? Think about your decisions with money, school, and even sexual purity. Are you sacrificing God's great plan for you for a temporary pleasure? Are you honoring the people you are in relationship with because you trust the One who made them?
- Luke 14:26-27 says: If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.
- We see in Luke 9 that Jesus is unashamed and unafraid of telling us what it may cost to follow Him. He never sugarcoats it, never shies away from the truth, and is honest with us from the beginning. The Bible tells us that the world will hate us. There is a painful cost associated with being a Christian: choosing His will over my own, carrying a cross, and renouncing possessions. There is no small print when it comes to what it will cost us. Jesus is big and bold, offering us abundant grace, but also loving us enough to be real with us. There is no cheap grace – it's costly. But yet, He still invites us – come and be My disciple.
- This is the key point: the call of Jesus is not just a call to suffering and self-denial. There's so much more, and that's what we are called to put our hope in.
- The here and now will always be less than eternity.
- Jesus asks us the same question that He asked the disciples in the Gospel of Luke. He's asking you, today, do you believe that I'm worth it?

- *Main Scriptures:*
  - Luke 9
  - Luke 14:26-27
  - Luke 14:14
  - Jeremiah 29:11-13
  - Peter 2:24
  - Matthew 13:44
  - Philippians 3:8
- *Small Group Questions:*
  1. Have you ever questioned if following God was worth it?
  2. Do you think that you avoid following Jesus whole-heartedly to avoid disappointment if He doesn't answer your prayers? Do you avoid praying boldly?
  3. Have you ever suffered or went through hardship because you were a Christian?
  4. What's the difference between what God tells us and what Satan tells us?
  5. How can we better live into the Truth that following Jesus is the only way to real fulfillment and that He is worth it?
- *Teaching 2: Why Does God Give Us Rules?*
  - *Theme: Whether we are children, teens, or adults, it seems like our natural tendency is to veer away from rules and do the exact opposite of what we are told to do, even if the person telling us is doing so for our own benefit. Some of us think that they threaten our freedom, or maybe we are convinced that God won't love us or save us unless we keep His commandments perfectly. We think our salvation is dependent on our ability to perform and totally neglect the gift of grace. Or maybe the opposite—we take advantage of grace and do whatever we want, living however we see fit, because we know God will save us despite our sins. Neither is true. God gives us rules for our own good, and they actually aren't a restriction but rather a ticket to freedom. In this teaching, we will take a look at what it means to make some "half-time" adjustments in our lives to live a life worthy of the calling we've received as children of God.*
  - **MAIN QUESTIONS:** What is the point of rules? Why do we tend to do the exact opposite of what rules tell us to do, stretching the boundaries and testing the limits? Why does God give us rules and how do we know they are for our good?
  - **Main Points:**

- We may be tempted to push the boundaries and break the rules because of our sinful nature, but that doesn't mean we have to (1 John 4:4).
  - God does care about every decision you make, every day, big or small.
  - *Ephesians 5*: "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Do not get drunk."
  - God doesn't just care about rules – He cares about our hearts, the condition of them, and how we are loving others and being loved in return.
  - **Indicatives v. Imperatives**: Paul proclaimed in Colossians 3 that Christ is your life. He is. Fact. Done deal. He did not say that Christ is your life if you accomplish this, give that away, and forgive those. No. None of that. Paul stated, qualification free, that Christ is your life. This kind of statement in Scripture is called an *indicative* - something that has already been declared about you as a fact, a Truth. Indicatives aren't the only kind of statement in Scripture, however. There are also *imperatives*. An imperative is something we are supposed to do, phrased as a command or a direction. It might sound dry to talk about types of speech, but it is hugely important for this reason: when we confuse indicatives with imperatives, we sabotage our ability to live in our new identities.
  - Every imperative in Scripture is based on an indicative. In other words, we're never asked to do something until we're told something true about who we are. The truths of the Gospel support and sustain the commands of the Gospel. If we don't first understand the truth about who we are - the truest thing about us - we will be crushed by the weight of the commands.
  - Identity statements are everywhere. Find a command, and you'll find somewhere near it a truth about who you are!
  - God outlines "rules" for us in the Bible, guidelines, recommendations, or imperatives to give us the option of having an abundant life.
- *Main Scriptures*:
    - 2 Timothy 1:7
    - 1 John 4:4
    - Ephesians 5:3

- Galatians 5:22
  - Colossians 3:1-10
  - 1 Corinthians 10:23-24
  - Romans 12
- *Small Group Questions:*
  1. Have you ever felt like God is restricting your freedom with all of the commandments found in the Bible?
  2. What do you think about God telling you who you are before He tells you what to do? Have you ever been told that before?
  3. Do you believe the commandments in the Bible are for your good? Do you realize you realistically can never measure up to them? What's the good news found in that?
  4. Have you made any decisions that you wish you would have done differently, unknowingly or knowingly?
  5. What are some "half-time" adjustments you can make in your life to acquire and start living the abundant life that Jesus offers you?
- **Teaching 3: Love Does**
  - *Theme: This is all about love. Dating, sexuality, relationships, and marriage, everything we've been talking about - it all rests on love, or rather, what we think love looks like. In the words of Bob Goff, "Love is never stationary." It's always moving, always acting, and always pursuing the best interest of the other person. If we have the wrong definition of love, we will be utterly helpless when we are trying to live it out in our day-to-day lives. Sometimes we are so inspired by sermon illustrations, and we connect with teachings about Jesus that inspire us to live into His greater story. But instead of going out there and creating our own epic stories of love, we marvel at someone else's, or we wait for extraordinary acts of love to be done to us. Truth is, if we love people greatly and deeply on a daily basis, God will teach us something through that. He will reveal Himself not only to the person we are loving, but also to us, as we seek to love more like Him. Here's what it comes down to: love is what defines our lives. We will be known for how we love others, and the definition of love is found in the Gospel of Jesus alone. The love of God is reckless - going after us and chasing us no matter what the cost.*
  - **MAIN QUESTIONS:** What do you want your life to be known for? How do you love people – is it based on the reckless love of God or is it based on the "norm" of love that we see around us? What does it mean to REALLY love?
  - **Main Points:**

- Love is all over Scripture. In fact, love is the point of the Bible. The Bible is a love story between the God of Creation and the creation itself. We've talked about the difference between biblical love and the example of love we see modeled around us. We see people committing to love each other forever but not taking that vow seriously enough to actually keep it "forever." We see distortions of real love: pornography, dating with no intentions, using one another to fulfill lustful desires, and exploiting others to lift ourselves higher. The "normal" of our love doesn't always match up with what our hearts wish it to be.
- There's nothing we love more than a story of sacrificial love. Think about it. We are so inspired by heroism. We all love to hear about people acting selflessly, putting another's well-being before his or her own. We love stories where a stranger steps in and protects someone in danger or where someone sacrifices time or money for the greater good. Those stories inspire us. (*ADOPTION, SERVING SACRIFICIALLY EXAMPLES*). But we can also connect with teachings about Jesus, so that they would inspire us to live into His greater story.
- **Definition of love:** Romans 5:8, "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." This verse tells us that love saves. Love rescues. Love helps. And it does so, if necessary, at great cost to the lover.
- **Bottom Line:** Your life is not defined by what you believe in, it's about what you actively and deliberately participate in. What do you want your life and relationships to be known for?
- *Main Scriptures:*
  - John 15:13
  - Ephesians 5:1-2
  - Ephesians 2:8
  - Romans 5:8
  - Matthew 5:13-16
  - Micah 6:8
  - Romans 12:9-13
- *Small Group Questions:*
  1. How would you define love?
  2. Have you ever fallen into the trap of loving people to make yourself look good and not for their benefit?
  3. Do you believe you are loved simply because of who you are?

4. What are some practical ways this week that you can show others that they are loved for who they are?
5. Do you think that God's love is reckless? What does that mean?