

## Group Agenda – April 19, 2008

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### **Lesson: "Finding Our Lives"**

**Passage: Matthew 10:32-39**

#### **Background**

*Milt was out of town this week, and so we are taking a break from the "Reply to Why?" series from Habakkuk.*

*Our daily reading have been moving through the gospel of Matthew in the last couple of weeks. Chapter 10 finds Jesus speaking to his disciples as he prepares to send them out on a short-term mission trip. He tries to prepare them for the type of reception they will face when they go around telling people about their relationships with Jesus.*

*Some believe following Jesus is a matter of a one-time confession of the name of Jesus and faith in his Sonship. But Jesus warns his followers here that "enduring to the end," "acknowledging his name before others," accepting threats and even death, are all involved in the journey with him. Ultimately, we must "take up our own cross and follow" him. Just as marriage is not the same as a wedding, discipleship is not the same as a conversion experience. They are inter-related, but not identical. And Jesus says we must be in it for the long-haul, committed to him even in the face of death and suffering, and must sacrifice our lives, as he did his own, to find true life with the Father.*

#### **IceBreaker**

Does having strongly held beliefs and a guiding worldview help us make more friends, or cause more conflict with people around us? Explain.

#### **Read & Discuss**

<Read Matthew 10:32-33>

- How is our earthly behavior tied to our ultimate, long-term relationship with the Lord?
- How does God react when one of his followers is unwilling to declare his connection and loyalty to Him?

<Read Matthew 10:34-36>

- Do Jesus words here, that he "didn't come to bring peace" in this world, surprise you? Why or why not?

- What does Jesus mean when he says he came to “bring a sword” instead of peace? Give some examples how Jesus has brought a sword instead of peace into the world.
- Is Jesus encouraging us to be in conflict with others, or just warning us that it is likely? What is the difference?

<Read Matthew 10:37-39>

- In verse 37, is Jesus saying he is against close family relationships? Should we actively distance ourselves from parents, spouses, and children, or is there a better explanation?
- Is being a disciple of Jesus a one-time decision, or an ongoing process? What kinds of things do you think of when Jesus says his followers must “take up your cross and follow me?”
- Would you say most people you know are “clinging to their lives” or are the “giving up their lives?” What does this passage say each choice leads to in the end?

### **Apply**

- How well would you say you “publicly acknowledge” Jesus in your own life? Are there any settings you think you should make more of a point to acknowledge Christ to others? What risk do you run in doing so?
- What special friends have you made since and because you became a disciple of Jesus? How about any enemies, or any strained relationships, because of your walk with Christ? Can our enemies, as well as our friends, help show how our walk with Christ is going? Explain.
- What “cross” does Christ have for you to take up right now that you may be struggling with? Would you say you are more in “clinging to life” mode, or “giving up life” mode right now?

### **Pray**

- Commit your friends AND enemies to prayer right now, thank the Lord for both, and ask for spiritual power to love them BOTH!
- Ask Christ to reveal to you the “clinging” you may be doing to life, and how to give up your life to him so that you may find real life!