

# Living a Chocolate Life

## SESSION 5 FROM SCRATCH

### A CHOCOLATE SAMPLER

Check all that apply to you, and then discuss as a group:

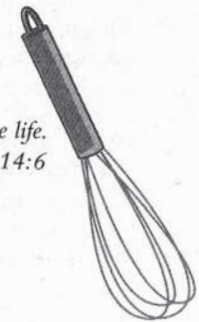
- You live a chocolate-rich life as you delight in God's promises to you. (Share a bite-sized portion from the last session and a Memory Morsel moment too.)
- You love to bake anything from scratch using real chocolate.
- You prefer raw cookie dough to baked cookies.
- You have been fooled by imitation chocolate (but not for long):
- You watch food channels and search the Internet for chocolate recipes.

### MEMORY MORSEL

*"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"* John 14:6

### Picture This

You are making dessert for special guests. You want it to be the *best*. Memorable. Perfect. One that makes a statement and leaves a lasting impression. It's made with chocolate, of course! This dessert will leave them longing for more, while completely satisfying their chocolate-loving palates. For this



special occasion, do you take a shortcut? Do you use a cheap cake mix and serve it with canned frosting? Do you run to the store and grab a cheese-cake from the freezer section? Of course not! You want to give your guests a delectable chocolate delight made from scratch. (Like a made-from-scratch *Chocolate Chip Cheesecake with Chocolate Glaze*, using the recipe at the end of this session.) No shortcuts; only the best will do. After all, your guests are worth the time, effort, and special ingredients that will provide a unique burst of rich, home-baked chocolate flavor and melt-in-your-mouth texture.

### Shortcuts

How often are we tempted to take shortcuts in our faith walk and in life? Instead of giving God our very best, we settle. We are too busy to pray. *Wasn't the table prayer enough?* We make excuses for not spending time in God's Word. *Why read the Bible when I'm going to get what I need from the Sunday sermon?* Instead of giving people our very best, we settle. We take shortcuts. *Why go the extra mile for my boss? If I take a few shortcuts on the job, no one will notice. Why read the professor's assignment when there's a summarized version online? If I look like I'm listening to the kids, I can create mental checklists and accomplish twice as much. I said I'd pray for her. Isn't that sufficient? I don't have time to help.* This is just a sampling of our many shortcuts.

Are we giving our best in worship, work, service to our Lord, and care for our family and friends if we take the easy route, the path of least resistance, the shortcut?

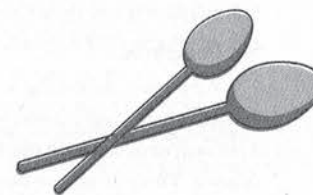
## #1 dig in!

- a. Take a look at **Mark 12:30–31** and **Colossians 3:23–24** for help in learning what the Lord desires from us concerning these matters. What insights do you receive as you ponder these passages and consider your shortcuts?

- b. What do you make of the repetition in **Mark 12:30–31**? Just how much should we give of ourselves as we love? as we work? What do we learn in **Colossians 3:23–24** about service and reward? How could knowing this make all the difference in our work?

Jesus said we should love the Lord with our entire being and love everyone else as we love ourselves. We're to work with all our heart as we remember that we are serving the Lord Christ as we serve others. That's a tall order! Following Jesus' commands leaves no room for shortcuts, does it? And it is possible for us *only* because He first loved us. (Check out **1 John 4:19**.) God demonstrated the extent of His love by sending a Savior to die for our shortcuts, our excuses, our willingness to settle for less than our best. Praise God that He gave His best when He gave us Jesus, when He gave us victory over sin and death, when He gave us new life in Him. His Spirit empowers us and the Gospel frees us to give *our* very best!

*Now picture this:* You are not making a decadent chocolate dessert this time. You are making time to spend with the Lord, your most special guest, and you want to give Him your very best. As the Holy Spirit works mightily through the Word, He leaves a lasting impression in you. As you savor the Scriptures, you long for more, though you are also fully satisfied. This is *living a chocolate life—from scratch*. It is giving your best to God and everyone He places at your dessert table. You can't wait to invite guests over to share your best with them too!



### CHOCOLATE FUN FACT

The phrase "from scratch" is derived from a late-eighteenth-century term for a line scratched in the ground to mark a starting point in sporting events. It came to apply also to the starting point of a competitor who received no handicap, as in "a scratch golfer." From there, it grew to mean "from nothing," and it was increasingly used as a cooking term following the creation of boxed mixes and prepackaged foods. To be made "from scratch" defines a culinary creation as being fully homemade, using only raw ingredients—not a mix.



**TAKE A BITE**  
Where do you take shortcuts?

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**TAKE ANOTHER BITE**  
Envision carving out a time and a place each day to meet with your most special Guests! Where might that be? What raw ingredients will you bring with you? A Bible? Maybe a journal? A devotion book? A pen?

### No Imitations!

When you are baking from scratch, giving your best, you allow only real ingredients in your recipes, right? Cheap imitation chocolate is *not* allowed! Artificial chocolate-flavored chips are no substitution for real semisweet morsels. There is no substitute for the real thing. One taste, one bite, and your guests would know they had been deceived. Or would they? People would know the difference only if they had tasted real ingredients. If someone had never tried real chocolate, that person could be fooled by a cheap imitation cleverly packaged to look like the real deal.

Just as an imitation morsel looks real enough, so alternate religions outside the Christian faith may have initial appeal. They may look real enough; they may even make alluring claims. Christianity's teachings may sound offensive to ears that want to hear that "all roads lead to heaven," that you can substitute one world religion for another. But the Bible says there are no substitutions. No imitations! Jesus is the *only* way. Only Jesus satisfies our need for a Savior. In **John 14:6**, "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"

## #2 dig in!

The apostles—eyewitnesses to Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection—courageously spread the Good News, and the Early Church exploded in growth. Read **Acts 4:12** and write it here. What does the apostle Peter boldly proclaim, and how does it parallel Christ's words in **John 14:6** above?

While cheap imitation chocolate won't actually hurt someone, dabbling in alternate religions or believing false claims about Christianity will. Our culture wants to mix world religions and beliefs of religions outside the one true faith. But God's Word leaves no room for mixing. Other teachings and religions are *not* alternate roads to heaven, to salvation, to eternity with God. Without Christ, humans face eternal damnation and separation from Him. Many may attempt to deceive us by claiming something about Christ while twisting His words, trying to convince us that we must earn our salvation. Some reject His death and resurrection, even denying that He is God's Son, claiming instead that He was merely a man or a prophet.

As Jesus teaches about the end times, He begins by warning believers not to be deceived. "**See that no one leads you astray. . . . Many false prophets will arise and lead many astray**" (Matthew 24:4, 11).

## #3 dig in!

Paul gives specific warnings to Christians in **Acts 20:29–30**; **2 Corinthians 11:13–15**; **Galatians 1:6–9**; and **2 Peter 2:1–3**. What will happen or is already happening that Paul warns believers about?

### Be a Berean!

We must be cautious of the claims we hear. “Be a Berean!” the apostle Paul would surely tell us if he were here today. As he traveled on his missionary journeys, preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the people, he noticed something special about the Bereans.

### #4 dig in!

Read **Acts 17:10–12**. What was it about the Bereans that caught Paul’s attention? What did he notice that was noble about them? How can we see by the people’s response that Paul’s message of proclaiming Christ as the promised Messiah did, in fact, fulfill the Old Testament prophecies?

We would be wise to do today as the Bereans did then. We must test everything we hear today against God’s Word, the Scriptures. That means keeping our ears open for *imitation* claims coming across television, over the Internet, via books and music, and even in churches. If we don’t know what God’s Word says, we may fall for anything.

### #5 dig in!

None of us wants to be deceived. To “be a Berean” and test everything against Scripture, we must be students of the Word and learn from it. How do God’s Words in **Psalms 119:9–16** and **Colossians 3:16** encourage us to stand strong in the one true faith?

Not only is the Bible the inspired Word of God, but it is also a means by which He gives us His grace. The Holy Spirit works powerfully through the Word, creating and increasing faith, imparting truth, and guiding us into greater understanding. The Bible tells us that only by faith in Christ, God’s Son and our Savior, will we be saved. God saved us not by works, but by grace alone through faith alone. This is the truth of the Gospel on which we stand. (See again **Ephesians 2:8–9**.) Praise God for His free gift of faith and salvation in Christ!

### #6 dig in!

- a. God tells us in **1 John 4:1–4** to “**test the spirits,**” to examine words and actions against Scripture. Read this passage; what specific guidance does He give in discerning whether or not a spirit is from God?
  
- b. **Verse 4** gives us beautiful reassurance. Personalize this truth, inserting your name as you read it aloud (even together as a group), since you are His “little children” too. How have we “overcome them,” the spirits of the antichrist in the world?

### ✦ TAKE A BITE

Have you recently detected imitation faith claims because you knew they didn’t hold up to God’s Word of truth? (For example, pithy statements frequently flash before us on social media, in films, and in print; they mention God’s name, but make claims contrary to His Word.) Describe these claims here:

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### The Real Deal

Remember when we talked about aroma, inner beauty, and taste in Session 2? The sweet, satisfying richness of God's grace in Christ attracts people when they notice Him at work in us. With the help of the Holy Spirit, they see in us the *real deal*. Nothing artificial. No imitations. They see His grace and forgiveness at work. Our salvation does not depend upon our good works, as many followers of other religions believe, so they are shocked that we go out of our way to love them. We love them because Christ's love and His power work in us and enable us to do so. We love them as Jesus loves them. Whether or not they realize it, they desperately need to know the Truth. The Real Deal. Christ.

*But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.*  
(1 Peter 3:15)

### #7 dig in!

- a. Chosen in Christ and saved by His grace through faith, we have *The Real Deal*. But many people have never heard of Him; others have heard only confusing imitation claims and have fallen prey to false teachings. As stated in 1 Peter above, they may ask us for a reason for the hope that is in us. How can we be prepared to answer them?
  
- b. What is so significant about the first part of this verse, as it relates to the rest? Why is the last part of this verse also important as it, too, relates to the rest?

God's work in us enables others to see, smell, and taste the difference. What makes Christianity different than all the rest? *Grace* . . . God's sweet, amazing grace in Christ.

*Living a Chocolate Life—  
from scratch—in the one true faith!*

### PRAYER

#### Sweet Supplication

Dear Lord, fill me with the desire to live a chocolate life—from scratch. Empower me by Your Spirit to give my best to You and to everyone You place at my table. Father, forgive me when I have faltered, listening to the imitation claims of others instead of Your truth. Continually fill me with Your Spirit and point me to Your Word, that others may be attracted to Christ through me. In His precious name I pray. Amen.

### Chocolate Chip Cheesecake with Chocolate Glaze

Crust and Cheesecake filling:

2 c. chocolate cookie wafer crumbs

¼ c. melted butter

3 (8-oz.) packages cream cheese, softened

½ c. sugar

2 tbsp. flour                      1 tsp. vanilla

2 egg whites                      1 c. heavy cream

½ c. *real* mini semisweet chocolate chips, or more if desired

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Starting *from scratch*, mix cookie crumbs and melted butter; press into bottom of 9-inch spring-form pan. In large bowl, combine cream cheese, sugar, flour, and vanilla. Beat with an electric mixer until fluffy. Add egg whites, beating on low speed until combined. Stir in cream and chocolate chips by hand. Pour mixture into crust-lined pan.

Place on baking rack in the middle of the oven, with a shallow pan of water on a lower rack directly below it. (This prevents cracking in cheesecake.) Bake 35 to 40 minutes or until center appears nearly set when shaken. Do not overbake. Cool to room temperature in pan on wire rack. Loosen sides with knife, then gently remove sides of pan.

Let cheesecake cool completely, then top with *Chocolate Glaze*.

*Chocolate Glaze:*

½ c. *real* mini semisweet chocolate chips

¼ c. heavy cream

Melt chocolate chips with cream in small heavy saucepan; cook and stir until thickened and smooth. Immediately spread over cooled cheesecake. Cover loosely and chill at least 4 hours.

### CHOCOTIVITY

## Cookie Mix in a Jar

Create and give away your very own mixes—made *from scratch*—and share with each recipient what it means to *live a chocolate life* from scratch in the one true faith!

Using the *Best-Ever Chocolate Chip Cookie* recipe from Session 2, carefully layer all dry ingredients in a **2-quart wide-mouth glass jar**. (Blend oatmeal and grate chocolate bar first.) Pack each layer as necessary to fit. Add lid and decorate with **ribbon or fabric**, as desired. Attach **tag** with list of remaining ingredients, along with the following instructions: *Empty mix into large mixing bowl. Add 1 c. softened butter, 2 eggs, and 1 tsp. vanilla extract. Mix well by hand. Chill at least 1 hour or overnight. Spoon dough into 2-inch balls for large cookies. Bake at 375 degrees 8 to 10 minutes or until edges are lightly browned and center is moist and chewy.*