

“Following Him: What it Means to Be a Disciple” (part 3)

Mathew 4:12-25

I am amazed at how in our American culture, we have become experts at minimizing costs. In the last few decades, we have seen the emergence of “big box” stores like Super Wal-Mart and Sam’s Club, Costco, and Target. These stores make the claim what when you shop with them, you can get more bargain for your buck. Advertisers constantly bombard us with their catchy slogans to try and reel us in so that we will buy their product. Think about these slogans, and how once you hear them, you know their product:

- *“Taste the rainbow.”* - Skittles
- *“Think outside the bun.”* - Taco Bell
- *“Melts in your mouth, not in your hands.”* - M&M’s
- *“Have it your way.”* - Burger King

When I read the gospels, nowhere do I find where Jesus tried to minimize the cost or come up with a catch phrase where He tried to talk people into following Him. In fact, Jesus did the exact opposite. He didn’t try to market or sell His product to anyone.

Jesus was always upfront and honest about the cost involved in being His disciple. For instance:

Following Him will cost you personal comforts.

Luke 9:57-58 - “Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, Lord, I will follow You wherever You go. And Jesus said to him, Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”

Following Him will cost you prized possessions.

Luke 9:59-60 - “Then He said to another, Follow Me. But he said, Lord, let me first go and bury my father. Jesus said to him, Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.”

Following Him will cost you popular approval.

Luke 9:61-62 - “And another also said, Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house. But Jesus said to him, No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

In each instance where Jesus calls on individuals to follow Him, He always uses the same word.

- Peter and Andrew - "Follow Me." (Matthew 4:19)
- Matthew - "Follow Me." (Matthew 9:9)
- Philip - "Follow Me." (John 1:43)

Even to those who were superficial, Jesus uses this same word.

"Follow" - *to accompany, to be a disciple; always used in the present tense by Jesus, meaning that He was not seeking a momentary following but rather a continuous, life-long commitment to Him*

The word was a military term that carried the idea of falling in line.

When Jesus invited a person to follow Him, He did not want the emotion of a moment's feeling of guilt, fear, or simply a desire for a better life. To follow Him involved a carefully thought out lifetime of commitment to Him as Lord.

It is surrender to Him that He is looking for.

If this were not true, then Jesus would have accepted any old response to Him as legitimate. If the end result were simply one-time decisions, Jesus would have gladly embraced superficial people. Instead, He chose to put up barriers that divided the superficial from the surrendered, barriers that separated those who wanted cheap grace from those who were willing to truly bow to Him as Lord.

John Stott - *"The Christian landscape is strewn with the wreckage of derelict, half-built towers--the ruins of those who began to build and were unable to finish. For thousands of people still ignore Christ's warning and undertake to follow Him without pausing to reflect on the cost of doing so. The result is the great scandal of Christendom today, so-called 'nominal Christianity.' In countries to which Christian civilization has spread, large numbers of people have covered themselves with a decent, but thin, veneer of Christianity. They have allowed themselves to become somewhat involved; enough to be respectable but not enough to be uncomfortable. Their religion is a great, soft cushion. It protects them from the hard unpleasantness of life, while changing its place and shape to suit their convenience. No wonder the cynics speak of hypocrites in the church and dismiss religion as escapism."*

Jesus calls on His followers to take up a CROSS, not a CUSHION.

What does it mean to be a disciple? According to Matthew, a disciple is one who:

- 1. REPENTS of sin and embraces Christ's gospel (4:17)**
- 2. RELIES fully on Christ's grace (4:18-19)**
- 3. REJECTS this world to follow Christ's person (4:20-22)**

"They immediately left their nets and followed Him."

When Jesus passes by and offers the invitation to follow Him, what is it that leads a person to reject this world and all that it has to offer?

What leads someone to turn their back on everything else and bow to the person of Jesus? A couple of things are involved. Consider how a disciple:

Understands Christ's infinite WORTH

A follower of Jesus Christ turns their back on everything else the world has to offer because they understand the value of Christ.

Jesus is worthy infinitely more than what we typically give Him.

David Platt - *"There is only one conclusion to draw when we hear the invitation 'Follow Me:' Jesus is worthy of far more than church attendance and casual association. We have such a dangerous tendency to reduce Jesus to a poor, puny Savior who is just begging for you and me to accept Him into our lives. As if Jesus needs to be accepted by us! Jesus doesn't need our acceptance; He is infinitely worthy of all glory in the whole universe, and He doesn't need us at all. We need Him."*

These first followers recognized something in Jesus that was worth abandoning their nets for. He was immeasurably more valuable to them than anything else that the world could offer.

Nothing is more precious to a disciple than the One they follow.

Until we reach the point where we understand who Jesus is and how much Jesus is worthy, I'm not so sure that we will risk our lives for the sake of making much of His name among those who are lost and without Him.

Luke 14:25-34 - **"Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, 'If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not**

bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it--lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish? Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he cannot be My disciple.'"

According to Jesus in these verses, being His disciple involves:

- supreme DEVOTION (v. 25-26)
- self DENIAL (v. 27)
- serious DECISION (v. 28-32)
- sacrificial DISOWNERSHIP (v. 33)

No one would ever be willing to make such drastic commitments unless they first of all realize that Jesus is infinitely worth more than they could ever possibly imagine.

Obeys His authoritative WORD

True faith is when one recognizes Jesus for who He is and rejects everything else in exchange for Him.

Notice that when Jesus speaks, these disciples obey.

- There are no excuses offered
- There is no hesitation on their part

Where there is no willingness to believe and submit to Christ's Word, there is no faith.

A disciple obeys the commands of Jesus and always takes His Word seriously. In fact, the greatest measure of our discipleship could be summed up through how we respond to His Word.

Luke 6:46 - "But why do you call Me, Lord, Lord, and do not do the things which I say?"

We have no right to call Jesus our Lord when our lives are characterized by disobedience to His commands.

Perhaps we have failed to emphasize Scripture in our generation.

Disciples love the Word, consume the Word, study the Word, meditate on the Word, and obey the Word.

Charles Spurgeon - *“A man who wants to see a country, must not hurry through it by express train, but he must stop in the towns and villages, and see what is to be seen. He will know more about the land and its people if he walks the highways, climbs the mountains, stays in the homes, and visits the workshops; than if he does so many miles in the day, and hurries through picture galleries as if death were pursuing him. Don’t hurry through Scripture, but pause for the Lord to speak to you. Oh, for more meditation!”*

There is nothing that we can do that has any more impact in our Christian life than reading and meditating and memorizing the Word of God.

Psalms 119:11 - **“Your Word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.”**

We used to do a far better job of this in the church than we are doing today. We have gotten too far away from our Bibles, and is it any wonder why we are having less of an impact?

Oswald Chambers - *“Faith is the deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you may not understand at the time.”*

The disciple lives and dies with faith in His Master’s Word. This shapes his every decision, his value system, and his ideas.

Illustration - *“I read the story of two little boys who were involved in a terrible accident. One of the boys was mangled up while the other had suffered some head trauma. One said to the other, ‘Say, Tommy, I heard in Sunday School about a Man named Jesus. They told me that you believe that He died on the cross for your sins, He will come and take you to heaven when you die.’ Tommy replied, ‘But what if I’m asleep when He comes and I can’t ask Him?’ The other little fellow said, ‘Just hold up your hand. That’s what we did in Sunday School, and I guess Jesus just sees it.’ Since Tommy was too bad to hold up his own arm, his little friend propped it up with a pillow. During the course of the night, Tommy died, but when the nurse came in the next morning, she found him with his arm still propped up.”*

That’s what a disciple’s faith looks like. It is simply trusting Christ and taking Him at His Word. It is living and dying with your “arm propped up” in total trust.

4. REACHES out to others through Christ’s mission (4:23-25)

“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. Great multitudes followed Him--from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.”

Jesus came with a mission in mind--to seek and to save that which was lost. Nothing could distract or detour Him in that mission.

In calling these men to follow Him, Jesus was sure to explain His purpose in doing so.

Purpose: *“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men!”*

Instead of searching for fish all over the Sea of Galilee, they would preach the gospel all over the world. Instead of waiting for fish to swim into their nets, they would witness to others of Christ and His salvation.

The disciple lives for what Christ died for.

These disciples would model what they saw their Master doing.

TEACHING

PREACHING

HEALING

“Various Diseases” - *all manner of sickness; no case was too difficult for Him*

Disciples pattern their ministry after Christ:

- ‘Teaching’ involves the instruction of other believers.
- ‘Preaching’ the gospel involves evangelism among those who are lost.
- ‘Healing’ involves personal ministry and aid to those who have various needs.

This is how we bring ‘light’ to a dark place.

Unless the church is committed to making disciples, reaching the world for Christ is nothing more than a fantasy. Making disciples involves introducing people to Christ, but this is not

where it stops; this is merely where it begins. Discipleship involves DELIVERING people, DEVELOPING people, and DEPLOYING people.

Warren Wiersbe - *“Christianity is a missionary faith. The very nature of God demands this, for God is love and God is not willing that any should perish. Our Lord’s death on the cross was for the whole world. If we are the children of God and share His nature, then we will want to tell the good news to the lost world.”*

We are to take the gospel to the nations.

David Platt - *“Together, we spend our lives telling hundreds of millions of people in America and Europe to turn from sin and trust in Jesus because He’s worthy of their worship. We make disciples in Africa, where there are over three thousand animistic tribes worshiping all kinds of suspicious spirits and false gods, who do not deserve glory. We make disciples in Japan, Laos, and Vietnam, where there are 350 million Buddhists following Buddha’s practices when Buddha does not merit their praise. We make disciples in India, Nepal, and Bangladesh, where there are over 950 million Hindus worshiping millions of worthless gods. We make disciples in China, North Korea, and Cuba, where over a billion people have grown up in Communist environments that deny the very existence of the God who reigns above all. We make disciples in Central Asia and the Middle East, where over 1.5 billion Muslims are following a false god. We make disciples among all these peoples and among the toughest of these places because we know in our minds, hearts, and lives that Jesus has died on the cross and risen from the grave and that He alone deserves to be exalted as Lord.”*

The measure of a church is not that church’s SEATING capacity, but its SENDING capacity. A healthy church is not about how many people come, but about how many people go.

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- A disciple is one who REACHES out to others through Christ’s mission