

Follow Me

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- [0 : 0 0] All right, if you do have your Bibles with you this morning, we will be in Matthew chapter number four. We're going to go quite a few places this morning. But as we think about it this morning, this may sound like a silly question.
- What is a disciple? Especially a silly question for a group that we have here today. But as we think about it, the way that a Jewish audience would have understood what a disciple was in their day, the day of Jesus, and when Jesus said, follow me, we're going to spend the next few weeks looking at disciple making.
- We're going to be looking at what a disciple is this morning. And as we begin that, so here we go. And looking at discipleship.
- And what I find interesting is the word disciple is mentioned around 269 times in the New Testament. 269 times we see mathetes, the word disciple.
- And interestingly enough, the term Christian is mentioned about three times. And so as we look at what Jesus is calling us to do and calling us to be, he is calling us to follow him, to be a fully functioning, committed, lifelong learner, following him.
- [1 : 2 9] So I want us to look at some main categories of disciple as we see the New Testament talk about discipleship.
- And if you have your notes this morning, the first thing when we see the Bible talking about disciples are those that followed Jesus around. The first thing we come up to is a casual listener.
- Those are the people that were the crowds that were following Jesus. They were listening to what he was saying. The Bible considers, or we would consider those casual listeners.
- Then there's another level of follower, one who was following Jesus during his ministry. And I think those went to another level.
- And those would be those we would call a convinced listener. They heard what Jesus said. They believed what Jesus said. And they say, yeah, I believe who you say you are.
- [2 : 3 3] And there's some buy-in there. There's a deeper level beyond that, though. And that is where we're going to be spending the time over the next few weeks, for sure, January and maybe the better part of February as well, and talking about what is a disciple, what does it really mean to be a disciple, and how are we to be making disciples.
- And as we see here, the next level would be a committed, lifelong learner and follower.
- Committed, lifelong learner and follower. But what also we find interesting is the greater percentage, the greater number of those in the New Testament that would have fit into the first two categories, I believe, are the majority.
- There were many who followed Jesus around. There were many who were casual listeners. And I believe there were many who had some buy-in. They believed he was who he said he was.
- But when you take that third step of being a committed, lifelong follower of Jesus Christ, the group got pretty small. As a matter of fact, in Acts 1, verse 15, after Jesus Christ had left planet Earth, the Bible says the number had dwindled down to 120.

[4 : 07] Only 120 from those thousands that had followed Jesus around, listening to his message, many who may have been convinced of the message.

And it comes down to only 120 who were committed to following Jesus, even after he was arrested, after he was placed on a cross, and sure, their hopes were dashed.

Who is it that we were following? But 120 were committed to still meeting together and still live based on the teachings of this Jesus Christ.

And when we think about the churches in the Western world, what kind of percentage do you think that we would see? What category do you believe that the largest number of people in churches, even today in the Western world, what group would they fit into?

Now, I think I can say with pretty good assurance that a vast number would fit into the first two categories.

[5 : 17] Now, in the South, I think we may have more convinced listeners, more that believe, more that understand who Jesus is, and maybe attempt to live somewhat like a follower of Jesus ought to live.

But I think those who are truly committed, lifelong followers of Jesus, that every area of their life is surrendered to Jesus, and their life looks like a follower of Jesus, and they're making disciples, they're sharing their faith, and they're bringing the gospel to the world, I think that would be a very, very small, small percentage.

And I think what the church needs today is not more money, is not more people, is not more prestige, is not more power. I think what the church needs today is men and women, young people, boys and girls, who are totally and completely surrendered to Jesus Christ, and who are followers, who have complete buy-in, and who are being Jesus-following, fully committed, lifelong learning, followers of Jesus Christ.

And it's probably not the greatest need just simply in the church, but I want us to see what writer Dallas Willard had to say, and this is what he had to say.

He said, The greatest issue facing the world today with all its heartbreaking needs is whether those who by profession or culture are identified as Christians.

[7 : 15] If they will become disciples, students, apprentices, practitioners of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the kingdom of heaven into every corner of human existence, and that's what we're talking about.

He says, Will they break out of the churches to be his church, to be his mighty force for good on earth, drawing the churches after them toward the eternal purposes of God, and on its own scale, there is no greater issue facing the individual human being, Christian, or not.

Let's pray. Father, this morning, Lord, we long to be who you want us to be. And Father, I pray that you would help us all to understand the cost of what it means to be a lifelong committed learner and follower of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and our purpose, and that we might be used by you as your early disciples to turn this world upside down for you.

And Father, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Now we're going to look where we had recently said in our passage this morning, Matthew chapter 4 and verses 18 through 20.

I guess this is a passage that I'm pretty sure is familiar to most of us this morning, but I pray that God would give us fresh eyes so that we can see what it really means and understand the truths that are locked here in this passage.

[9 : 06] Verse 18 of Matthew chapter 4, Verse 20, Now Jesus comes on the scene here.

He sees these fishermen, probably not the first time they had met Jesus. Some would say maybe it was the first time. Not sure.

I'm pretty sure they had heard at least him teach. Maybe while they were mending their nets on the shore, they were busy doing their job, taking care of their business, and maybe they're listening to him as he is teaching the crowds.

So they may have heard him before, but he gives to them an unusual request. He says, Follow me.

Literally, come after me. And this is what they do. So today as we look at this passage, as we look at others in Matthew, in Luke, to ask the question, and hopefully answer the question, what does it mean to be a follower of Jesus?

[10 : 49] What does it mean to follow Jesus? First of all, I believe it means complete abandonment for the glory of Christ. Complete abandonment for the glory of Christ.

Now in order to see that, I think we need to see the context of Matthew 4.18 and what's following that comes in. So back up with me to verse number 12.

I don't have that in our, up on the screen, but look back at Matthew 4, starting at verse 12. Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he departed to Galilee.

And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light.

And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, light has dawned. Now notice verse 17. From that time, Jesus began to preach and say, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

[12 : 13] Now from the very, we see from the very beginning of Jesus's ministry, we see this message resounding over and over and over again. It may not always be this particular phrase, but we see the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God repeated over and over and over again.

And when the New Testament talks about the kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of God, it's not necessarily a literal place, but it pictures the rule and the reign of Jesus Christ, and everywhere that the rule and dominion and the authority of Jesus Christ is honored and submitted to is a picture of the kingdom or the authority of God.

So we see this all throughout the book of Matthew. Now you may ask, well, where do you get a picture of complete abandonment for Jesus Christ in this passage?

Now I want to take us on a little tour this morning. We're going to be going through quite a few different chapters, quite a few different verses this morning. Well, first of all, I want us to look in Matthew chapter 5 and verse 3.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. Excuse me a minute while I catch up here.

[13 : 42] Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Now look down in verse number 10. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Now if you want to be part of the kingdom of heaven, Jesus is saying, first of all, poor in spirit, being humbled. Secondly, he says, if you want to be part of the kingdom, you will be persecuted.

So persecution for the cause of Christ is part of kingdom living. There's a cost for being, for submitting completely to the rule and reign and the authority of Jesus Christ in this life on this earth.

Now look over in Matthew 13, and we're going to be skipping over a lot of references to where Jesus talks about the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God.

But in Matthew 13, verses 44 to 46, again, the kingdom of heaven, see it again, is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid.

[14 : 51] And for joy over it, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Now do you see the picture? Here is this passage. If you want to be part of the kingdom, what he's saying is the kingdom, being part of the kingdom, is worth selling everything that you have, giving up everything that we own to have or to be part of the kingdom of God.

That's how glorious and wonderful it is. Do we want to be a part of God's family? It's worth if God asks to be willing to give up everything for his honor and for his glory.

Now you say, do you mean literally give everything up to have the kingdom? Well, let's look at Matthew 19, 21 through 22.

Matthew 19, 21 through 22. We have the story of a rich young man or the rich young ruler as he sometimes referred to. Verse 21, Jesus says to him, he comes to Jesus, he asks, what does he need to do to inherit the kingdom?

[16 : 13] Again, that term kingdom. Jesus said to him, if you want to be perfect, go sell what you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven and come.

What are those two words we see next? Again, follow me. Come after me. Give up everything that you have. Sell it all. Give it to the poor. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful for he had great possessions.

Now, this was a man who had great wealth. He comes up to Jesus. How can I inherit the kingdom? And you see Jesus say in verse 21, if you want to be perfect, sell everything you have and give it to the poor.

Give everything away. Now, in verse 22, what happens? When the man heard this, he went away, the Bible says, sorrowful. He went away sad.

Why is that? Because he did not see the kingdom of God worth letting go of everything that he thought was important in his life.

[17 : 19] He was not willing because he did not see the value of being with God or being part of the kingdom of God. Now, this message, I believe, is huge for us.

Now, you might be saying this morning, well, I don't have a lot. I don't have a lot of stuff. I'm not wealthy. Well, think about it. What we have in America, the average individual here has a place to stay, has a roof over their head, has a vehicle to drive, and can afford to eat.

That makes us wealthier than billions on earth today. Billions of people are going to wonder where their next meal is going to come from.

You say, Pastor, that many? Yes. The Bible says there are that many people living in third world countries or living in places where they do not have as much as we have.

So we are considered wealthy. Then Jesus says to his disciples. Verse 23, after they've seen this little scene, the guy walking away sad, Jesus said to his disciples, assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

[18 : 30] And again, I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. Now, what does this mean? The eye of the needle? There's all kinds of speculation.

Is it a real eye of a needle? Yeah, there's a gate that was called that and a camel that went on his knees? Or was it? We don't know. All that Jesus is saying is if someone is holding on to what they have, it's going to be difficult for them to give it up for Jesus unless they're willing to say he's more important than all of this stuff.

When his disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished. What was their reaction to Jesus' comment? Well then, who can be saved? I mean, Jesus, you're saying that it's impossible for us to be part of the kingdom.

But Jesus looked at them and said to them, with men, this is what? Impossible. But with God, all things are possible. I think, over and over, we see not only Jesus, but we see the New Testament reiterating the fact that we cannot get to heaven on our own.

We cannot be good enough. We cannot do anything to be worthy of being part of the kingdom aside from the grace of God.

[19 : 53] And we're going to get to that later as we look at what does it mean to be part of God's kingdom. Then Peter answered and said to him, See, we have what?

What does Peter say? We've left everything. If it's this difficult and if it's this impossible, why did we leave everything? We left everything to follow you.

Therefore, what shall we have? So what are the disciples literally saying? We agree that we abandoned everything.

We left it all to follow you. Now, look at verse 28 through 30. Jesus says to them, Assuredly, I say to you that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of his glory, when you have, what?

Followed me, also, will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, and everyone who has, what?

[21 : 00] Left houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold and inherit eternal life.

But many who are first will be last, and the last first. Do you see the cost of the kingdom here? Jesus is saying to his disciples, you're going to rule and reign with me one day.

Everyone that has given up everything they own, their possessions, their family, we're going to see a little bit what that cost really involves.

Unpacking this would really, as we see what Jesus is talking about, he's talking about complete abandonment. Complete abandonment to follow him. And we're saying, well, we don't really see that in western Christianity.

No, we see Christianity as an add-on to our life. We see Christianity as an add-on to our lifestyle. We see many cultural Christians in America today.

[22 : 08] But Jesus' discipleship is a far cry from what we see in America and in the western world today. He said, following me means complete abandonment.

Following me means dying to yourself. Following me means giving up and just living for me. So Jesus has a lot of people following him at this point.

It may be thousands of people that are following Jesus around. verse 23, then he said to them all, all, everyone that's there, not just the twelve, but everyone who was there.

It may have been more, I don't know how many were here. Then he said to them all, if anyone desires to come after me, let him what? Deny himself and take up his cross daily.

We've talked about what that means. That means willing to be killed for your faith. That's what it means. The cross is not, oh, I got the flu and I got to carry my cross or this happened and blah, blah, blah, and then I got to carry my cross.

[23 : 15] No. The Jew, a Jew listening to this, would have understood completely what Jesus meant. Take up your cross means be willing to do, be willing to go, be put to death for your faith.

So take up his cross daily, die to self, be willing to give up your life for him and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will what? Lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world? Meaning, if he got houses, if he got property, if he got three cars, a three-car garage, and you've got all of these things that we think that we need to be part of the American dream and have what we think we want to provide us our comfort?

Now, none of us like to be uncomfortable, myself included, probably myself in particular, but we need to understand that Jesus is seeing this from a different perspective.

And he says, for what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and himself is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and in his father's and of the holy angels.

[24 : 30] But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God. I'll show you one more. We'll go to Luke chapter 14, and I want you to see, look with me in verse 25, the context of this in verse 15.

Jesus, again, is beginning to talk about the kingdom of God, and then it comes in his discourse to verse 25, and let these words soak in.

Now, great multitudes went with him. Great multitudes were following Jesus at this point. Remember we said casual listeners, maybe some of those were convinced listeners, some of those were committed, becoming committed, lifelong followers of Jesus.

There's 120 there in Acts chapter 1. 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, what does he say?

He cannot be my disciple. Now, there are many who would try to say, well, that hate, that's a strong word. I don't know that Jesus really meant to, you've got to hate your parents, you've got to hate your kids.

[25 : 54] We're not going to really delve deeply into this this morning, but the word that Jesus used, misseo, or misowned in the Greek, is the same word when Jesus says, the world hates me, and if you live for me, they're going to hate you too.

Same word, same word that Jesus uses here. He says, and whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Now, are you getting a glimpse of what it means to follow Jesus?

A little bit more intense than we, than maybe some of us originally thought, to be a disciple of Jesus. Anyone who does not hate his mother, his father, his brother, his sister, his wife, his children, even his own life cannot be my disciple.

What does that mean? It sounds harsh, doesn't it? Well, that's what Jesus said. Now, come back to Matthew 4. Let's go back to Matthew chapter 4.

And we've got this picture. Think of how this thing is playing out when Jesus goes to Simon Peter and his brother, James and John. Think about how this leaving mother, leaving father, hating mother, hating father, hating brother, hating sister, is playing out when Jesus calls these guys.

[27 : 11] And look at the cost. What Jesus is teaching here and to his disciples is we leave behind all things.

For some people, that's literally. For some people, it means, or for the rest of us, it means we need to be willing at a moment's notice at the drop of a hat to leave everything and leave everyone to do God's bidding.

And some may say, well, I don't know about that. I don't see why the Bible teaches that. Well, let's look back in Matthew chapter number four. So what we see is these guys were leaving everything behind.

So we leave behind all things. We leave behind to follow Jesus all things. First of all, we leave behind our comfort.

Now, I like being comfortable. Most of us like being comfortable. comfortable. You know, that's why we have central air conditioning and central heating because we like being comfortable.

[28 : 12] We don't like a portion of our house being five degrees colder than the other part. We don't like the bedroom being five degrees hotter or whatever.

So we want the same temperature all over our house. Why? For comfort. The same thing with our vehicle. We want a vehicle that's got automatic transmission. We want to make sure that here in the south it has air conditioning that works.

For those of you from up north, a heater that actually works. I remember driving, Jeremy's laughing up there, I remember driving a truck that belonged to Jeremy from Kansas all the way back home with no heater in an ice storm.

It was not fun. Do you see the commercial with a guy squeegeeing his vehicle from the outside? That's what I was doing. I was trying to reach the windshield.

Not a good thing. So comfort, he's telling these guys, you've got to leave your comfort behind. Second thing, we leave behind careers. These guys were completely leaving behind their career.

[29 : 14] It was a radical reorientation of their entire way of life to follow Jesus because apparently all they had known was being fishermen. What would it look like to you to leave your entire way of life if Jesus said, follow me, physically, and I'm going here, but it's not where you live.

And so what would that look for you? It would be difficult, I know, for many, many people they left behind their careers.

The other thing is possessions. The other thing is possessions. They had property. They had boats. They had nets. Now they were not probably well off, but they certainly weren't the paupers of their day.

they were business owners. Boats were expensive. Nets were expensive. And so they left their possessions behind. They've got a lot to show us in a modern world today.

You see, we cannot be a disciple of Jesus Christ and love our house. We cannot be a disciple of Jesus and love our car. We cannot be a disciple of Jesus and love our possessions, our TV, our stereo system, our tools, our clothes, our iPhones, our iPads, whatever.

[30 : 37] You see, we can't be a disciple and love those things. Because what happens when we love those things? When we have to make the choice, just like that rich young ruler. When given the choice, he chose his stuff over Jesus.

It doesn't mean we're going to have to do what he told this young man to do, but what if he did? What about all the thousands who have heard the call of Jesus to go to a foreign country where there are no comforts?

They did leave behind all their possessions. They do leave behind their families. They do leave behind their careers. They do leave behind everything these guys did. Now, we are no different because we're called to be disciples, we're called to be missionaries where we are and live like missionaries where we are.

There's no difference, there's no classification of servant of Jesus Christ. We're more of a slave if we go to be a missionary somewhere or stay here.

See, we can't love anything else more than Jesus. But in our modern culture, it was radical 2,000 years ago. It's still radical today.

[31 : 48] What about position? Leave behind our position, our comfort, our careers, our possessions, our position. What you have to understand is in this day, when people wanted to climb the social ladder, what they did, they would go find themselves a tutor.

They would find a rabbi, they would find someone who was skilled in a trade, and they would go and say, can you teach me? Can I sit at your feet and listen to all the pearls of wisdom that you have to dispense?

And what they did was they sucked up all the knowledge of this particular teacher, or this particular worker, and what they did was they found somebody else that could bring them further, all so they could climb the social ladder, all so they could make more money.

And what Jesus is saying here is, you follow me, you don't climb the ladder, you follow me, you go down the ladder. Jesus, the Bible says, didn't even have a place to lay his head.

And so what Jesus was offering was not an increase in position, Jesus was offering, you're going to be abased, you're going to have downward mobility instead of upward mobility.

[33 : 04] Next, families, we abandon our comfort, our careers, our possessions, our position, and our family. Now this is heavy. As you look in Matthew chapter 4, these guys left their father, Zebedee.

Now we know from other clues in the New Testament that these disciples, they had families, they had children, some of them had wives. Did they never see them again?

No, probably not. But what we do see from evidence in scripture is that there were great periods of time when they left on a missionary journey.

It's possible that for two years they didn't see their wife. For two years they didn't see their kids. So that's what Jesus is calling his disciples to do. You give up your family. That means you're not going home every night.

I may call you to leave. It's the same as signing up for the military. If you say, well, wait a minute, I don't want to go. Sorry, that's what you signed up for. You might be gone for 18 months, 24 months at a time.

[34 : 09] Serving your country. Serving Jesus means that at a drop of a hat he might say, I want you to, or serving me means you're going to be going from home a lot.

That's what I'm calling you to do. To leave behind your family, leave behind your possessions, leave behind your position, and follow me. Doesn't mean he's going to do that for everyone, but we cannot say that we're different from the disciples.

Or say, oh, that was 2,000 years ago, that was his disciples, that was them. Today, it's different. It's not different today. We see all throughout Scripture, same thing, follow me, be willing to give up your life, deny yourself, take up your cross, follow me.

Our friends, very often, when a person comes to know Jesus, and especially when they become a true follower of Jesus, and a fully committed, functioning, lifelong, learning, disciple of Jesus, very often, friends are going to drop off like flies.

Well, you're not going to have fun with me anymore? You're one of those holy rollers, and you don't want to do this, and you don't want all you want to do is go and do this, and talk about Jesus, and feed the poor, and do all this other stuff.

[35 : 18] I'm out of here. And so maybe friends, the disciples left their friends. They left their hometown to go and live with Jesus for some three, three and a half years.

Then we come to our safety, our family, our friends, those we know best, then our safety. For Jesus to say, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves.

That didn't sound too encouraging. And Matthew 10, he says, guys, I just want you to know, the world hates me. They're going to hate you too.

And I'm sure about this time, the guys are looking at each other, wow, should we sign up for this? This is a lot. That's not good news, especially when you see Jesus going to a cross, and then you remember back, wait a minute, what did he tell me?

I've got to be willing to pick up my cross too, and follow Jesus to death? Most of the disciples, almost all the apostles, save for one, died for their faith, is what history tells us.

[36 : 21] John, exiled on the Isle of Patmos. As a disciple of Jesus, don't miss this. We don't see playing it safe anywhere in the New Testament for being a follower of Jesus.

The call of discipleship, safety, is not promised. It's no longer a concern for a follower of Jesus. Why? Because he said, abandonment.

Discipleship involves full and complete abandonment to Jesus Christ. We leave behind ourselves. Jesus said, anyone who wants to come after me must do what? Deny himself.

What does it mean to deny yourself? It means, well, you know what? I'm scared. Jesus says, deny yourself. Jesus says, I want you to do this. We say, well, God, that's not comfortable.

Or that might be a little dangerous. God says, Jesus says, deny yourself. Not saying he's asking everyone to do it, but what if he asks you to do it? Luke 14, we see that, deny yourself.

[37 : 21] Everything in our culture is about elevating ourselves, is about elevating our comfort, preserving self, taking care of self. But Jesus comes on the scene and he says, slay yourself. Die to yourself.

And I'm sending you guys out. To the wolves. I'm sending you out among the wolves. One of the times he sent the guys out, he says, take a sword.

If you don't have a sword, go buy one. Because it's dangerous out there. And so he sends them out that way. This was countercultural in Jesus' time. It's countercultural 2,000 years later that we leave behind all things.

Now what would happen if we chose to go all in and be a follower of Jesus like his disciples understood him to say?

Because what happened when Jesus said this to the crowds? They didn't stick around. The vast majority of the crowd did not stick around when Jesus said that.

[38 : 20] Why? Because they understood that he meant leave it all behind. Die to yourself. Follow me. Even being willing to die for me. They didn't like that and they felt it's not worth it.

ourselves. Abandoning ourselves. Now what do you mean abandon all these things? Our safety, our position, our family, our safety, ourselves.

Well think about it practically. You know Jesus may not call all of us to give away all our possessions. Jesus may not call all of us to go and leave our family for long extended periods of time to follow him but if we've built our entire life and our entire life revolves around serving him and saying that everything else will be in the background of my devotion to Jesus in the way his disciples did here.

Jesus is showing us I believe what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ and I think what he's saying is everything in this life, family, friends, possession, position, comfort, all of these things we are to hold on so loosely to and we grip so tightly to the person of Jesus Christ and whatever he calls us to do.

And if he calls us to do something, even something that might violate what we think is important, Jesus says you need to be willing to give it up.

[39 : 56] hold on so loosely to everything and hold on so tightly to me in comparison that you've really let go of everything else and you're holding on to me.

Now let's think about it on a whole other level as we wind this thing down to a close. We're only going to get through one point this morning. Remember the kingdom of God, his rule is everything that everyone who submits to his rule and his reign part of the kingdom, those who are part of the family of God, it radically changes the way that we live, it radically changes the way that we look and what if Jesus says, I want you to give up your comfort and we're to say, well, God be praised.

He wants me to suffer. Jesus suffered. What did the disciples say when they suffered? They considered it a privilege to suffer for him. They didn't say, oh, woe is me.

What did I sign up for? This is horrible. The disciples said, this is awesome. Now, I don't know how they could say that, but they said their attitude was we consider it a privilege to suffer like Jesus suffered.

Our comfort, our position, all of these things. What would it mean if, Jesus may not call all of us to leave our position, leave our possession, leave our families, but what if, whether we're a carpenter, a plant worker, an accountant, a doctor, a mom, whatever, and what if every area of our life, every area of our occupation came under God's control, and what if from eight to five or whatever hours or 24-7, we say, everything that I do is to honor God, glorify Jesus, honor Jesus, glorify God, and build the kingdom.

[42 : 02] How different would that look than everything we do, washing a dish, treating a patient, taking care of a load of wash, or selling something, or teaching somebody, whatever it is, we say, this I'm doing for him.

It's not about making more money, it's not about being the most successful, it's about exalting the glory of God in the workplace. So we leave behind all things, and what do we do?

We live for one thing, live for one thing. Who do we live for? We live to honor the king. We live to honor the king.

That's the one thing that drives a disciple and a follower of Jesus Christ. We wake up in the morning and say, God, make the glory of the king known in my life today.

Let me glorify you in everything that I do today. I live for the honor of the king. We have to see this as a follower of Jesus. That we wake up and we say, not what can I get today, not what can I have today, but God, how can I glorify you today?

[43 : 13] How can I live for you? How can I be a blessing to someone else today? Now, very quickly as we close, we've got a contrast here. And some might say, well, you know, that's being a little bit too stereotypical and you're being a little bit too general in this, but I really don't think that I am.

And the contrast is this. I believe that American Christianity, by and large, is extremely self-centered. American Christianity is extremely self-centered because we say, well, I am trusting Jesus so I don't have to go to hell.

What is that? That's self-centered because it's saying what's in it for me. Now, it doesn't mean that's a horrible motive. I'm just saying that can't be our only motive because we'll see later in the following weeks that our salvation is not primarily for us.

Why were we saved? To honor God. So that the angels, all the principalities, all the powers could see how awesome the grace of God is that he did it for us.

You know, American Christianity thinks that God did everything for us. No, he did it for himself because we are so loved by him. See, it's a total package.

[44 : 33] God did everything for himself because he wants his name to be honored and glorified by showing his grace toward us and bringing us into his family. He wants to have a relationship with us.

But it's not all about us. Someone said, well, you know what? There's not enough stuff for my kids to do with this church. So what will we do? We'll go find another church. So we have the consumeristic mindset.

And so we have to understand that Christianity, following Jesus, is not self-centered. But what we see in the New Testament is that biblical disciple-making is extremely God-centered.

Because remember, our purpose of our salvation is not primarily for us. It's for God to show his glory. God to show his grace. That's what the Bible says. That's what the Bible teaches.

It's all about him. It's not about us. We're just glad to be part of his story. We're just glad to be... I'm excited that he loves me. And I'm excited that he wanted to show his power and his glory and his grace by making it possible for my sins to be forgiven and being a part of his family.

[45 : 49] Now, we will not see in the Gospels or in the New Testament, for that matter, you will not see a people who are satisfied to receive forgiveness at the expense of Jesus and go on living in a casual acquaintance with him.

That is not biblical. Biblical discipleship involves complete abandonment for the glory of Christ. So as we go through this, this is not a comfortable message to preach.

because I see how short I fall in all of this. And I see how much I like my comfort. I see how difficult the life that Jesus is calling us all to live.

But it's important that we understand he didn't give us the luxury of picking and choosing the life that we want.

He said, if you want to be to be part of the kingdom, he says, what? Abandon all and follow me. We hold on to everything so loosely and grip so tightly to Jesus.

[47 : 00] Because think about it. People who are living around the world today. Now, I'll close with this. We in America really are ignorant.

And I mean that not in a bad way. I just say we're ignorant. Because what if, what about people who are living in countries that it's against the law to read a Bible and to talk about Jesus?

And they stand your family in front of you. And they say, if you don't renounce Jesus, I'm going to shoot your wife and I'm going to cut the heads off your kids.

Think for a moment. Does that bring the words of Jesus, hate mother, hate father, hate brother, hate sister, into focus? Which do you love more?

Do you love your spouse? And do you love your kids more than me? Are you willing to renounce my name? Or do you love mother and father and kids more than me?

[48 : 08] You see, we don't know what that is like. But there are many Christians across the world who face that same decision. Who have faced that same decision.

To be a follower of Jesus. It means that we have to hold on so loosely. And that's hard for us. Family. I mean, that's important. But Jesus says, if it's family or me, it has to be me.

It's hard. His disciples understood it. It's hard for us to understand. Because we've never had to live that. We've never had to make that choice. But that's what a true disciple of Jesus really means.

Let's pray. Father, this morning, we thank you for your love for us. And while we understand that, we don't understand what it fully means to be a disciple.

A fully committed, lifelong learner and follower of Jesus Christ. In American Christianity, we don't really understand what it means to abandon everything to follow you.

[49 : 20] Because we don't. Because in our culture, we can say, I love you, and I want to be a part of your family, and really our lifestyle would barely have to change for many people.

And so, Father, help us to to know some, eventually we may have to know by experience. But, Father, help us to cling tightly to you, surrender to you, and be willing and die to ourselves and follow you.

Lord God, I pray that you would encourage us today. I know this was a difficult message to preach, a difficult message to hear. No more difficult than it was for the followers of Jesus to hear 2,000 years ago, and many left because it was too difficult.

So, Father, please help us to live for you, to honor you, and to be disciples and to be disciple makers. And as you teach us how, as you teach us, and as we see our Lord's method for making disciples, then, Father, help us to learn that as well.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.