

## The Call to Discipleship

**Intro: This morning we looked at the meaning of discipleship. Discipleship means...**

*Diligently learning His teaching*

*Patterning our lives after His example*

*Giving Him control of our lives*

*Showing total loyalty to Him over all others*

*Making a carefully-weighed commitment to Him*

**I confess that it is a challenging set of demands. And when people hear these demands, they may conclude that it is just too much to ask of any human being. And then when they read the words about "counting the cost" they may even be left with uncertainty about whether being a disciple is even doable. They may ask, "If Jesus is demanding so much of us and urging us to count the cost, is He not discouraging us from making the decision to be a disciple?"**

**Not at all! He wants us to understand the demands and challenges of discipleship; but He also wants us to understand that the cost is worth it—that the blessings of discipleship are truly worth the effort. So then let's consider why we should want to become a disciple of Jesus.**

**Each of the demands of discipleship brings great blessing to us.**

### The Blessings of Discipleship

*The choice to learn from Jesus is to possess clarity and direction in life.*

Jesus teaching give us clarity about what is true and freeing.

*Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (Jn. 8:31-32)*

Listening to Jesus will show us the right way to live and free us from the guilt, the sorrow, and the enslavement of sin. Instead we can experience the joy and peace of His forgiveness and live with an assurance that we are right with Him.

His teaching will give us direction.

*Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." (Jn. 8:12)*

Listening to Jesus will help us avoid the dangers of our own self-direction; and gives us light to guide our path. It will enable us to be a light to others in the darkness, showing them a better way.

If we have clarity and direction, we can live with purpose, knowing that we are fulfilling our divinely-created purpose and that we will find our place in God's story—living forever with Him.

*The choice to follow Jesus is to bless others and to please (and glorify) the Father, so that He in turn will exalt us with Jesus.*

It is important to think about what blessing Jesus brought to the lives of people—His teaching encouraged them. It gave them hope. And His acts of love healed them, brought them joy, and made them thank and glorify God.

Jesus urged people to follow Him, not because of some egotistical desire to have a following, but because He could lead them into a life that blesses others and that pleases the Father. So He described His life:

*“And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.”* (John 8:29)

The Father gave His testimony to that fact.

*“This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!”* (Matthew 17:5)

And because we live a life that pleases Him we can hope to be exalted with Jesus eternally.

*“For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”* (Colossians 3:3–4)

Jesus prayed for that:

*Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world.* (John 17:24)

The Lord’s apostles promised it:

*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.* (Rom. 8:16-17)

We can make it our hope.

*“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”* (1 John 3:2–3)

***The choice to deny self and to let Him have control (or to make Him Lord) is to truly find ourselves and to experience true life.***

The challenge to deny self may not seem intuitive to us. We imagine that our personal happiness and well-being has to be rooted in the fact that we are in charge of our lives. But all throughout Scripture we are made to appreciate the fact that the human heart is deceitful, and that we are not capable of directing our way without the help of God.

*“I know, O LORD, that a man’s way is not in himself; Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.”* (Jeremiah 10:23)

*“The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?”* (Jeremiah 17:9)

Jesus promises that those who surrender their will to His will find true life—life as it was intended to be lived.

*For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. (Mt. 16:25)*

Jesus seeks to rescue us from the heavy-laden labor of sin and even self-righteousness. Instead He promises that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Giving him control will bring rest to our souls (Mt. 11:28-30). He demands obedience in through it He offers His wonderful grace!

It enables us to live the life we were created to live and that He came to give us.

*“The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.” (John 10:10)*

***The choice to be loyal to Him over all others and put him first over every earthly thing is to be free from earthly control and inherit all things heavenly.***

Being loyal to Jesus over all others and all things frees us from the control of human agendas and self-serving people who manipulate people for their own advantage. Life can be incredibly freeing when all you want ultimately to do is please your heavenly Father!

Jesus assures us that no sacrifice we make for discipleship will go unrewarded both in this life and in the life to come.

*And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name’s sake, shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life. (Mt. 19:29)*

And he has taught that there will be a great judgment in which we will at last be recompensed for our actions in this life.

He assures us that all that we done for His sake will follow us after death and be rewarded.

*“And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, ‘Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.”*

(Revelation 14:13)

What we do for the Lord is not left behind but follows us to the judgment.

And our reward in heaven will be worth every sacrifice.

*“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” (Romans 8:18)*

**Conclusion: Once more it is important that we make a carefully-weighed decision. Just as we need to carefully weigh the costs of discipleship, we also need to carefully weigh the rewards. When we understand the blessings of discipleship, we can see that the demands of discipleship, though challenging, are the best and the only way to live.**

**And we can also see that what we might gain for only this life through a life of disobedience cannot begin to compare with what we gain for eternity. Imagining the best possible scenario for earthly life Jesus urges us to make a carefully-weighed comparison:**

*For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds. (Mt. 16:26-27)*