



“And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple,” Luke 14:27.

### **Jesus Speaks On Discipleship**

**Lesson Aim:** To aid believers in being faithful disciples of Jesus.

**L83. Date:** November 1970. **Text:** Luke 9:23-26; Matthew 10:37-39; 16:24-27. **Topic:** Christ: Teachings of; Discipleship.

#### INTRODUCTION

What a wonderful thing to be a disciple of Jesus. How honored were those men chosen by Him to make up “the twelve.” It would have been the greatest privilege to have walked with Him, seen His miracles, listened to His words, and received the revelation of God which He brought to men.

But the Bible makes it clear that discipleship is not a thing of the past. Those who trust Him, love Him, and serve Him today are surely disciples of Jesus as were Peter, James, and John. Just as they heard His, “**Follow me,**” so can we if our hearts are tuned to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

A disciple is “one who gives personal adherence to the views and doctrines of his teacher personally accepting them and assisting in spreading them.” This means the Bible-believing Christian who is concerned about helping others be saved is a disciple of Jesus.

The call of the Lord Jesus upon your life today is a call to discipleship. He wants you to believe the truths He taught. He wants you to cling to Him by personal choice. He wants you to lead others to trust Him as Saviour and obey Him as Lord. In so doing you will truly be a disciple of Jesus.

Today's lessons aims “to aid believers in being faithful disciples of Jesus.” As you study, therefore, keep alert to find any truth which you could apply to your life and thus be a better disciple.

#### EXPOSITION

## I. DISCIPLESHIP DEFINED

The term “disciple” has an interesting derivation. The English word “disciple” is derived from the Latin “**discipulus**” which comes, in turn, from the Greek “**mathetes**.” The Greek term means “a pupil or learner.” In secular literature it was used to describe a philosopher's understudy. The first and basic meaning of the term, therefore, is “one who learns under the guidance of a teacher.”

But Jesus used the term in a larger sense than this. It is used in Acts 11:26 as equivalent to “believers in Jesus.” Luke 14:26-27, 33 applies it in such a way as to mean a learner in the school of Christ, but more definitely “one committed to a sacrificial life for His sake.” Matthew 28:19 uses the term in the great commission to mean “one who makes disciples of others.” To “teach” in that context means “to disciple” others. A disciple is, therefore, one who makes disciples of others.

Jesus makes it clear that responsibility, not honor, is the key idea in discipleship. The disciple must be humbled by his privilege, not puffed up by his position.

Since the basic concept of discipleship is devotion to a teacher, the disciple is always subject to his master. Always he is to learn from Him, obey Him, and promote His interests. This is why Jesus said, **“The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. . .”** Matthew 10:24-25.

In view of these facts, can you truly say you are a disciple of Jesus? What changes, if any, would true discipleship demand in you?

## II. DISCIPLESHIP APPLIED

1. Apply this concept of discipleship to persons. In the family circle true discipleship means that Jesus is loved more than father, mother, son, or daughter, Matthew 10:37. Applied outside the family circle true discipleship means that believers love one another without respect of divisions common among men, John 13:35. Superior love to Jesus is the undeniable sign of true discipleship.

True discipleship, applied to one's own self, is expressed in Luke 9:23, **“ . . . If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”** Behold the demands of discipleship! To “take up his cross daily, and follow me” does not mean to bear an oppressive

burden each day, nor to take a responsibility in promoting religion, nor to practice self denial. No, it goes much deeper than that. To “follow” means to imitate as a lad imitates his elder. Jesus said that discipleship meant taking up our cross as He took up His cross and imitating Him so that we do with our cross just what He did with His. He died on His cross!

Real discipleship, therefore, means the carnal “self” is put to death that the Lord Jesus Christ may live upon the throne of the life. It is the grain of wheat falling into the ground and dying so that it may produce much fruit, John 12:24. It is saying by faith, “. . . it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives His life in me.” See Galatians 2 20.

This is not a call to special service demanded only of select workers as missionaries, evangelists, pastors, teachers, or soul winners. Jesus said to “them all . . . if any man. . .” **“And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, can not be my disciple,”** Luke 14:27. **“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it,”** Luke 9:24.

This means trusting Jesus as your Saviour does not make you a true disciple. Church membership alone does not make you a true disciple. Occasional acts of religious service do not make you a full disciple. Only when by faith you admit that your old self died with Jesus on the cross and that His resurrection life lives in you (so that the life you live is no longer your own but His life in you) do you enter into what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus.

But what does it mean to take up the cross “daily”? There must be a daily reckoning of your death to self and new life in Christ Jesus. There is a development of this truth in Romans 6. Even though that chapter is beyond the scope of this lesson on the teachings of Jesus, the interested reader should pursue it in prayerful detail.

2. Apply this concept of discipleship to possessions. To be totally devoted to Jesus means that no present or potential possession is to be held more dear than He. Jesus said, “. . . **Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple,**” Luke 14:33.

How literally must this demand be taken? It does not mean, of course, that the Christian disciple cannot own property or engage in business. Jesus elsewhere speaks of our stewardship of material possessions and assumes that believers will have such possessions. But Jesus said that the true disciples must renounce in his heart any allegiance to possessions which would be superior to allegiance to Himself. All he has must be held and administered in the spirit that it is available for the Lord's use when He calls for it. With such a spirit one can “forsake, all that he hath” at the same time

he administers it and enjoys the benefits of it.

Can you honestly apply this principle of discipleship to your personal possessions?

3. Apply this concept of discipleship to service. On the night of His betrayal and arrest, before He was crucified the next day, Jesus gave His disciples the secret of successful service. His words are recorded in John 15:1-8.

Look at a grape vine (or a fruit tree) to get the picture. The fruit is born on the branches, not on the main stalk. But the branches are powerless to produce fruit, or even to sustain their life, apart from the stalk. That which they receive from the stalk enables them to produce fruit according to their nature.

True discipleship means the believers (the branch) gives up any hope of doing any good thing for Jesus (the stalk) in the strength of his carnal flesh. He depends solely upon that which Jesus provides—Christ working through him—to produce fruit. The fruit produced is by the power of God. Man is no longer under obligation to do for Him, but to be available that He might do through man. All depends upon His ability and our availability.

In the light of this concept, are you a faithful steward in your service for Jesus?

4. Apply this concept of discipleship to conduct. Jesus said to certain Jews who believed on Him, “. . . **If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed,**” John 8:31. Applied to conduct, therefore, discipleship means to live according to the principles of the Word of God. The true disciple hides God's word in his heart and it produces fruit in the form of a life consistent with the will of God. The Christian life is the out-living of the in-dwelling Word.

In the light of this concept, can you honestly say that you are a faithful steward of Jesus in the way you act? What about a look of lust, pride of spirit, personal ambition, investment of time, etc.? Are you really a faithful steward?

### III. DISCIPLESHIP REWARDED

1. Discipleship is rewarded in the enjoyment of the larger life here and now. Jesus said that he who “loseth” his life for Jesus' sake shall “find” it. On the other hand, he who tries to keep his life for himself, not considering the will of God nor the demands of discipleship, would “lose” it, Matthew 10:39; 16:25. A man would be the worse off if he gained the whole world but failed to enter into this larger life in Christ, Matthew 16:25-27. Those

who enter the true life of discipleship “shall receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting,” Luke 18:30.

Ponder this point seriously. So many believers are living poor, infantile, defeated lives simply because they have not entered into the spirit of real discipleship. Listen to these words of Jesus, **“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit,”** John 12:24.

Here is the secret! True discipleship is rewarded by a full and fruitful life day by day as the disciple follows his Master. In view of this truth, can it be correctly stated that you are a real disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ?

2. Discipleship will be rewarded when Jesus comes again. **“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works,”** Matthew 16:27. Believing these truths, multitudes of believers have served the Lord Jesus selflessly expecting to be “recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” See this principle illustrated in parables Jesus told as recorded in Matthew 25. It behooves each believer to be the kind of disciple who will receive a full reward.

Jesus does not go into detail at this point. But elsewhere in the New Testament it is made clear that believers will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to be judged and to receive rewards. At that day each deed, word, and thought will be examined. Because each of these are involved in the true expression of discipleship.

## CONCLUSION

Discipleship is a wonderful opportunity. But discipleship is accompanied by responsibility. Jesus warned that, **“... unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required. . .”** Luke 12:48.

How much has been given to you? You have heard the gospel, you have received Jesus as Saviour, and you have confessed that you have become a disciple of His. Therefore, you will account in every area of Christian stewardship.

## QUESTIONS

1. What is a disciple?
2. What is a disciple's relation to his master?
3. How is discipleship applied in the family?
4. How is it to be applied to self?

5. What does it mean to “take up the cross” and follow Jesus?
6. Why is this to be a “daily” experience?