

# The Making of a Disciple - Part 2

by David Roper

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*The Lord is looking for men who will be willing to take every area of their life and lay it in His hands, and who will be used in the great job of building and establishing the church.*

**Duration:** 27:13

**Scripture:** Matthew 11:28, Luke 14:25-27, Luke 14:33, Luke 14:35 - 15:2, Romans 12:1-2

**Topics:** "Discipleship", "Sacrificial Living"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses how Jesus intentionally offends and antagonizes the crowd that gathers around him. He recognizes that many people are following him for selfish motives and seeks to thin out the ranks by revealing the true terms of discipleship. The preacher emphasizes that becoming a disciple of Jesus requires complete surrender and sacrifice, including our families, time, and possessions. He also highlights the importance of living for the highest good of others and renouncing anything that possesses our hearts before our allegiance to Christ.

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## Transcript

I'm sure you must have been struck by the, what seemed to be the harsh tone of these words from the Lord, the one who told us that the greatest commandment is to love our neighbor, to love God and to love our neighbor, and then to speak of hating our family, seemed to be very, very hard to reconcile. And I'm sure these words must have struck the disciples with even greater force than they strike us. The Lord was certainly an enigma to the disciples.

He was always saying strange things. They could never quite determine what he was going to do next. Just when they thought they had this strange man figured out in their thinking, he would say something that would completely derail them.

They never knew him, and of course we can never know him. The Lord himself said, no one knows the Son but the Father. And he'll always be upsetting us by the strange things that he says, but I think that we can, in some measure, reconcile this passage to what Scripture tells us in other places about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

This is peculiar. The Lord, at the very outset of his ministry, said that anyone could come to him. His invitation was to come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I'll give you rest.

And men began to respond in great numbers. Luke takes note of the fact that there were great multitudes that were following the Lord at this time. And now, instead of gathering this group together and beginning to teach them, he begins to warn them against himself.

Instead of inflaming their hearts, he throws cold water on them. He seems to go out of his way to offend and antagonize the very people that seem to indicate success in the part of his ministry. And I think the answer is found in the nature of the crowd that was beginning to gather around the Lord at this time.

It was followed by all sorts of people, people who listened to his words, watched his actions, wanted to be a part of this great movement, but the Lord knew their hearts. And he knew that they were following him for what they could receive, that their motives were selfish. And he began to do as he said he would do, to thin out the ranks.

And in this section, he gives them a revelation of the only terms by which a man can become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Three times, he gives us the terms without which he says, no one can be my disciple. In verse 26, in verse 27, and in verse 33, he lays down the terms.

And then by means of two parables, he clearly explains the reason for the severity of these terms. Now let's examine first the terms of discipleship. And these are solemn words.

In verse 26, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. He hits at the very heart of every human relationship, the dearest relationships that we have. That these have to be laid aside out of loyalty to Jesus Christ.

And then in verse 27, he says, whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. He moves into the personal life and the necessity for laying aside our personal ambitions, our own aims and goals in life. And then third, in verse 33, therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Strikes at our possessions, the things that we own and says we must abandon these. Without these terms, he says, you cannot be my disciple. Now, frankly, when I read a passage like this, I have to ask myself the question, if these are the terms, am I a disciple? Because these are certainly harsh, restricting terms.

And it would seem like the one who is noted for his love, concern for people has turned into a legalist. Laying down demands that are impossible and saying that unless you fulfill these requirements, you'll never be my disciple. Now, let's look in detail at these terms.

The first, he says that we must hate mother and father and wife and children and brothers and sisters. Yes, and even our own lives. We have to remember, I think, that the Lord frequently used shocking words to arrest people's attention.

It's like an alarm, a sort of a shock producing sound that alerted people to danger. He's not saying that we have to develop a malicious, hateful spirit in regard to our family in order to follow him. He's not saying that we have to abandon our homes or ignore our families if we're going to follow him because this would ignore much of the revelation in other parts of Scripture that tells us we must love mother and father.

We must love our wives as Christ loved the church. We must obey mother and father. He's not saying this.

He's saying that we must be alerted to the possibility of a competition in loyalty between Jesus Christ and those that we love. That love for the Lord takes precedence over all other loyalties. That he must be first.

And often when we choose to follow him, it will appear that we hate those that we should love in terms of an earthly relationship. I have a good friend, Jim Hutchins, who was a chaplain in Vietnam for 18 months. And at the end of his tour, he chose to go back to Vietnam to extend his period there because of the ministry that God had given him and the great numbers of men that were responding to the call to come to Jesus Christ.

And he felt that the Lord had laid upon him the necessity of going back to Vietnam. And so he went out of obedience to the Lord. It wasn't easy.

He loved his family. And to those of us who knew Jim and his family, it would appear as though he turned his back on his family and hated them and abandoned them. But it wasn't this at all.

Jim would have liked nothing better than to spend this time with his family, but there was a higher claim on his life. His loyalty to Jesus Christ. So he went back to Vietnam out of obedience to that call.

Now, that's what the Lord is saying, that Jesus must have the top priorities in our life. Our first loyalties go to Him. Now, notice He does not name sin as a major deterrent to being a disciple.

We think of the things that we do, the attitudes, the rebellious actions, as the things that keep us from following the Lord. But He didn't put His finger on this, on specific sin. He put His finger on the human relationships, the loyalties that we have to people.

There's nothing greater than love for mother and father. Mother love is a cardinal virtue. But He's saying that even these things may and do challenge our loyalty to Jesus Christ.

Our love for our families can be the thing that turns us against the Lord. The point is that every relationship has to be examined and regulated by our determination to be a disciple. Does this relationship draw me closer to the Lord, or does it separate me? I've known many young people that have had to walk away from a love relationship because they sensed that to continue this relationship would drive them farther away from the Lord.

I've had friends that have walked away from opportunities to be in partnership with their father because of a higher claim on their life. And it's been difficult, it's been hard, it's hurt. They've had to walk across their own hearts to do it, but they did it out of obedience to Jesus Christ because He comes first.

And that's why the Lord said, you must hate your own life to follow Me. And this is no justification for abusing our parents, or our wives, or our children. The Lord warned against that attitude when He referred to the actions of certain Jews who brought a sacrifice into the temple and said, this is reserved for God, when actually they intended to use it for themselves, unless they were able to keep the money out of the hands of their parents.

This is not what He's talking about. Our love for Jesus Christ ought to cause us to love our families, and to love our parents and our children with a greater love than we could ever have for them. But what He's saying is, in terms of contrast, we must first love Jesus Christ.

And every other relationship is to be subservient to that. And it may appear that we hate those around us because of decisions we have to make out of our love for Jesus Christ, but He comes first. Now He interprets this, I think, by the second term in verse 27, when He says, whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

In order to understand what He meant by the cross, we have to think of this in terms of the disciples' thinking at this time, because if they saw a man dragging a cross up a hill, they would know that that man was going out to die. That he was dying to his own personal life. That he was emptying himself of any possibility of fulfilling his own ambitions.

And this is what the Lord is saying. In order to be a disciple, there has to be a willingness to set aside every personal ambition, every personal goal, all things that are precious to us in our program, and place these things under His authority. Now this was the cross that the Lord Himself endured.

Philippians says that the Lord did not think it a thing to be grasped after, to be equal with God, but He set this aside, and He made Himself a servant to man, and He became obedient unto death, even the death of a cross. He poured out His life for all men, out of obedience to His Father. He set aside His prerogatives as God, He came to earth, identified Himself with men, set aside all the glory that was His for us.

A cross always has this vicarious aspect to it. Now the Lord says that if we are to follow Him, this is our program as well. To set aside our own ambitions and goals, to place them under the authority of Jesus Christ, and to follow Him no matter what it might cost us, and to do this on behalf of others.

Paul writes in Romans 15 that we who are strong ought to bear with the feelings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to edify him, for Christ did not please Himself. He didn't seek His own selfish motives.

He came to seek and to save the lost. And Jesus says if we are going to be a disciple, that must be our program as well. Not to live for self, but to live for the highest good of others.

If we are going to enter Christ's enterprise, we have to do it His way. And third, in verse 33, he says we must renounce all that we have. Our possessions.

Now granted God gives us everything we have. It's not the things that we own. It's the things that own us that God is talking about.

He's not talking about possessions per se, but the things that possess our heart that we have. That come before our allegiance to Jesus Christ. They have to go.

They have to be brought into proper relationship to Jesus Christ. Now these are the terms. They have to do with the most dear, the most personal human relationships that we have, that the Lord Jesus Christ must come before any other relationship.

It has to do with our own personal ambitions and goals. It has to do with our possessions. The things that we own.

Now God may not necessarily take these things away from us. But if I'm going to be a disciple, I must be willing to yield them to Him. What if God does take our family? Or dash our fondest dreams? Or take our prized possessions? How will we react? With bitterness? With anger against God? With rebellion in our

hearts? Then it's an indication that we love these things more than we love the Lord Jesus.

Corrie Ten Boom, who ministered so faithfully for so many years, and who was here in this area for a time, made a comment to the effect that she had learned, out of obedience to the Lord, to hold things loosely in her hand, because she had discovered that she had a tendency to grasp them tightly, and the Lord had to pry her fingers away from these things, and it hurt. And what he's saying is that we must, for the sake of Jesus Christ, if we're going to be a disciple, hold things loosely. Count nothing as our own.

Everything is a gift given to us by God to be used for Him, to be enjoyed. Yes, but most of all, to be placed under His authority. And only thus can we be a disciple.

Now, having declared the terms, in no uncertain terms, he gives the reason for the stringency of these terms, and uses two figures, two parables. One, of a man who built a tower. For which of you desiring to build a tower does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it.

Otherwise, when he has laid a 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. And secondly, he uses a parable of a king going to encounter another king in war. Will he not sit down first and take counsel, whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends an embassy and asks terms of peace.

Now, why these two figures? Is he saying that we need to count the cost? Like a man who goes out to build a tower? Or a king who goes to war? I don't think so. If that's what he means, it really doesn't make sense. Because he just told them that they're not to count the cost.

That there is no comparison between love of family and love of Jesus Christ. That you cannot make any kind of cost appraisal on a human relationship. It's not a profit-loss transaction.

He says there's to be no hesitancy regarding fellowshiping with him in the cross. No, it's not they who must count the cost. But he who must count the cost.

He's the king going out to war. He's the builder going out to erect a tower. You see, these two figures run all the way through the Scriptures.

That God is in the world for building. Building men and building a church. And he's here to do battle against the forces of the world, the flesh and the devil.

And it's he who has to reckon on the quality of his builders and his warriors. Jesus said, I've come to build my church. It's the building aspect.

And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. That's the warfare that's going on. He said that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers.

Rulers of wickedness in high places. That's the battle. The apostle spoke frequently of building a house of God.

That the church is a great temple that we're building. These two figures run all the way through Scripture of building and fighting. And the supreme question that the Lord answers, asks, is that will I have enough men qualified who will stand by me until the building is done and the battle is over? In the Old Testament, there's a story of Nehemiah who went back to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls that had been destroyed.

And when they got there, they discovered that there was a great deal of opposition to the building. And so it was necessary for Nehemiah to arm his men, not only with a trowel, but with a sword. They built with one hand and they fought with the other.

Half of them were given over to the responsibility of erecting the wall, the others defending those that were building. And this is the figure again. It's asking for men who will build and who will do battle.

He's not concerned about the numbers, but he is concerned about the quality of those that he entrusts to this task. The Lord is sifting the crowd. And I think this explains the severity of these words, because he's not concerned about size.

We talked about this last week. Size is no guarantee of success. But he is concerned about the quality of the men that are following him.

Also a story in the Old Testament of Gideon, who discovered from God the truth that 300 men are adequate to do the job. He could have had 32,000, but he would rather have had 300 picked men whose hearts he could count on, who were valiant men. The Lord emphasizes this principle by another analogy in the last two verses in this chapter, verses 34 and 35.

He talks about salt and the quality of salt. Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? The Lord had told the disciples earlier that they were the salt of the earth. They understood what he meant.

What he's saying is that they're no use to him unless they have the true quality of salt, the bite, the aseptic quality of salt, its ability to arrest the spread of corruption in the world. So what the Lord is looking for is disciples who have this salty quality that he can deploy out through the world, that will be used in this great job of building, of establishing, of fighting the fight of faith. Now, I sense that each one of us has a hunger to be put to use.

We want to be a part of this enterprise. And we want to be men and women of quality that the Lord can use. And I feel that these words are for us, for me.

At first sight they do sound harsh, but I think that this is nothing more than the words of a surgeon who is forced to operate, to engage in a radical operation to help someone. And he knows that if he does not cut deeply into the flesh, anything he does will be superficial and the man will never be whole again. And so he addresses these difficult words to the disciples that cut deeply into their lives to alert them to the fact that they must be willing to allow Jesus Christ to do whatever he wishes in their life.

They must be willing to take every area of their life and lay it in his hands. Because God wants to heal and he wants to put to use. A half-hearted spirit will keep us from the excitement of being where God is working.

We'll be caught in some little eddy and we'll watch the mainstream of God's purposes pass us right by. But as Paul says, if we present our bodies a living sacrifice, if we'll make ourselves available to him, our families, our time, our possessions, all that we have, God will put us to use. And finally, in the first two verses of chapter 15, we note the response of the people that were gathered.

He closed in chapter 14 with these words, He who has ears to hear, let him hear. And Luke says that tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And I think there's a significant connection here

because these were the people, the sinners, the publicans who heard him and who wanted to be a part of this operation, who were willing to allow Jesus Christ to move into their lives and correct and to do whatever needed to be done to qualify them.

But the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, This man receives sinners and eats with them. They were repelled because there was too much to give up. But Jesus delights to take sinners and turn them into soldiers if they'll just turn to him.

Shall we pray? Our loving Father, it's our desire this morning to be a part of what you're doing in the world. And we know these are difficult words. And there's not one of us that is not struck by the fact that we have areas of our own lives to which we're clinging desperately that need to be brought into submission to you.

But it's our desire to be a disciple, to follow you and become fishers of men, to be the kind of people that you intend us to be in a world that's desperately looking for life and reality. And so we ask that we might be this for your sake. And in your name we ask this.

Amen. The words of our mouth and the meditation of our hearts, our very actions, all that we say and are, that these might be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, this week. And we claim you as our strength and our Redeemer.

Amen.

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