

Jesus and Discipleship

by Dean Taylor

Jesus' method of discipling is a call to radical commitment, where individuals must prioritize their relationship with him above all else, including family, possessions, and national standing.

Duration: 1:10:35

Scripture: Matthew 16:24, Acts 2:44

Topics: "Discipleship", "Sacrificial Living"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of discipleship, focusing on the need to abandon worldly associations, live in intimate fellowship, actively engage in ministry, and embrace the cross. It calls for a transformation in the church to reflect the sacrificial spirit of the early church and fulfill the ministry of reconciliation, becoming a colony of heaven on earth.

Transcript

It is really a blessing to be here. This has been kind of a reunion for us. We've had a very busy summer down in Mexico and just got back literally days before we came out this way.

And seeing some of you has been such a blessing. Seeing all of you has been such a blessing. Some of you have been getting a lot older.

I'm glad that I haven't been aging like you have, but it's amazing. And seeing some of you, it's just a tremendous blessing. I can't think of a better place to come and to sing.

And Brother John D leading music, they have Matthias have overhauled singing. I'm just tremendously blessed already. I'm also blessed with this theme, this idea of discipleship that was given to us, the speakers that were given these topics.

And as you look at this concept of discipleship, I agree that I think it's very important. Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it this way. He said, Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.

John Wesley said, and as I ponder some of the powerful things that I have personally experienced in my life, even here, even at this camp, even in Lancaster County, even in this whole area, John Wesley has a challenging word when he speaks of just the movements of God. He says, I am more and more convinced that the devil himself desires nothing more than this, that the people of any place should be half awakened and then left to themselves to fall asleep again. And as he spoke of this, he spoke of his desire to have his

discipling programs that he did, which eventually was called the Methodist Church, part of what he was about.

I have been blessed in my life, I think of the men that I've had in my life, and I should be much further, seriously, in my journey from the people that I have had the pleasure. I think of my life, some of the people who have taken time to disciple me, the Briseau family, David Briseau, Brother John D. Martin sitting here has been a big part of discipling in my life, Denny Kiniston had a big part, Brother Dale Heisey sitting here recently, even through some of the difficulties over the last few years, and Brother, your tapes and your ministry and just meeting with me at times has been a big importance to me. And I thank the Lord for that.

And I do see the importance of this. Because I do believe there is a crisis since in the earth today. You know, history goes through times of ups and downs, but every now and then, or every so many centuries or so, there's a big change.

There's bigger things happening. And there's many things, both from the economic and from the spiritual and from the things that we see in this earth, that it seems to be that we are heading towards one of those times. And through this, I have sensed and I have been speaking to many people that there is an encouraging paradigm shift.

And I'm encouraged to be here this morning and just with the people that are here, I'm encouraged in being around some of these young fellowships that are now taking those words of Jesus and beginning to take them very seriously. Churches that are based around ministries and activities and works of God. And several of the groups that are represented here, I'm not just flattering you.

You can listen to my places that I speak. I brag on you all the time. And they're almost all here this morning.

And so I praise the Lord for that. I thank the Lord for that. So it's tremendously blessed to be here.

You know, as they gave me the topic when all the different things came, and the topic that came to me was the topic of Jesus in discipleship. And I'm blessed with that. But it's very challenging.

I've had a sort of, I don't know, calling on my life, a burden on my life to try, one of my models in my life is to try to put the teachings of Jesus in as most practical way as possible by the grace of God. And that's, see, that's been my journey. When I was in the army, it was the revelation that Jesus meant what he said that changed everything for me.

And so that's been a continued journey for me. And so I've tried, and I have failed this miserably, but it's been my attempt, it's been what I've tried to do is to put the teachings of Jesus into practice. And so as we look at this theme today, Jesus in discipleship, I'm going to try to put, talk about the way that Jesus disciplined in a very literal way.

And I want to make a confession that I don't want you to think, oh, that I'm here, or that all these things, and I live in a community, so I have all these things. I need this, and our community needs these things more than you do. And so, but I see these words of Jesus.

It reminds me, the first time I heard John D. preach. Been over 20 years ago. Brother David Brisseau and I, we heard you in Oklahoma there in Perkins.

And he was preaching these things that I had never heard before. And I remember Brother David stood up, and he said, you know, I want to make a confession. I'm not where Brother John D. is.

But I dare not, how did he word it? I dare not anesthetize the teachings of Jesus to make myself feel comfortable. And so I want to bring up these discipling methods of Jesus Christ, and ponder them together with you, on a journey with you. And ponder this paradigm that I've tried to live in my life is this.

You know, what if Jesus really meant every word he said? And as we ponder that paradigm, it becomes something beautiful. Now, a few years ago, I ran across this newspaper article. And it's actually from January 25th of 1879.

Interesting newspaper article. It's a reprint from a London Times article. And it was from the New York Times, January, from the London Telegraph, repeated in the New York Times, January 25th.

And suddenly, it's about a discovery that they had found some of the manuscripts of Bach. And here's the newspaper article, it's interesting. It says, great excitement has been created in German musical circles by the discovery in an old country mansion belonging to the noble Saxon family of Witzhund, of the large number of manuscripts, compositions by John Sebastian Bach, hitherto believed to have been irretrievably lost.

Skipping a little bit, Robert Franz, the well-known composer and editor of Bach's works, determined to undertake this enterprise. They wanted to go and find and search all through Germany to see if they could find some of these manuscripts. Determined to undertake this enterprise and to set upon it in the most minute and painstaking manner imaginable, he went from town to village and from village to country house, examining garrets and cellars and turning over vast accumulations of inconceivable rubbish.

But in vain, until he came to Schloss Witzhund. There, walking through the park toward the house, he noticed that the stakes to which the young fruit and ornamental trees had been tied were padded with paper instead of leather or rags generally used in Germany to prevent young trees from chafing against the poles by which they are supported and kept straight. He went close to one of these saplings, animated, as he himself admits, more by idle curiosity than by any definite hope connected with the immediate purpose of his mission.

What was his joy? What was his horror? Upon recognizing Bach's well-known and beautiful notation upon the paper padding, he eagerly inquired of the gardener who was accompanying him through the grounds whence he had obtained, where he obtained the manuscript. The man replied phlegmatically, quote, up in the loft under the roof, there are several trunks full of old music, which was of nobody's use, so I took it and wrapped around the trees and the paper was thick and strong and it did just as well for the purpose of leather or linen rags and I've been using it for a long while now. You know, as I've noticed, when we deal with the words of Jesus, when we deal with the scriptures in a lot of ways, it's kind of like that.

We have been given these words to perform a beautiful symphony, to make music and to sing something that the world needs to hear and we turn it into some kind of weird thing. We pad paper with it and use it for something that it was never intended to be. So today as we open up the words of Jesus and look at the way he disciplined, let's ponder for a moment.

Let's all be challenged and please, don't think that I don't, or that my community doesn't need this. I guarantee you more than you do and so as we look into this, let's look together and be challenged without

anesthetizing it, the words of Jesus and discipleship. Now as we do this, first of all, we think of Jesus and his way of discipling and you know, Jesus put all his campaign, all his theology, all his grand design into the most simplest two words imaginable.

Amen. Follow me. That is Christianity.

In a nutshell, having Jesus Christ within us, following him is Christianity. You know, 1 Corinthians 1.30, what does it say? In him, somebody can quote it for me before I get there. 1 Corinthians 1.30. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus who of God has made into us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption that according as it is written, he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord.

Jesus Christ is Christianity. Albert Einstein says, if you can explain it to a six, if you can't explain it to a six-year-old, you don't understand it yourself. Albert Einstein, he said that the most brilliant concepts of complexities of physics, if you understand them properly, should be able to brought down to something simple.

And so if I could bring everything entirety of what Jesus represents, it's in those two words. Follow me. And as we look at the things I tried to break down, this is certainly not an exhaustive list, but I tried to break down some things that I saw that are challenging and trying to look at it in a practical way that Jesus did.

Now, most of these things we've spiritualized. And there's a spiritual aspect. In many ways, the idea of being discipled by Jesus Christ, far, you have to spiritualize them, but we can't repeat that.

But I'm going to dive in and look at some of the techniques that he used and try to look at it in a practical way. So four things that I wanted to bring out about Jesus and discipling. Number one, he asked them to abandon everything and follow him.

Number one, he asked them to abandon everything and follow him. Number two, he asked them to immerse them immediately into a life of constant ministry from the beginning. You can argue against it, but that's what he did.

Immediately brought the disciples into a life of constant ministry. Number three, he called those disciples to live intimately together. I think in this circle, I could even use the term, he called them to live into a sort of community.

A gathering together, an intimate fellowship dependent on each other was part of the discipling process that he did. And number four, as John Deas did say that I was going to preach on, he had them embrace the cross. He had them embrace the cross.

So let's go through those. Number one, abandon everything. Why? Why did Jesus call those apostles to abandon everything in that way? Jesus put it this way.

If anyone comes to me, speaking to those out loud, imagine you're now here. If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yay, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple. Now, again, we've spiritualized these things. I want you to bring it now more to the practical and let's be challenged by it, not anesthetizing it and looking at why did Jesus, his methods, why did he call his disciples? Why was Jesus' method of discipling such radical abandonment of their jobs, of their occupations, of their family associations, of their national standing, everything, he called for that.

Later on, when he gave them their commission to go, he said, and when he called unto them the 12, he began to send them forth by two and by two and gave them power over unclean spirit and commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only, no script, no bread, no money in their purse, but be shod with sandals and not put on two coats. You know, this idea of this total renunciation, you see, he wasn't just starting a school of thought, he was starting a nation, he was starting a kingdom. When they said Jesus is Lord, it had huge political ramifications.

See, Caesar said Caesar is Lord, there was actually statues we found that say Caesar is Lord on it, and them saying Jesus is Lord had political ramifications, it excluded that Caesar was not. It meant that Jesus was Lord, and he was planting a nation, a kingdom of God, that he wanted them to be renouncing everything else but the kingdom of God. You know, if you join and become American citizen today, I wanna read you just a clip from the oath that you have to say if you become American citizen.

Here it is. If you're coming from Yugoslavia or Russia or whatever, and you're coming to America and you're wanting to become a citizen, this is still the oath today. Quote, I hereby declare on oath that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which I have hitherto, hitherfore been a subject or citizen, that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, et cetera.

Wow. America understands the need for absolute loyalty. Jesus cried for that.

I am upset when I see, not upset, I'm disappointed when I see kingdom Christians getting involved with politics. It just means you don't understand what Jesus is Lord means. You don't understand it.

You know, in the very first command when God said you shall have no other gods before me, that concept of no other god is the Hebrew word *pani*. It means in my presence. It doesn't mean just to have the priority, like you shall have no other gods before me, more than me.

It means in my presence. You shall have no other gods in my presence, nothing. It's not just I want to be tops, I want to be everything.

And that's the kind of commitment that Jesus Christ was asking of these people. He was asking of them. John, you know, when the Pilate asked Jesus, you know, people are saying you're a king, and Jesus replied, my kingdom is not of this world unless my citizens would fight.

Pilate answered, are you a king then? I think many of us sometimes talk about our citizenship with Jesus Christ in that way. And you almost treat Jesus, are you even a king then? Truly embracing the concept of absolute allegiance to Jesus Christ was what he was asking of these apostles. But even more, he was having them take everything, all the trust they had in themselves, in their possessions, in their associations, in their families, and creating something new.

In Galatians 4.3, it says, even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. Colossians 2.8 says, see to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world rather than according to Christ. Romans chapter 12, you know the passage at verse two, and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.

That word conformed in Greek means the word that they would have like a press, you know, like a seal. It comes from external forces that are being pressed upon you to be pressed. Do not be conformed, but be transformed.

You know what the word, what's the word transform, Brother Joseph? It's the word metamorphic. It's to be transformed and like a caterpillar turns into a butterfly. Don't be conformed by this world having the outside pressures turn us into something, but be transformed, metamorphosed into something beautiful that Christ makes you.

That's what Paul's telling us. But they're going, and so they're challenging, he challenged them not only though with his political association, with his family association, but for some reason, he stripped them of even their financial dependency. He stripped them of something of relying on themselves.

And you know, I remember when in my journey, and again, I've tried to have this journey of trying to put the words of Jesus as practical as I can. That's the way I started, so it kind of affects me. And I remember one of the things that I dealt with, you know, is the classic one of the rich young ruler.

And it's always a very challenging thing, the story that Jesus gave the rich young ruler. It's one of the cries that we get here of discipling Jesus, of Jesus' form of discipleship. But I always said to myself, well, you know, it says that Jesus knew what was in his heart, so good that's not in my heart, and you know, I don't have to worry about it.

I remember another story, giving you plugs here, Brother John D. I remember setting, I was actually teaching at one of your Bible schools, and you were teaching, and you were preaching on Luke 12. And it never really hit me the same way as when Brother John D. was preaching it there. And as it says in Luke 12, verse 30, speaking Jesus is again summarizing the Sermon on the Mount, summarizing not caring about the things of this world.

And verse 30, he says, for all these things do the nations of the world seek after. And your Father knoweth that you have need of these things, but rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Sell that you have and give alms. Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, or treasure in heaven that faileth not, where no thief approach, nor neither moth corrupt. For where your treasure is there, your heart will be also.

And that's a journey. That's a continual thing. And as I've tried to follow that and be pricked in my conscience by that, God's had to rebuke me many times.

I remember one time that it strikes me that in that rebuke is when I was heading to living in a Christian community. And you know, you have a tendency to kind of pat yourself on the back and kind of think pharisaical. And as I stood out there and I looked at my moving truck, I was thinking, oh, the rich young ruler just didn't know you could call a U-Haul and get it moved to the community, you know? And so God

has continually had to beat me down with the pharisaical thinking and brought me continually on a journey.

But what I have found is that the more I surrender, the more he gives. And you can't out-give God. But he wants to do something in those apostles.

And I don't know what. I can't know exactly why Jesus was doing that. But you know, I remember one time I was at a meeting.

It was years ago. And I was at a meeting and I felt, again, something in my heart. And these brothers were giving good, solid advice, but they were talking about how to get your cause or your mission, desire, or something, how to properly ask a financial institution in Lancaster County or whatever, how to go about asking them for money and support.

And as they were giving, very practically, they had the guts to say what everybody knew what needed to be said, that, you know, you're supposed to speak good about them and behind the scenes, you should, you know, those sorts of things. And as I began to listen to that, I thought, wow, you mean we're getting to the point where because I own this wealth, I can actually control the missions of what's happening amongst the Anabaptist people. And I felt that in my own heart.

And it struck me. It struck me hard. You know, the Proverbs says, the poor man uses entreaties, but the rich man answers roughly.

So is there something why, is there something more in what Jesus asked of them? Is there something that he asked of them? You know, I found that there's maybe, you're a different man when there's something different between your being generous and being needy. I found there's something different than of, there's a difference between giving and sharing. It does something different to you as a man.

You know, I would, if any of you have ever read the book, Mere Discipleship by Lee Kemp, he makes an argument in there talking about that perhaps one of the reasons why Jesus had this sort of an idea is that when you're a different state, economically, whatever, you ask different questions. He talks about Athanasius during the big Trinity debates of the 300s and how he stood for homoousian, meaning the same substance of the Father was the term to be of if you're a Christian. He talked about Luther and how his concept of ubiquitous grace and his consubstantiation, you know, had to be defended.

And he asked in this, in that book, he says, one asks different questions of the meaning of God, depending on whether one finds oneself in the ivory towers or the slave cabin, in Pharaoh's throne or Pharaoh's mud pits, in the boardroom or the sweatshops, where we are and where we have been deeply affects who we think God is and what we think God wants us to be. This was the basis during the 70s, a movement that responded terribly in their response was the liberation theology, trying to say poor people see the Bible differently. Their response, though, some of them acted, unfortunately, with revolution.

But where you are and the situations that you see the Bible and you read the Bible differently, is there possibly something there? Now, one thing, though, that I've also noticed, okay, when you start to talk about radical Jesus economics, there's something that can tend to happen that's kind of ugly. And I don't know how to explain this the right way, but there seems to be this sense of almost a self-righteous poverty or a non-working, I don't know, it's like a misunderstanding of the idea of what Jesus is wanting to do. You see, the point is that in the midst of that surrender, Jesus desires to make us rich, to make us rich.

And not rich in a materialistic way, but that full dependence on God. You see, in the kingdom that he describes, if you go to the Sermon on the Mount, the rich guy says, ow, the poor guy says, praise the Lord. You know, this is the kingdom that he's establishing.

But the concept is that we live in a world that's kind of strange. You know, our economics of Western civilization builds our wealth on scarcity. So if something's scarce, it's valuable.

You know, like diamonds are very valuable, gold is very valuable, but, you know, fields and grass and oxygen and water, those things are not valuable. And this concept of false scarcity is something that the world lives by. Jesus, in this sense, wants to say, I will provide everything, and he does.

It's interesting, the response that he gets from the apostles. You know, Paul, I mean, excuse me, Peter, in Matthew 19 says, and answered Peter and said, behold, we have forsaken all and followed thee. What shall we have therefore? And Jesus answered that in a beautiful way.

Do you see, he gets glory from giving. And I have found this, what little tiny things I have done, and you've all done much more than I have. But what little things I've done, it's a blessing to see how God just keeps providing.

And later Jesus says, and he said unto them, when I sent you without purse and script and shoes, lack ye anything? And they said, nothing. So this concept of blessing Jesus and coming to him is one of the biggest rejoicing that he gets. And so the desire in the kingdom that we go forth in these ministries, he sent the apostles out, he's establishing something he wants to be glorified in these disciples.

For some reason, he stripped them of that way. He stripped them. Now, there's another thing that comes a little challenging that happens when you get around on a radical thinking.

Now, there's many things that rebuke in the scriptures as far as living luxuriously and living by pleasure and living your pleasure and that sort of thing. But Jesus goes further than that to the disciples. He rebukes them not just for living luxuriously, that's what they weren't, but he rebukes the concept of just having storage.

He wants that faith trust in him. You know, what did the guy who built bigger barns do wrong? He just had a good crop. Hey, the sun came in that well and he built bigger barns.

His problem was that he just kept resting on that. For some reason within radical economics, there's sometimes a concept, well, I'll just have kind of an old car and an old house, but I'll have these big storehouses. Jesus wants to the disciples to touch that, to touch that.

And there's something about having that lack of control and circulating that thing. There's a book, can't necessarily recommend, by Lewis Hyde, who speaks of the concept of this gift being returned and going around and received by different people. And he brings up an interesting quote, that's where I got the quote from, that when the Puritans came to Massachusetts up here, there's a diary written in 1764 where they talked about this idea of the way the Indians gave things, the Indian generosity, and they used the term, and this is where we get the term, and they were Indian givers.

And what the concept was is that, okay, so they're setting there, the Puritans there, and the American Indian gives him a peace pipe. So he gives him the peace pipe, but instead of circling, letting this, then giving the peace pipe to someone else and giving to someone else, the colonist said, great, I'll go send

this to the British Museum. And he sends it off to the British Museum.

And it's taken out of the use and the circulation of what God has intended those gifts to be. He wants us to have that generosity and that gift that we share, and that's the kind of thing that we see walking with the apostles. It was beautiful.

It was a beautiful concept. Jesus said, do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break into steel, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break into steel. For where your treasure is there, your heart will be also.

This is the same thing, not even living in a community life, but in Paul, later on in 2 Corinthians 8 9, and chapter 9, makes it clear they weren't living in an axe type of community. But also talk about this concept. The apostle Paul says, for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for our sake He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.

And herein I give my advice, for this is expedient for you, who have begun before not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. Now therefore perform the doing of it, that as there was readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have. For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to the man that hath and not that he hath not.

For I mean not that the other man be eased and ye be burdened, but by an equality. That now at this time your abundance may be the supply of their want, and their abundance also may be supplied for your want that there be an equality, as it is written. For that had gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack.

The concept that he's giving is the manna. What happened when you collected the manna and tried to stick it on the shelf? It rotted. It needed to be used.

He has poured His resources and His blessings and His wealth into this nation and into this county, and He wants us to use it. Don't be scared. If we take this literally, don't be scared.

That was the first total abandonment. Why, Lord? Why did you do this to your disciples? The next one, to immerse themselves into a life of constant ministry. When Jesus came to His inaugural address, when He came before the start of His ministry, this is what He said.

In Luke 4, chapter 4, verse 16, and He came to Nazareth where it had been brought up and His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up for it to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Isaiah, and when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written. Verse 18, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.

He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, to recover of sight to the blind and to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Most scholars think that's the Jubilee. And He closed the book and gave it to the minister and sat down.

And the eyes of all that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say to him, this day is a scripture fulfilled in your ears. This is a beautiful concept.

And you know, this idea is the vision of Jesus Christ. Immediately involved in action. Immediately involved in those kinds of things.

You know, Habakkuk 2.2 says, speaking of the future, it says, and the Lord answered me and said, write a vision and make it plain on tables that He may run that readeth it. This was Jesus' vision. Instantly involved in action.

And we see it coming out in the apostles. This was His discipling method. Matthew 4.23, Jesus went through Galilee teaching in the synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

Luke 8.1, after this, Jesus traveled about one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The 12 were with Him. Luke 9.6, so they went out and went from village to village preaching.

It says another place. And He said unto them, come ye for yourselves and take a part in the desert place and rest for a while. For there were many coming and going and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

They were very involved in ministry from the very beginning. Why do you think this is? Why do you think God called the disciples immediately into such an act of life? There's an interesting diary. I don't know if any of y'all read the diary of David Brainerd.

He was a missionary in this area. And one of the interesting quotes that I have from his diary is in 1745, he writes, very dear brother, he's writing a letter. I am in one continued, perpetual, and uninterrupted hurry.

I am in one continued, perpetual, and uninterrupted hurry. And divine grace throws so much upon me that I do not see it will ever be otherwise. May I obtain mercy of God to be faithful to the death.

This concept of having an agenda of Jesus Christ. You know, the Acts uses the word the way. They were people of the way.

That's who they were. The idea of discipleship comes, the Greek word used for discipleship comes 240 times in the book of Acts alone. Why do they throw so much instantly into ministry? Again, I ask the question.

When we're involved in those types of things, we ask different questions. Why is your church here? You know, I've probably read most of the histories of the different denominations that are represented here and know some of the stories of the churches that are here today. And for the most part, they've started from either someone coming to liberal and another church has started or something like a doctrinal issue had come up, some advancement or something like that.

But very few churches have been started around a ministry. That's why actually I'm very excited about some of the new movements that I even hear here in this gathering. A basing a church around a ministry instead of basing a church around a reaction is quite a different thing.

You know, in 449, there was an argument over how can Jesus be fully divine and fully human all in one person? And they had such a divide about it. They started debating the different camps and everything. And seriously, it's recorded that the Hippodrome, they had like they were there watching these gladiator sporting events.

And the Orthodox so-called guys wore this blue ribbon on their sleeve. And those who became the Monophysites had this green one on their sleeve. And they fought back and forth on this theological argument.

And finally, they had a synod and some bishops came in and tied up the other bishops and made them by force write that they agreed to this other way and then had them slaughtered. That happened in 449, it's called the Robber's Synod. That's not what Jesus intended.

And when we get, but we'll see if you're constantly involved in ministry, you ask different questions. Be careful not to get the right answers to the wrong questions. So we live in a, I live in a church that used to be part of an old order system.

And if, and I challenged, you know, to our brothers that are there, if all of our decisions that we make are all just new freedoms that we express from leaving the old order system, we're in trouble. But if we are asked, if we are involved immediately in ministry, you begin to ask a different set of questions. And I think this is one of the reasons why Jesus had them instantly involved in doing the work of God.

It causes you to ask different questions. Be very careful. You know, this quietism, Robert Friedman, who wrote the book on Anabaptist theology has another good book, Pietism Through the Centuries, says that he believes that Anabaptists lost this fervent desire for missions and activity from the Pietists.

That this sort of quietism and type of thing and just self-focused, overextended was something they received from the Pietists instead of what the original Anabaptists were like. If you look at the differences, it's quite possible he's right. The great command, sometimes called the great commission, says this in Matthew 28.

And then the 11 disciples went away into Galilee, into the mountain where Jesus had appointed them, verse 17, chapter 28. And when they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them saying, now get this, all power is given unto me in heaven and earth.

Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And, watch this, lo, I am with you always, even into the ends of the world. Now, there's a deadly poison that comes into churches and it says this, you know, when we get it all right, then we'll begin to minister.

When we get it all right, I was reading through the Hutterian Chronicles and coming to the 1800, they put in a letter, the Moravians visited a Hutterite colony in Russia. And the Moravian is rebuking the minister by saying, why don't you have these missions that you used to, that we read in your books from the old days, why aren't you doing this? And the minister said in around 1812, well, we're trying to work out, you know, these other things and we get these other things right, then we'll go back to being missionaries. Well, coming close to about 200 years, you know, I mean, if we get into this mindset, it will never end.

But here's the thing, I heard a sermon once by Hudson Taylor III and the sermon title says it all, no go, no lo. Go and lo, I'll be with you. He didn't say, wait till you get it all perfect and then I'll be with you.

He said, go and I will be with you. If we want that anointing, if we want that presence, then we have to walk in the conditions of the command. That's what he tells us to do.

And you do that, you just might ask different questions in your congregation. You just might ask different questions. And he healed the sick, he did these things.

You know, many times we also, another excellent book, Richard Stearns wrote a book, *The Hole in Our Gospel*, talked about the concept of us separating spiritual things with physical things and said that during the, when we got the fundamentalist movement, that the liberals and the fundamentalists split up and suddenly it didn't seem spiritual to start hospitals anymore. Suddenly it didn't seem spiritual to feed the poor. I had a young man come to me once and we were talking about doing some sort of charitable thing and he said, I don't wanna do that stuff.

I want something spiritual. Well, you know, if Jesus commanded us to do it and it was all of Jesus' life to do it and examples to his disciples to do it, it's spiritual. You know what I'm saying? And so this separation, as a matter of fact, when Galatians two, when Paul talks about him going to the apostles in Jerusalem and he's there and he wanted to make sure that he didn't have false doctrine or everything, there was one thing that he said that those apostles wanted to make sure.

Now, was it the monophysite argument about the two natures and one? Was it Luther's consubstantiation and ubiquitous grace and this? No. One thing to make sure that you remember the poor. He said, which I was also wanting to do.

That was the one thing. Let me make sure you get this one thing right. Wow.

You see, we have to deal, they had to deal with these heresies. In the 300s, when they were saying Jesus was created, you had to deal with it. When a heresy comes up, unfortunately, you have to do it, particularly when they're saying, this is Christianity.

Arius couldn't just believe it himself. He had to say, you're not a Christian unless you believe that. So you have to do that, but you gotta be careful because bit by bit, you get off here and next thing you know, way over there, Jesus came into the synagogue and said, I come to preach the gospel to the poor.

I come to set at liberty them that are bruised. We've gotta get back to Jesus's dream and vision for the church. Deal with it.

Yes, we've gotta deal with it, but make sure we keep getting back to Jesus. And Julian the Apostate, right after Constantine, understood this and he tried to, right after Constantine, Constantine's son tried to reverse everything. And it's interesting, this is why he could not get rid of Christianity.

He writes, Julian the Apostate writes, why do we not observe that it is their Christians' benevolence to strangers that care for the graves of the dead and the pretended holiness of their lives that have done most to increase atheism? That's not the belief in the pagan gods. For it is disgraceful that when no Jew ever has to beg and the impious Galileans support not only their own poor but ours as well, all men see that our people lack aid from us. Teach those of the Hellenic faith to contribute to public surface of this sort.

That kind of thing was something they saw. That's something they see. You know, I have a dream, I have a vision that one day the church would regain that vision that Jesus gave.

All right, the third thing, I gotta hurry. The third thing is they live in intimate lives with one another. Why is this? When they were stripped of all their associations, he required that they live together and deal with

these things together in a community of sorts.

Now, we have them, even in the Apostles, living and giving out of a common purse. Now, it wasn't the only thing. We actually see these former demon-possessed women giving money out of their own means, the Gospel says.

And so we have both things there in the Gospel, these ladies giving out of their total poverty. And we have the disciples living out of this common purse. And there was something that he was having them do in the disciples.

Why did he have them lean on each other so much? Why? We don't know exactly why, but we do know this, that he was wanting to create a new humanity, a family of God. And in the early church, when they called you brother, sister, it wasn't just an ecclesiastical title. It was a brother.

You were a sister. You were something. When you were stripped away from all your different things and all your different associations, then you had that.

You know, he promised, and I've experienced it. You know, when I was getting out of the army, I was scared to death. Who in the world? What am I gonna do? I thought maybe I'd go to jail and everything.

But that promise he said, that anyone who's given up these lands and family associations, these different things, would have a hundredfold on this earth and this life. And you know, I've experienced that. I know for a fact, I sit here and I can look through, I can look through 20 families, just right here.

I've been right here in this audience. And if I said, guys, it's not working for me out in the community. I need a new place to live.

You'd take me in. I have experienced that. And when I was over and I gave up those things, I have truly embraced a wealth and abundance and a family like I could have never had when I was in the army.

But you know what? There was an association. When I got out of the army, we had a camaraderie. You know, you're marching, you're doing these things, you have this campaign.

And I guess I always dreamed for the church to be more like that. You know, I don't know, there's, you know, Francis Chan talks about in his book, Crazy Love, the idea of, he said he had a motorcycle gang guy join his church. And he said the motorcycle gang said, you know, after church, it's like, so where is everybody? Where is everybody? I hung with my motorcycle gang.

You know, I always kind of got jealous. You know, you drop down the street, you see that little motorcycle wave. You ever noticed that? You know, the Harley guys.

You know, I tried that with my white 12 passenger van. It just doesn't work. You know, they don't get it, you know.

And I guess there was something in me, maybe too much, that craves for that. Being part of an army that's together, fighting for the Lord with common song and common vision. I always wanted the church to replace that army that I had, and I want to be a soldier for Jesus Christ.

You know, the passage when Jesus, one said unto him in Matthew 12, 47, then one said unto him, behold, you know, they were challenging him, hey, your mother and your brother want to talk to you. Then one

said unto him, behold, thy mother and thy brother stand without desiring to speak to thee. But he answered and said unto them, and he told them, who's my mother? Who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hands toward his disciple and said, behold, my mother and my brethren.

For whosoever shall do the will of my father, which is in heaven, the same as my brother and my sister and my mother. You see, it's a new humanity. Don't spiritualize too much John 1, 11.

In the Gospel of John, he says, he came unto his own and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God. Even to them that believe on his name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

We're a family. That's why we share. That's why we would never let these things.

And I tell you, one of the main reasons I was attracted to Anabaptism, particularly why is I do sense that. It's something we don't wanna lose in all of our communities. Embrace that.

You know, I think it's a beautiful thing. And there's one concept there a little deeper. A.W. Tozer once said, all our problems in the church stem from a wrong understanding of the nature and attributes of God.

This concept that you have in your churches to be one, to be a community of God, stems from, and is supposed to stem from that attribute. And John 16, what time am I supposed to be done? 15? 9.15, okay, great. Okay, I'll go a little bit later.

In John 16, you get this brotherhood of the Trinity, this community of the Trinity, and this is the reason. See, there is no command in all the Bible to live in community, zero. Communitarians who say so don't understand what they're talking about.

The idea, what we see in the book of Acts is a testimony, not a command. But what is it a testimony of? Why did the apostles live that way is the bigger question. We get into these silly debates, oh, you're supposed to live in community, no, you're not supposed to live in community, and neither one of them are getting closer to the teachings of Jesus.

But if we in our churches, in our lives, in our fellowships try to represent this community of the Trinity, it'll be powerful. He says this, now ponder it. Tozer says, our problems stem from a wrong understanding of God.

And John, where is John? There he is, John 16, he says, I pray, John 16, verse 13, how be it when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth, for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak, and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine, therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you.

Then chapter 17, verse nine, I pray for them, I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hath given Me, for they are Thine, and all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine, and I am glorified in them. And now I know, and now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee, Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those which Thou hath given Me, that they may be one, to what degree? As we are. Verse 20, neither pray I for these alone, but for them which also shall believe on Me through the Word, that's us, that they may all be one, as Thou, Father, are to Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us, that the, why, that the world may believe that Thou hath sent Me, and the glory which Thou

giveth Me, I have given them, that they may be one to an extent, even as we are one, he goes on.

So this attribute, it's an attribute of unity, an attribute of sharing that kind of life together, we need to bring into our fellowships and bring into our communities that we have, and represent that, that's why the acts happen, not that acts is a command, we clearly see in scriptures both community models and non-community models, that's without question. But why both in Paul, when he's given that word about equality, and in the book of Acts, behind all of that is this beautiful discipleship and concept of God, of representing this attribute to the world, he stakes his testimony on it, that the world may know that I was sent, that the world may know. And the last thing, to embrace the cross, he said to the apostles, the disciples, behold, I send you out in the midst of wars.

The concept of the cross is liberating, but it's an entirely paradigm difference. You know, when you're in the dealing with non-resistance, particularly, you know, I was getting out of the army, and everybody's making all these arguments, and all the what ifs, somebody breaks in, and what if somebody does this, and it really doesn't matter what theology, it all comes down to the what if arguments. But the one thing that kind of just blows it all away is sometimes you die, sometimes your family dies, sometimes your kids die.

And when you can embrace that cross, and realize that those who believe in Jesus never die, there is a liberation, there is a freedom, there is a life that is there, and I'll tell you what, there's nothing, all the words of Jesus are nonsense without the theology of martyrdom. It is that theology of martyrdom, the theology of the cross, that makes Jesus understand. If you're trying to save your life, save your whatever the thing, and try to put the teachings of Jesus on, it's a real mess.

But if you die, if you let yourself just trust the Lord in that way, it becomes beautiful. 1 Corinthians 1.18 is so profound, isn't it? For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. They don't understand it.

But to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the spewter of the sage? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world through that cross? You know, the apostles came to him and said, can I sit on one hand, you know, the James and John, we want something from you, Lord.

We wanna sit on one side and sit on the other. And what did Jesus say to them? Are you able to take the cup that I'm gonna give you? And they said, yes, Lord, we're ready. And then he did say, now you are ready.

And he gave them and he blessed them in that. And you know, all those disciples, James beheaded, Philip crucified, Matthew slain with a sword, James son of Alphaeus stoned to death, Matthias stoned and then beheaded, Andrew crucified on an X-shaped cross, Peter crucified upside down, Paul beheaded by the orders of Nero, Jude crucified, Bartholomew beaten to death with clubs, Thomas speared to death, Simon the zealot crucified, and John exiled. They did live crucified lives.

But wow, what fruit, what glory came from all these. And you know, as we embrace this, it becomes something that makes us understand. And this is the secret of early Anabaptism.

This is something that's secret of any movement. Do you know when the early Anabaptist revival started in 1525, okay? 1525, about four guys, young guys, none of them over 30, met together and the revival started. They began to preach and they began to go around and they began to go forth.

But they had this concept. In 1527, there were 60 elders that met in Augsburg, Germany. 60 elders to decide where they're gonna go in missions and different things and how they're gonna divide it up.

And out of those 60, in five years, you know how many were left? Two. That's why they call it the Martyrs' Synod. Two.

So in 1527, your chance of survival as an Anabaptist missionary was 5%. In the next 10 years, it went up to about 20%. But it's something that they embrace and they took it as a command.

When I was going and reading through the Hutterian Chronicles one thing that always struck me was why they did this. And it was very easy. The commands of Jesus.

We have the commands about marriage. We have the commands of adultery. We have the commands of all these different things.

He also commanded us to go. So it's not thinkable to not go. It's part of Jesus' teaching.

It's not the Great Commission. It's the great command. It's the great command.

Interesting, when I was going through the Hutterian Chronicles there's one, I mean, terrible, gruesome, sorry, I had to write caution, careful reading this because of all the terrible things that they were writing in those diaries. And I got to 1620 and it said this. It says, reading through those diaries, it said in 1620, it says, this year too we follow the example of our forefathers by sending out several brothers in various places in Germany.

This is during the Thirty Year War. They went to seek those on fire for the truth and to call to repentance. It amazed many people in Bohemia where both hostile armies were encamped as well in Germany that our defenseless members set out during a time of such terrible dangers when scarcely anyone, whether of high or low estate, could travel in safety.

But the Lord was their protector and they relied on him alone. When their task was completed through the intercession of his people, he led them home again. Well, at least 5%.

Wow. And now we can sit and say, well, when we get it right, we'll go. When we get it all together, then we'll maybe do a little something.

It's not right. What if it's your family that crossed? You know, letting you die is one thing, letting your family die is another. There's an interesting story by a man named John Welch, married John Knox's daughter, who was a reformer in Scotland.

And John Welch was a preacher during the King James Day and they were going for the, having the Church of England was supposed to be ran by the king and John Knox and John Welch didn't agree with that. And he was preaching, he was put in jail and taken to France. Well, his wife, John Knox's daughter, John Welch's wife, went to the King James and appealed to him to get him out of France.

He was actually preaching in the prisons, but he was starting to get some respiratory problems in the damp and he said, can he come back to England? And King James said, sure, just do one thing, have him say that the King of England is the head of the church. You know what she did? She lifted up her apron and looked at him in the face and said, I would rather have his head in my apron. She understood the cross.

She understood what it meant. You know, the army understands this. Napoleon, when he was going through his different times trying to what he called liberate the different European countries, when he got to Italy, he said, they don't want their freedoms and he said, Italy doesn't know how to die.

General Patton, when the Battle of the Bulge, when he was trying to have a problem with the support route and he was the truckers, he tried to encourage them, he got the truckers together and he said, listen, here's the way it's gonna be. You're gonna get into your truck, you're gonna drive down the line until somebody blows you up. And they did it.

There was some release, even in these secular people of just giving all and knowing that that's what they're gonna do. How much more for us who have a secret weapon called immortality? If you could take a bunch of soldiers and say, okay, here's the way it's gonna be. You're gonna go there, you're gonna get shot, but this is great because in a little bit, you know, you're just gonna come back to life and it's not gonna matter.

Soldiers would be going everywhere. Think what ISIS would do. But if we would take the truth of that immortality and embrace the cross, that's the thing that he gave to his disciples.

That's the thing that he gave to his disciples. You know, and the biggest thing that when you're in the basic training, they tell you if you're getting attacked, worst thing is an ambush. And you're surrounded, it's terrible.

You're gonna die. They say the only way to survive an ambush is to charge it, to run against the ambush shooting and as you go. We're being ambushed, church.

We're being ambushed. If we have to have this kind of concept, the Apostle Paul, I'm coming to the end. The Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 3 verse 10.

Now you followers of my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions and sufferings such as happened to me in Antioch, you followed me in those things. At Iconium, at Lystris, what persecution I endured and out of all of them, the Lord rescued me. Indeed, all who live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

In Revelation, Jesus tells us. He tells us what the cure is. The times are coming to the end times.

Things are terrible. And how do they win? Revelation chapter 12 verse 11. And they overcame him, that's the Antichrist, by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony and they loved not their lives.

And to the death. You know, I'm a dad. I got young people.

And I think probably, I know all of you, one of our biggest worries is what's gonna happen to our children? We get nervous about losing them to the world. I begin to wonder if we're destined in the church to lose some young people. The question is, I wonder if we're destined to lose some young people one way or the

other.

To the world or to martyrdom? And if we'd be a church that would embrace the cross more in this way, we'd be losing people, but instead of losing young people to the world, we'd be losing them as martyrs. What effect would that have on our churches? What effect would that be? I'm a dad. I'm concerned in that way.

All right, I'm gonna end with a quote and then a scripture and I'll be done. Martin Luther King Jr. was a fighter for the rights of the African-Americans in America and he did some amazing things. And most of the things he did in a political arena that we may not agree with all those things.

One thing he did, one time he wrote, he had a particular beef with the church. And he was in Birmingham, Alabama in the 1960s. And it was the church that brought persecution against him.

And as he was in fighting for those things in Birmingham, Alabama, they threw him in jail. And while he was in jail, he gathered up a bunch of newspapers, a bunch of papers and sketched out a letter to the church. This time not to the White House, but to the church.

And here's an excerpt from that letter. I'm gonna end with this in one verse. Martin Luther King Jr. writing in jail, 1960s.

There was a time when the church was very powerful. It was during that period that the early church rejoiced when they were deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days, the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion.

It was a thermostat that transformed the marays of society. In other words, a thermometer, if it's cold outside, it's cold inside. But a thermostat sets the temperature.

Wherefore, the early Christians entered a town, whenever the early Christians entered a town, the power structure got disturbed and immediately sought to convict them for being, quote, disturbers of the peace, and, quote, outside agitators. That's what the church was calling him in the newspaper. But they went out with the conviction that they were, listen, a colony of heaven.

And had to obey God rather than man. They were small in number, but big in commitment. They were too God intoxicated to be astronomically intimidated.

Gotta say amen to that. They brought an end to such ancient evils as infanticide, throwing your baby out to die, and gladiator contests. Things are different now.

The contemporary church is so often a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. It is so often the arc supporter of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church's often vocal sanction as things as they are.

But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If the church of today, 1960s, if the church of today does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed, listen, as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the 20th century. I meet young people every day whose disappointment with the church has risen to outright disgust.

In the verse, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians chapter five, last verse, talking about the blood of Jesus Christ and what it does for the church. Talking about all these acts have been brought unto the disciples. And it says, beginning through 2 Corinthians five, they're appealing to men that they understand this and understand the ministry of reconciliation.

And it says in 2 Corinthians chapter five, last verse, verse 21, for he hath made him to be sin for us, Jesus Christ, who knew no sin, listen, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Now, it did not say that we would know the righteousness of God. It did not say that we would even believe the righteousness of God or even receive the imputed righteousness of God, but we would become the righteousness of God.

That word righteous is a heavy word in both Greek and Hebrew. It means to set out God's kingdom and establishment here on earth. And with that blood of Jesus Christ, He has made us to be that.

Think back to that song from Bach. Listening to that verse, can you hear the symphony? Can you hear it playing? Can you hear it in your heart this morning? Instead of taking that wad of paper that Bach had and now taking those words of Jesus and looking at the words of Jesus in a way that's not just a theological argument, but a symphony, a symphony to be played, a symphony to be performed, a symphony that the world could hear. I can hear it.

Can you hear it this morning? You know, Martin Luther King Jr. had a dream. I have a dream and I'll end with this. I have a dream.

I have a dream that armed with the faith of Jesus Christ, the Anabaptist Church would once again focus our energies on fulfilling Jesus' command to take the gospel of the kingdom and preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, to recover sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to preach the jubilee of the Lord. Let's perform that symphony to God's glory. Let's pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you, Lord, for Jesus Christ. And Lord, again, I can't, following you is a journey and it's continual. You bring it down to these two words, follow me.

And dear God, I pray that the absolute presence of Jesus Christ would be true and real here and that you would do that in our hearts and do that in each of these little fellowships represented here, each of these churches, each of these communities, that you would have these attributes. You would call these people to abandon their earthly life of associations, come together as a family. I pray that they would lean on one another and appreciate one another.

I pray, God, that you would be present in their midst and I pray that you would teach us all to embrace the cross. And I pray, Lord, that you would teach us to ask the right questions involved in ministry and actively fulfilling your dream for humanity. God, we ask you to do this by your grace.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Video: https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/1rn8cCCN_v0.mp4

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/dean-taylor/jesus-and-discipleship/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net