

# Touchstone of Discipleship

by George Verwer

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*The touchstone of discipleship is love, the kind of love that Jesus had when he laid his life down for us, and it requires a willingness to be a fool for Christ and to follow his principles.*

**Duration:** 37:53

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, John 13:34

**Topics:** "Discipleship"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of standing for righteousness and not conforming to the ways of the world. He uses examples from the Bible, such as Noah and Abraham, who went against societal norms to follow God's will. The preacher encourages young people to be bold in their faith and not be swayed by the opinions of others. He also highlights the sufferings and persecution that believers may face, but emphasizes that the rewards of following God far outweigh any worldly gains.

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## Transcript

The Gospel of John chapter 13 and verse 34. A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

The touchstone of Christianity, the foundation of a revolution that was begun by the Lord Jesus Christ himself. In this you will know that they are my disciples, in that they have no possessions. It's not what it says.

In this you will know that they are my disciples. They read and carry their Bible. Doesn't say that.

In this you will know that they are my disciples. They will have sound doctrine. Doesn't say that either.

In this you will know that they are my disciples. They traverse land and sea to get our tract. Doesn't say that either.

It says there is one major thing that will cause the world to be convinced that we are his disciples. Not the disciples of men, not the disciples of an institution, not the disciples of an organization, but his disciples, and it will be on and on, one toward another. Love, the kind of love that Jesus had when he laid his life down for us.

A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you. I want you to remember those words tonight. That ye love one another as I have loved you.

That's God's standard. That's what God demands tonight. That's what the heart of God is crying for tonight.

That we love one another in the exact same way that Jesus and that God loved us. He is our example. We can but follow him.

For as it says in 1 John, we must walk even as he walked. We could go on and give many passages of scripture. Brother Dale has already touched on so many important phases of love.

Love is always given. Love is always going. Going to the other man.

Going to the need of the other man. Going to bring happiness and health and heaven to the other man. It says in 1 John chapter 3 and verse 16, in this we perceive the love of God.

Young people have asked me, well how do I understand the love of God? How can I know the love of God? The writer gives it very clearly. In this we perceive, we understand the love of God in that he laid down his life for us. And what are the following words? And so we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for a friend. Love is the essence of discipleship.

Love are the walls that surround the disciple. Love is the roof that protects him. Love is the ground upon which he rests.

For though I speak with the tongues of men, though I have all wisdom, though I make tremendous sacrifices, though I give my body to be burned, though I give of my limbs and of my bones and of all I have, and if I have not love, I am a sounding brass and tingling cymbal. Oh that God will deliver us from the tin bands of the devil. Sounding brass and tingling cymbal.

Wising sepulchres. All the outward appearance. All the outward trimmings.

Living economically. Living ruggedly. Very few possessions.

Watching your money. All the outward trimmings and yet possibly all white and sepulchre. The Bible says man looketh at the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart.

And the love that God is seeking from the disciple tonight, the love that God is seeking from you tonight is a love that comes from the heart. It's not an external thing that you can turn off and on. It's not something that can be measured with some kind of a spiritual phenomena, but it's something that springs from a heart that has been touched by God.

Most of us, I think, have to admit we don't know much about really loving people. Easily during these days here we could become frustrated and condensed as we realize what a pack of phonies as we would say across the water we really are. As we realize how our hearts have deceived us so often times.

As we realize how our love is so often stained, so often tinted by the one who we're trying to love, by his reputation, by his ability to like us, by what we can get out of the whole situation. How easy it is to love a man unconsciously, loving him to see what we're going to get out of the holding. Paul speaks of unfeigned love, unhypocritical love, love that shows no partiality, love that is equal to the queen as to the beggar in the street.

For Jesus himself said that if we help the man in prison, if we help the man who is naked, if we help the man even by giving a glass of cold water, it would not go unrewarded. For Jesus said himself, whatsoever you have done to the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me. So absolutely revolutionary those words are.

But the question that comes to my mind tonight, and I think it's coming to many of your minds, is simply this. Does it really work? Does it really work? This thing of loving, this thing of giving yourself utterly for the other man, this thing of falling into the ground and dying, this thing of denying yourself, taking up the cross and following him, does it really work? Or will I merely become a frustrating person on a tangent to some kind of sex or fanatical religious experience? Does it work? If I let go of all my worldly possessions, if I let go of all the pride of my heart, all the lust for power, all the craving for status, all the desire for recognition and for feeling important, and for the clatterings and cravings of men, if I let go of it all, will I really be able to live a balanced life? Before I knew Christ, some ten years ago, I used to go to the football game. Some of you know in America, we're a little bit odd.

We play football mainly with our hands, throwing the ball around. And I was never very good at it. I was a little small, because it seems that they also throw one another around quite a bit.

And so I really was never of the right size for that sport. But I used to love to go to the game. And oh, I tell you, I used to get excited.

I tell you, my team, they were some of my good friends. My pride was wrapped up in that team. That's right.

I had told many an enemy they were going to get routed on Saturday night. And if they didn't get routed, I was liable for routing. And so my pride was wrapped up in that team.

And a lot of other things. And I used to want our team to win. I remember when I was in high school, what you would call grammar school, I went out into the woods all afternoon to gather up wood for the bonfire.

We used to have what was called a pet rally, and we'd get the football players and give them the biggest dose of ego juice we could ever find, so that they would be in top condition for the battle of pride on the field the next day. And oh, I wanted these guys to win. I rallied the whole school together.

I don't know how that happened. We had hundreds come out to this bonfire, and we burnt dummies of the enemy. And we had a tremendous time.

And I used to shout and scream about what we have to do. And then when the game time came, I sat up in the stands, or the bleachers, or whatever you call them over here. I'm still so ignorant of the English culture and have it confused now with the Spanish, Italian, German, French, Indian, Persian, and Turkish, Russian, Czechoslovakian, Yugoslavian culture.

But I used to sit up in the stands, and I used to get a drum, a big bass drum. And if I couldn't find the drum, I remember one time I got a railroad, an ambulance siren, about so large. And I would cheer.

I was a cheerleader. Not an official variety, but unofficially. Some thought I had perhaps the loudest voice.

And across the field, where the enemy was lodged in its nest, I would shout very interesting remarks and beat the drum. All during the game, until I could hardly speak. When I couldn't speak any longer, I just beat the drum and turned the crank on the siren.

Our team never won many games at all. But I was considered perfectly normal. They elected me as president of my student body.

I was considered absolutely normal. What I was doing was not fanatical. What I was doing was not overboard.

I was the normal American grammar school lad, concerned about his high school, concerned about the reputation of the team. All my friends thought that was so normal. And after the game, or the next night, we'd go to the big celebration dance, which was especially frustrating when you lost the game.

But anyway, we'd try to forget it all. And we'd go to the big dance. And I'd come in oftentimes at maybe six or seven in the morning, absolutely exhausted, absolutely unable to walk, only to collapse on my bed and sleep for six or seven hours.

I was considered perfectly normal. He's an enthusiast, they would say. He loves his school, they would say.

He's loyal, they would say. But dare one young man, dare one young woman become enthused for Christ and begin to beat the drum of war against the powers of darkness, and begin to speak out that which is upon his heart against the enemy. And he's labeled a fanatic, an extremist, and many other names that there's no need to repeat.

How the devil has us fooled! Excited about the tinsel of the world! Excited about the poison pills of the world! And so absolutely blasé about the thrilling message of the gospel of Christ. We've been doped or drugged. That's what Edward R. Murrow, the great television announcer, said concerning the American nation, and it could be true of many nations.

He said we're doped, we're drugged, we're in a stupor, not conscious of what's happening around us, not conscious of the world situation and all of its implications, not conscious of the critical hour in which we live. Drugged, doped by the inoculations of an inconsistent mankind. But the question is, does it work? If I become an enthusiast for Christ, if I give my life to Christ, if I begin beating my drums for Christ, speaking forth for Christ, be it in High Park Corner or in the streets of Italy, will it last? Will it work? Or will I become hard? Will I become some kind of a special person and eventually lose even my own well-balance? I want to tell you I've studied a little bit of psychology just to know, or just enough to know, that the man who seems most normal on this earth is most abnormal with God.

Look at the life of Paul, if you will, for a few minutes, starting, if you will, in 1 Corinthians chapter 4. In 1 Corinthians chapter 4, we read these words, first tense, we are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ. We are weak, but ye are strong. Ye are honorable, but we are despised.

Even unto this present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place. And labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless.

Being persecuted, we suffer it. Being defamed, we entreat. We are made as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day.

The off-scouring of all things unto this day. Every once in a while we have people who come on OM, who become extremely frustrated when things don't go well. They somehow think that we as Christians have the title deed on getting everything done just as we want.

The Apostle Paul knew some other road than this. The Apostle Paul knew the road of hunger. Whenever there's a little lack of food in some of our headquarters, some become extremely worried.

The Apostle Paul knew what it was to be in terrible hunger, and yet we have every proof that in the midst of it, he always rejoiced. The prime Apostle Paul knew what it was not only to be hungry according to verse 11, he knew what it was to be thirsty. There's little of us that ever have that problem in this day of such abundance of water.

How unappreciative we are of the water that God gives us. And yet as soon as there's a drought, as soon as there's a lack of water, people almost sound cursing God. Running to and fro, headlines in the newspapers as we saw in New Jersey and New York recently when they were lacking water, and they couldn't water their gardens for more than twice a week.

Headlines in the paper of the Apostle Paul knew what it was to be thirsty. He knew what it was to be naked. Somehow the feeling that if all is going well, we'll have all of our needs supplied, everything we need, and yet what we really mean is everything we want.

The Apostle Paul, despite the fact that I'm sure he never wanted to be naked, was found in times of nakedness, and in times of being buffeted, and having no certain dwelling place. Now they have said, where is our heaven going to get a proper headquarters? Poorly organized organization without any proper headquarters. Now they've moved into an old paper mill.

Harrowing. The Apostle Paul, according to this verse of Scripture, knew nothing of a central headquarters. We have no indication that he even had a square inch in the Jerusalem church for a desk.

No dwelling place. Buffeted, naked, thirsty. The oft scouring of all things.

Was he not a disciple? Was he not following these principles that we've talked about here in these meetings? Was he not a man following hard after the Lord Jesus? Oft scouring. Fanatic. Fool.

That's what they called him. Yet he cried in his heart, yea, yea, a fool for Christ. Oh, that God would trip us with the words of C.T. Studd, who wrote this little chorus that is often spoke to my heart.

I must be carried to the skies on a flowery bed of ease. Let others fight to win the prize or sail the bloody seas. Mark time, Christian heroes.

Never go to war. Stop and mind the babies playing on the floor. Wash and dress and feed them forty times a week.

Tell them roly-poly pudding, so to speak. The chorus is also sharp, round and round the nursery. Let us ambulate, sugar and spite, all at night.

Must be on our sleep. Studd goes on to say, thank the good Lord, said a fragile white haired lady. God never meant me to be a jellyfish.

God never was a chocolate manufacturer and never will be. God's men are always heroes. In the scripture you can trace them or trace their giant foot tracks down the sands of time.

And the little booklet goes to speak of Noah, who turned back on all the traditions of his day. Who turned back on all the babblings of men, like you might have to do if you stand for righteousness as Noah stood. It speaks of Abraham, who went forth knowing not where he was going.

Young people apply for O.M. I don't know where they're going. We send them our literature, facts about operationalization, how you're going to be traveling, where you're going. Abraham went, never even filled in a questionnaire.

These were God's men. And then the little book goes on to speak of men, of men like Moses, turning his back on the plushiest job in all of Egypt. He forsook it.

Rather it says in Hebrews, suffering reproach for the people of God, than enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season. And remember it, those of you who are in sin tonight, it's but for a season. It'll last only so long.

How many young men, for five minutes on a lonely night, sold themselves cheap to the devil, all for a season. The heartache that comes after it. Oh, might we realize the way of Moses is the only way.

Esteeming the suffering for the people of God, greater than the riches of Egypt. Men like Nathan, who feared not even the king, and went to David when David was in sin, and said with a boldness of heaven, Ah, Archimandrite, these men of God cared not what kings, nor queens, nor governments, nor friend, nor foe, had to say. They had their ears to heaven.

They knew what God wanted. They knew what God had said. And they spoke all for men who will be free from the praise and the opinion of others.

Men like Samuel, who was simply told in unequivocal terms, No more praise. What did he do? To his room he went, like a fool of fools. Bowed down by the open window.

Anybody with any common sense would have told him to close the window. Even the medical doctors would have suggested he could have caught a cold and could have had a good excuse for closing. The window wide open, fell on his knees and defied the king.

Prayed to heaven. Some people say, Oh, these are empty, going behind the iron curtain, shunned her at breaking the laws of men. What rubbish! Every man of God that's ever done anything has passed through the devil-given laws of men that were in contradiction to the words of God or the word of God, which is quite different from the 30-mile traffic law that no one seems to bother about.

Oh, that we might treat these iron curtain countries as Daniel treated the window, and leave them wide open to take the message of salvation. And so they took Daniel, and they put him in the lion's den. I don't know what he did.

Perhaps he spent the night tickling the lion's palate. But we know the lion never touched him, because God is with those who will follow him. And on and on we could go tonight, telling of those men who walked with God.

Disciples they were, followers of him. If you don't like the word disciple, use another word. We're not going to argue with you over vocabulary.

The Bible uses disciple many dozens of times, so it seems that might be a good term. Jesus used it over and over again. In the book of Acts it didn't say the number of evangelicals multiplied in Jerusalem.

It didn't say the number of decisions multiplied in Jerusalem. It said the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem. Is not that the burden that God has for London tonight? Is not that what's on the heart of God? Not another set of hands waved? Not some more noise, some more motion, but men of iron walking even as he walked.

Discipline, spiritual, broken, loving, kind, meek, gentle, oh, oh, how much is involved in this life. And yet, you know, there's a verse that secures me in the midst of it all. It's found in Corinthians and it says, my grace, my grace is sufficient for thee.

My strength is made perfect in weakness. Oftentimes when I read the life of Daniel, I was extremely frustrated. I knew I was no Daniel.

I read the life of Moses and I became even more frustrated. I knew I was no Moses. I read the life of Paul, his sufferings, his trials, his lashings across the back.

I became almost frightened by the very thought of it. I was no Paul. Then I come to that verse in the writings of Paul himself.

My grace is sufficient for thee. Oh, I want us to dwell on that word in these closing moments together. My grace, grace, God's unmerited help, God's unmerited power, God's unmerited favor.

All that we need is unmerited. All that we need is grace. You say tonight, I can't be a disciple.

You know in your heart tonight, some of you this message is so far from you. You know that tonight you're living in sin. That's right.

You know that your life is not in tune with God. You've been doing things that aren't even in the realm of discipleship or out of the realm of discipleship. They are blatantly in the realm of sin, and you're not.

Can a man pray with fire and not be burned, says the scriptures? And you will be burned. I used to think before I was converted that one could play with sin. Many a Christian thinks that.

Many a Christian thinks that he can play with sin only to discover that soon sin is playing with him. He that committed sin, says John, becomes what? A servant of sin. Is that your case tonight? A slave to some habit, to some sin, something that you know is wrong, something that you know is condemned by God, something that you know is absolutely contrary to the plan of God tonight.

And as you hear this message, you feel frustrated. You feel uneasy. You feel that what can God ever do with me? I'm so rotten.

I've been a failure all my life. I've been a poor husband. I've been a poor daughter.

I've been a miserable son. I've been unfaithful to my friends. I've been a liar.

I've been a cheat. I've been a deceiver in my schoolwork, in my exam papers. What could God ever do with me? I'm no Scott.

I'm no Hudson Taylor. I'm no Paul Dundas. Stand against a crowd and go into an ark? I can hardly stand against a smallish temptation, you say.

I want to tell you this hope tonight, if you're in that boat. If you're one of those who can only say tonight, God have mercy on me. Oh, how vividly I remember the story.

The two men that went to pray, and the one stood. Oh, God, he said, I thank thee. I thank thee that I'm not like other men.

It was a man off in the distance, bent, beating his body. God, he said, have mercy on me, a sinner. And the scripture says, and who went away justified.

For Jesus said, I have come, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Not to call the man who feels he's doing okay. Not to call the man who's roped in his rag of righteousness, produced by himself.

But the man who will come tonight and say, Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner. Grace, John Bunyan said, grace abounding. To who? To the sinner.

My only hope for this thing of discipleship. My only hope to ever live this life. My only hope to know the life that I read so clearly in the pages of this book, is the grace of God.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound could save a wretch like me. Grace manifest in the cross when he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. Grace that raised him from the grave for our justification, that we too might know the reality of being crucified with him and of being raised with him into newness of life.

So I invite you, you want to know the Lord of the disciples. You want to know the pathway to power. You want to know the love of him who loved us and gave himself for us.

And my invitation is come to the cross, to the sinner's place, and take the grace, the unmerited power, the unmerited love, the unmerited ability to live these things. Take it, for he gives us water and charges us not. Water free to drink to all who come and say, Lord have mercy on me, a sinner.

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