

(Radical Jesus) 41 Radical Discipleship

by Glenn Meldrum

True discipleship is a mandatory part of the true faith, and it requires a radical commitment to reproduce Christlike character in others.

Duration: 26:03

Scripture: Matthew 28:19, Luke 9:57

Topics: "Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of discipleship and the need for Christians to be willing to be discipled and to disciple others. The speaker uses the example of Jesus and his interaction with three men in Luke chapter 9 to illustrate the choice that each person faces in following Jesus. The speaker also highlights the lack of role models in the church who live out what it means to be men and women of God, and the impact this has on the ability to disciple others. The sermon concludes with the reminder that discipleship is a choice that happens when people hunger for God and desire to be more like Jesus.

Transcript

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What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? How should a disciple live in this world? Why is discipleship so important for the individual believer in the life of the Church? I do not think that many people can give practical answers to these three questions. There are many reasons for this, but I will only mention a few. First, we are having a terrible problem with Biblical illiteracy in the Church today, and this includes those that regularly attend Bible studies.

If we do not know the Word of God, there is no way that we could answer those questions. Second, Biblical discipleship is not commonly taught in the Church, because it is not a popular message that draws in the crowds. Pastors can preach on prosperity, inner healing, and other such topics that does not radically transform people, because those topics can feed the flesh, rather than teaching the people how to crucify it.

The low spiritual and moral level of the average self-professing Christian is in part directly the result of the absence of discipleship in the Church. I think the blame falls both on the pastors and the people, since both have failed to live out the calling of being a disciple and of making disciples. If people really wanted to be discipled, then pastors would preach on it, and they would set in motion practical ways that people could be discipled.

If the people do not want to be discipled, then the pastor will find his hands tied, and may end up just trying to keep the people happy so the Church is not filled with strife. Nevertheless, it is the pastor's responsibility to teach on the biblical necessity that people be disciples, whether it is a popular message or not. Pastors should preach according to the direction of the Holy Spirit, and not some religious calendar, or the latest fad, or his own ambitions.

They should be preaching what the people need, not what will make the people happy so that they do not leave the Church. Third, we Americans are fiercely individualistic. Most professing Christians do not want to be discipled, or to get involved in the lives of others enough to disciple them.

This issue focuses upon the spiritual desire of professing believers, and the spiritual temperature of most believers is either lukewarm or cold. Most Christians are not discipled because they do not want to be discipled. This may happen because they do not see the importance of discipleship, or value the overall scheme of it in their busy lives.

Then there are those that want to be discipled, but cannot find a church where they can be discipled, or they can't find a person that is willing to disciple them. Unfortunately, we have allocated discipleship to specific ministries, where people are sent away from the local church that want to be discipled. But that is a very wrong approach to discipleship, because every believer is to be a disciple, and one that discipled others.

Fourth, we have a tremendous lack of role models that live out what it means to be men and women of God, so they are not qualified to disciple others. This is an issue that has to do with the quality of our character. To be honest, there are not many Christians that I would want to emulate, because of the spiritual and moral standard of most Christians today is extremely subnormal.

There are not a lot of genuine men and women of God around today, because someone is a pastor or a teacher does not mean that he or she is on fire for Christ. Fifth, true discipleship is costly, and most people do not want to pay the price. It is costly for both parties, the one being discipled and the one that discipled another.

Discipleship includes commitment, and that is something a large portion of the church does not want to do beyond what is convenient. I imagine that by now you know that today's topic is on discipleship. For the last two weeks we have been digging into this topic, and we are going to dig a little deeper today.

The biblical model for discipleship is radical because it is all-consuming. We looked at this last week. This is what Jesus lived out and what he taught his disciples and his apostles.

Such discipleship is a mandatory part of the true faith, even though most professing Christians do not understand this truth or want to be part of a faith that is radical. In one sense, every church discipled people, either actively or passively. It is just a matter of what they are reproducing in others, and that can be very scary at times.

Before I go any further, I want to briefly address the issue of abusive models of discipleship. There have been over the years some movements that have fallen into abusive expressions of discipleship that have been dubbed shepherding. The various shepherding movements were a wrong response to a legitimate problem.

How do we fulfill Christ's command to go and make disciples when most people that claim to be Christian have never been discipled and have no desire to be so? We have this terrible problem as humans that we are far more rebellious than what we care to admit, and this profoundly affects a church's ability in the area of discipleship. So how do you disciple a bunch of sheep that act like a herd of cats? How do you hem them in? How do you corral them? And that is basically what happened to the shepherding movement. They began to levy greater control over people so they could get them to do what they should have been doing all along.

In certain cases, the control became so abusive that people had to marry who they were commanded to marry and were forced to live under strict and manipulating control. Whenever this happens, the group becomes socially cultish, and this will always do tremendous damage to people. True discipleship is not about controlling people, but about people that want to learn how to be on-fire followers of Jesus.

The moment control comes into the issue, it ceases to be discipleship. You cannot force somebody to be a disciple of Jesus. They have to want to be one of his followers.

And if you force them to do things, then it is not what is coming out of them in loving obedience to God, so it will never be acceptable to God. Now, I am not saying that discipleship ministries should not have rules by which they run their ministries and uphold the moral standard of the faith, but there is a difference between what a discipleship ministry is striving to do and what a shepherding movement is doing. Discipleship is always a choice of the will, and you can clearly see this in the Gospels.

There is a very important law that we need to look at for the next few minutes that touches the natural world as well as the spiritual. The law I am referring to is that everything reproduces after its own kind. This is the Genesis model of creation in which God created every living thing to reproduce only after its own kind.

Evolution rejects the biblical model in support of a theory that is built upon the belief that mutations in a species creates new species, even though there is no credible proof for this. Evolution is actually a belief system that blatantly contradicts the laws God has established within creation. The natural law God created that everything reproduces after its own kind corresponds to the spiritual law that holds to the same principle.

People, religions, churches, culture, and nations reproduce in others what they are in character. I only want to briefly look at this idea and touch on it in general terms. Just a casual observation will reveal that each nation of the world has its own personality that causes it to be different from its neighbors.

Some of the influences that create the nation's personality is the government that the nation embraces, its economic condition, its prominent religion, and the common moral standard to which it adheres. This is far more than patriotism, but the cultural influences that give each nation its own personality. The general culture of a nation could be broke down into subcultures.

Each subculture has its own personality that is influenced by government, economics, religion, and moral standards. Together these subcultures create the overall culture of a nation which will define the character of that nation. These subcultures can center upon education, politics, religion, economics, music, drugs, gambling, and on and on.

When it comes to Christianity, there are subcultures in the overall religious culture of a nation. Each denomination has its own culture that is made up of various factions or groups. Together they make up the general character of a denomination or fellowship of churches.

By the time we get to the individual congregation, we can see the culture of a church that is a subculture of the community. There are many things that help define the personality of a local church, such as local, state, and federal government, church government, its doctrinal beliefs, and the economic and racial situation of the community. They have an old saying that birds of a feather flock together, and this is predominantly true.

People of like beliefs and practices are more prone to associate with each other than people that are the complete opposites. It is not just that every church has its own personality, but that every church will reproduce its character to a certain degree in the people that attend it, and this is unavoidable. Dead churches will attract dead people and can only reproduce dead converts to a dead religion.

Lukewarm churches are all lukewarm people because the beliefs of that lukewarm church appeal to people that want a comfortable religion and a lukewarm life. Churches that teach false doctrines attract people that do not want to believe the truth and those that are gullible. People that do not want to believe the truth will find that it is easy to believe lies, and there is no lack of false religions and philosophies that will appeal to their fleshly desires.

Since they have rejected the truth, they could never feel comfortable in a church that preaches the truth, so they gravitate to their own kind. People that want to believe lies will pass on their false doctrines to family and friends. On fire churches reproduce on fire believers that in turn reproduce on fire disciples.

This is the only model that Jesus made for the church, so it is the only model that can truly fulfill God's will and be pleasing to God. This is why I have said in past podcasts that if you are in a cold, lukewarm, or doctrinally off-the-wall church, then get out of that church as fast as you can and get yourself plugged into an on-fire, Bible-believing, Christ-centered church. I have said all that to firmly establish that there is a spiritual law that we reproduce ourselves in others.

Whether we reproduce ourselves in others for their good or evil directly depends upon the relationship we have with Jesus. The extent of the influence we have on others depends on the relationship and the position we hold to them. A pastor can have great influence upon the people because of his position.

People look to the pastor as a spiritual authority, and due to that position people allow him to be a strong influence in their lives, even if they are not close to the pastor. This is why the devil tempts pastors, because he knows that if the pastor gets caught up in sin, the whole church will be devastated, and some people will be so deeply wounded that it will take years or decades for them to heal. The influence parents have on the lives of their children is very extensive.

Take a look at the children, and you will most often see the spiritual condition of the parents. Lukewarm, worldly parents will pass on their dead religion to their children. Parents that believe in false doctrines will

pass on those lies to their children.

Secret sins in the home will define the family and curse the children because one or both parents practiced evil. On fire parents will pass on the fire to their children and will teach them to love Jesus with all of their heart. Whether intentional or not, every parent disciplines their children.

Even those natural fathers and mothers that have abandoned their children have left a mark on them that will affect them for the rest of their lives. Genuine Christian parents need to approach child-rearing from the standpoint of discipleship, that you purposely raise up your children to be followers of Jesus. This is what the Lord commanded Israel to do, and you can find this command in Deuteronomy 11, verses 19-20.

Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you sit down and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates.

What's he talking about? The Word of God, the commands of God, that they should become so much a part of a family that the children are being disciplined. The same dynamic can be seen in the local church. An on-fire pastor will typically have a group of parishioners that have the same passion for God.

In like manner, a carnal pastor will only be able to reproduce carnal disciples. The tragedy here is that such people may not be Christ's disciples at all, but disciples of a counterfeit religion, acolytes of a false god, who seemingly demand little of this life, but demand everything in the next. Discipleship is purposeful.

Everyone that wants to be pleasing to God must become one of Christ's disciples according to our Lord's standard of discipleship, and not according to our opinions or the local church's ideas or denominational criteria. True discipleship is a purposeful act on the part of the one that wants to be disciplined and the one that does the disciplining. We influence people by the life we live, but discipleship is a purposeful act, something in which we must make a conscious choice.

Discipleship does not come about by time and chance, but must be willed by the individual. In other words, we must want to be disciplined and submit to it. One day as Jesus was walking along the road, a crowd of people followed him.

The account speaks of the interaction between Jesus and three men, and this account can be found in Luke 9, beginning in verse 57. Two of the men said to Jesus, I will follow you, while the other man Jesus commanded him to follow. All three men were faced with a choice, either to follow Jesus and become one of his disciples, or to refuse to follow him.

There was no middle ground. They were either in or not. In our American version of Christianity, we have enlarged the Christian umbrella so we can have larger churches filled with converts, rather than true churches filled with active disciples.

The discipleship model Jesus created is that radical disciples reproduce their Christlike characters in others, who in turn reproduce their Christlike character in others, and on goes the spread of the gospel from one generation to the next. The passionate love for God that on-fire followers of Jesus have is contagious, and their hunger for the word is infectious, and their evangelism is powerful and effective. When you have Christlike on-fire radical believers that are reproducing themselves in others, you will find on-fire radical churches, and I passionately believe that this is the only kind of church that is pleasing to God.

People can bind and loose the devil all day long, and still see no change in the spiritual condition of the people or community. Others can make declarations that sound so bold and faith-filled, yet never see anything of substance happen from their declarations. Hell is not afraid of the greedy prosperity preachers that are getting rich through their exploitation of people.

Hell is not afraid of lukewarm apostate churches where pastors give tame motivational talks that leave everybody feeling good about themselves while they rush to hell. And the hordes of hell are not afraid of self-absorbed, self-professing Christians that are consumed with personal comfort while masses of humanity rush towards their eternal damnation. But hell is terrified of the church when she is like Jesus, when she comes alive in the power of true Pentecost, when the church is full of on-fire, spirit-filled people that are reproducing themselves in the lives of others.

Hell is terrified of that. History is full of wonderful accounts of true disciples turning upside down the world in which Christ planted them. You will see in Scripture and the pages of history that the only ones that changed the world for eternal good were on-fire Christ-like followers of Jesus.

Why did they turn the world upside down? Because they were growing in Christ's likeness, and the spiritual law that we reap what we sow can be seen in a positive dimension here. When people love Jesus so much that they will literally lay down their lives for Him, you can rest assured that hell is getting very nervous because they know that they are about to face a fight in which they will take a terrible loss. When disciples love Jesus more than this world and more than themselves, you will see true saints that cannot be silent through intimidation, persecution, or death.

They cannot be bought with money, fame, or promises of success because they are not for sale. They have found a better love than this world could ever offer, and they will not betray that love for any worldly treasure or even to save their own lives. True disciples are the ones that change the world for the glory of God.

Converts cannot do this because they are not committed like only true disciples can be. The lukewarm apostate church cannot do it either because they are not in right fellowship with God. It is only New Testament Christianity that can have the power of the Holy Spirit flowing through authentic followers of Jesus.

This is the faith at Jesus' birth, the faith He calls us to love, live, advance, and defend. Take the Chinese underground church as an example. The church is gathering an army like the world has probably never seen.

It is not an army with guns and bombs that are out to kill the enemy or conquer the governments of this world. They do not conquer through violence, but through love. This spiritual army has begun a massive invasion into Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu nations lying between China and Israel.

This invasion is happening through genuine disciples of Jesus that are willing to spend and be spent for the glory of God. This invasion is happening because radical disciples of Jesus have a deep ache within them to reproduce after their own kind. They ache to see people born again.

When the communists overthrew China in the last century, the church almost ceased to exist. But then it happened. Some Chinese came to understand the true gospel of Jesus Christ, and that discipleship is all-consuming.

A holy fire began to burn in them that has spread throughout the land and is now overflowing its borders. But the Chinese revival has come at a cost. For several decades, the underground church has suffered horrendous persecutions under the communists, yet thousands are saved each week.

Many Chinese saints have suffered for the faith. Some were martyred, while others spent countless years in prison. Yet the explosion of the underground church happened because discipleship was taken seriously.

They were purposeful in reproducing themselves in others. They did not sit in their churches waiting for the loss to come to them, nor were churches fighting over the limited number of churchgoers in their community. They were disciples of Jesus, and by sitting at His feet, they learned that true discipleship is costly, that it is all-consuming.

And until it is all-consuming, we will not see in America what the Spirit is doing in China. Take a look at the new generation of radical disciples in China, and you will see their passion to win a perishing world for Jesus. For this is the mission of every true disciple, bar none.

They have revived an old vision called Back to Jerusalem, where they are wanting to win to Christ all the nations and people groups along the old Silk Highway. To accomplish this, they must escape from China to preach Jesus in the countries between them and Jerusalem, where millions are perishing. Try and get a picture [here](#).

These Christ-like disciples are like their spiritual mothers and fathers that had the fire of God burning in them. The only difference is that these radicals are sacrificing themselves so that people of other countries can know Jesus and find eternal life. Is not this the example that Jesus gave us? He broke into our world to bring salvation to us.

So is it not right to break into the lives of those that do not know Him so they can have a chance to be saved? And is not Jesus our perfect example of true discipleship and how He modeled it for those first believers who were obligated by the cross and their love for God to make disciples of all nations? In the end, the moral and spiritual condition of children will reflect that of their parents. Churches will resemble their pastor. A city will bear a likeness to the spiritual quality of its churches, and a nation cannot rise any higher than the caliber of its believers.

If we do not like what we see in our children, then we need to take a good long look in a mirror and realize that they learned a vast portion of what they are living out from the parents. What you have planted in their lives as a seed has grown up to be a fruit-bearing plant. And if you don't like the fruit, then look at the seed and learn the reason.

If we don't like what we see in our churches, then there are two places to look. First at the pastor, and then at the people. The people get what they deserve, and if they have a lukewarm or self-absorbed pastor, it is because that is what they wanted.

If they had been on fire for God, then they would not want a lukewarm pastor. And if they wanted to be true disciples, they would not settle for the pop-shallow church-growth models that can only make converts, but not disciples. And if the pastor has a lukewarm congregation, it is because he has settled for that.

If he wants the people to have the fire of God burning in their bones, then he must have it in his first. If he does not have the fire of God, then it is futile to complain over a dead congregation. Some pastors become accommodationists that strive to keep the status quo, because they have grown weary of fighting contentious parishioners and contentious board members.

In these situations, the people get what they deserve, but the cost of getting our own way may be very, very high. When you see a community that is hard to the gospel, you can find the reason within the local congregation. Dead churches cannot attract a dying world.

Immorality in the church will not attract the lost. Until the church is alive in Christ, they will have nothing by which to attract the world's attention, other than the scandals that seem to abound. But they will certainly not draw people to Christ, but only drive them away.

The moral and spiritual condition of the nation is directly the result of the moral and spiritual condition of the church. When the church is on fire, the nation will have a major revival awakening. But when the church is dead, the nation will drift further and further from Christ into greater and greater immorality.

Until we are willing to have a personal spiritual revolution, we cannot expect anything else to change around us for good. We can blame everybody else for what is going on in our homes, church, and world, but until we accept responsibility, we will never become agents of change in the hands of Almighty God. Spiritual and moral reproduction is an unalterable fact.

It happens in everyday life, in our homes, schools, and workplaces. But discipleship is a choice, and only happens when people grow hungry for God, and ache to see His glory in their families and in the land. People will only want to be discipled when they long to be more like Jesus.

The model of Christ's standard for discipleship has not changed in 2,000 years, and it will never change while this fallen world remains. His standard is that radical Christians reproduce themselves and others, so that the next generation of believers will be Christ-like radicals as well. But what are the consequences if Christ's standard for discipleship is abandoned or watered down? It will most certainly be the ruin of many churchgoers, which will in turn cost multitudes their eternal soul.

It will mean that the greater portion of perishing immortal souls will die in their sin, and be forever cast out of the presence of the Lord in a real place called hell in the lake of fire. We must refuse to let people go to hell when it is within our ability and divine calling to bring the gospel to them. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2.1, You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

We are called to do a spiritual supernatural work that the natural man cannot know or perform. Divine grace is omnipotent, because God is all powerful. All of God's infinite grace is available to true disciples, so that they can live out what it means to be a disciple, and to go into all the world and reproduce after their own kind.

We must become strong in the grace of God, so that we can become powerful agents in the hands of the Holy Spirit to turn our world upside down for the glory of God. Disciples must put themselves in a place where the great potter can mold them into his image for his eternal glory. When we are pliable clay in the hands of the great potter, he will fashion us into his image, which is Christ's likeness.

This is the ultimate reason for discipleship, to make us like Jesus, so we can have deep, abiding fellowship with God Almighty, which in turn will open up the door that we may be powerfully used for his

glory. Yes, true discipleship is all-consuming, but we must also remember that it is all-fulfilling, because Jesus is the prize that is obtained through the radical pursuit of God.

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