

Radical

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon 'Radical' challenges believers to embrace a radical commitment to following Jesus, emphasizing the cost and urgency of discipleship.

Duration: 25:28

Scripture: Matthew 16:24, Matthew 22:37-39, Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:57-58, Romans 12:1-2, Hebrews 5:12-14

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being radical for God and not being a halfway person. He shares a personal story of diving for a loose ball during a basketball game, illustrating the level of dedication and commitment that athletes have. The preacher then refers to a passage from the Gospel of Luke where someone boasts about following Jesus wherever he goes, but Jesus challenges their shallowness by highlighting the hardships he faces. The preacher also shares a powerful story of a man from Bangladesh who was scarred for preaching the Gospel, highlighting the radical commitment some believers have. Overall, the sermon encourages listeners to be willing to go to extreme lengths for Jesus and not be afraid of hardship.

Transcript

How many wanna see something new and great happen in your own life through God, the Holy Spirit, Jesus working, and how many wanna be used, remember, all the blessings of God, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, is to bless us, not to be blessed, but to prepare us for what God's called us to do, individually and as a church. How many wanna step out like never before into everything God has for you? Could you lift your hand and say aloud, amen? And I hope the folks up there from Kentucky, young people, I hope that you're born again Christians and not just going to Christian school. Going to Christian school won't help you should you pass away and face God.

You have to know Jesus as your Savior, and you gotta be available to him. It worked different for me, and I wanna say this maybe to encourage someone who has the calling of God on their life, we're gonna talk consecration now, to service, and read a difficult portion of Scripture, teachings of Jesus, not easy, this passage. So I was in college, and God began, with my mind not on God, he began to break through.

And my cold, hard heart began to be warmed and broken, never dreaming, the last thought on my mind ever was to be in the ministry, but God began to work in me. And then I began to have a hunger in me

gradually after graduating, like God, I'm available, I wanna be used by you. So I wanna talk to everyone here who's radically hungry to be used by God.

You gotta ask the Holy Spirit to bring you to this place. I'm gonna put verses up here, teachings of Jesus, not easy, some are gonna sound not only austere, they're gonna sound unreasonable or stern. I'm going to explain them the best I can, but this is not for us to get psyched up and try to say, oh, I gotta be like this.

It's to us to go to God and say, God, make me like this so I can be the minister, the Christian. A lot of you have gifts and callings on your life that you're not operating in. And some of you have been sitting in services for how long? And you're not teaching anyone the word? And for 20 years, you've been coming to church? As the Bible says in one place, I'm still having to teach you, the writer says, when you should have come to the place where you're teaching others, and he's not talking to pastors, he's talking to people in the church.

I mean, how many meetings do you have to be in? How many decades do you have to go to church before you step out and start being a blessing to other people? It's true. But you gotta get over this barrier of I sit and watch, but I'm never used. So don't you wanna be used by God? I'm reading about this lady who never got ordained, there's some interesting women who lived around the end of the 1800s, into 1920, 1930, 1940, one died, I think in 41 that I'm reading about, and they were not ordained, but they shared the gospel, they taught other people, they helped missionaries, and some had the gift of praying for people who were sick, and they recovered, but they stepped out, they had oversight over them, but nobody made a big deal about it, they just said, no, God is doing this, and we wanna serve him, and they were radical.

The name of this little talk is radical. Because to be used by God, you gotta be crazy. My late friend David Wilkerson said that to me about six months before he died.

We were together, I spoke at a conference, he was then confined a little bit and ill, and he couldn't speak much, so we were sitting in a green room together at this conference in Colorado, and he said, you know, Jim, this is a good message. Something you said made me think of something, Jim. Jim, did you ever think of this, that God only uses people down through history who are crazy for him? Halfway people never get used by God.

You can read church history, never, ever. Halfway people, step out, but I gotta be able to know I get back. I'll minister, but I gotta know how it ends, and who's gonna pay all the bills? Never one has been used that way, and that's what he meant.

He didn't mean it as a joke. You gotta be crazy for God. What were Peter and those early disciples, going out in charge of world missions? They had just denied the Lord, everyone was against them, and they went out boldly proclaiming the gospel.

Were they not crazy for Jesus? Were they not radical for God? Are you following what I'm saying here tonight? I'm saying you can't be a halfway person. Look, does it make any sense to be halfway like I've told you before? They're playing the tournament games, now for March Madness. Where was it, in Boston, or Madison Square Garden, or somebody, there was a loose ball, and my roommate was way up in the balcony somewhere, and I dove for a loose ball, and back then they wore the shorts a little shorter than where they wear them now, and I went diving for the loose ball.

I just saw a loose ball. I had to save it. My team win a basketball game that nobody remembers, and he said you could hear the skid marks up in the balcony of this arena, and all the skin was ripped off of me from here down to here, all of it just ripped right off, and it was raw.

You couldn't put a, I couldn't put a sheet on it. Why, because I was nuts to get the ball. I was, ask any athlete, anybody, they're crazy.

They're totally radical. They don't practice a little bit, and then say I wanna go home and watch TV. They're working, working, working, working.

Look, Gospel of Luke, and they were going along the road, and someone said to him, I will follow you wherever you go, and Jesus said to him, the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. Before I read the rest, I don't wanna read them all, and then get discombobulated. Someone came to him and said, I'll follow you wherever you go.

It was like a boast, a spiritual boast. He didn't say I wanna be a follower of yours. He said, hey, I will follow you wherever you go, and he said, oh, will you? He must have seen some shallowness in him.

He said, well, let me tell you something. The foxes have holes to rest in. The birds have a nest to rest in, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

What's the teaching of that? The teaching is if you're gonna be radical for Jesus and serve God, you gotta be ready for anything, and it's not gonna be easy sometimes, in one way or another. I'm not gonna say you won't have a pillow under your head. There was a story about a little boy many years ago heard this story and heard this passage, and he began to cry, and his mommy said, what's wrong with you, son? And she said, he said, you know what? If I lived back then, I would've given him a pillow.

I would've given him a pillow. So what's Jesus teaching? That if you're gonna follow him, you wanna be used by God, then all bets are off. Well, that disqualified some of us already.

If you want guaranteed anything, you want guaranteed this, guaranteed that, it's always gonna be easy. Church history tells us that sometimes if you follow Jesus and you follow the ministry he gave you, it can really get hard, not just physically and financially, but emotionally and mentally. I was reading about one of the great preachers in England, and every summer, he had to go away on a vacation for four months because his nerves and his emotions, he was high strung, and as he poured out his life and ministry, it took a toll.

So what Jesus is saying, you wanna follow me? You really wanna be used by me? Then are you ready for some hardship? I'm not guaranteeing it'll happen, but it will definitely, you're gonna be fighting the devil. You're definitely gonna fight the devil. Why, the devil will cheer us on if we wanna be used by God? Everything's gonna work out smooth? Is that what's happening to Christians in the Middle East right now? If ISIS gets a hold of them? See, this is so counter American Christianity that as I say it, I can hear the roadblocks in our minds, like, no, you just confess the word and everything works out.

That's crazy. Jesus said, in this world, you'll have persecution and tribulation, but don't be afraid. I've overcome the world.

Wouldn't you rather die doing God's will than live a long life not serving him? Come on, can we say amen? So that must have stunned that guy. I'll follow you wherever you go. Jesus said, oh yes? Well, I just wanna

tell you now, if you follow me, you might end up not knowing where you'll sleep tonight.

Right now, people who go into ministry in most denominations, it's not like it was for the last 2,000 years, where I'm gonna serve God no matter what. I see them in seminaries when I'm invited to speak in the chapel services, convocation. They got want ads on the bulletin board and they have churches looking for youth pastors and for associate pastors graduating and I hear these college students say to each other, I would never take that job.

Look at the medical package they have. That's for the birds. I would never go there.

That's how you're gonna decide? That's how you're gonna decide where God's calling you, by the medical package and the salary. That's been unknown all through Christianity. That's why there's so many lukewarm churches.

We got so many lukewarm ministers who want comfort and ease. They're not willing to be radical and say, I don't care where he leads me. I'll be crazy for Jesus.

You know, the man's scarred face is before me right now. You can see him from Bangladesh. I'm preaching in Bangladesh and my session was over and we're getting water.

There's a break and they say, he's down there, that end. The one we told you about. I said, I gotta go see him and I went down and looked and I had to just wince a little bit.

His face is a mess. I said, tell me again how it happened. Oh, he was preaching in a village.

He led a lady to Christ. She went home, told her husband, I'm not gonna be a Muslim anymore. I'm gonna serve Jesus.

He went, oh yeah? I don't know what he did to her, but he went, got a small caliber revolver, went and shot him, this guy, right in the face. Somehow it didn't kill him. It ricocheted all over and they did plastic surgery as best they could wherever he was.

Then they told me, you know what he did when he healed? He went right back to the village to tell people about Jesus. So I felt like, wait a minute, I'm preaching to him? Wait a minute, I'm preaching to him? Our idea of hardship is a bad meal at a restaurant for a lot of us, am I right? But this is what Jesus did. And this might disqualify some of us, so be it.

Jesus doesn't fool with us. He tells us, you wanna follow me? Birds have nests, foxes have holes, but you follow me, there's no guarantee. But I'll be with you, I'll never leave you, I'll never forsake you, and I'll give you peace at night that you can't get in a nice hotel, that you can stay at a nice hotel and really be miserable.

Then, the Bible says, next case, there were three of them, and he said to another, he, Jesus said to another, follow me, but he said, no, Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father. But he said, Jesus said to him, allow the dead to bury their own dead, but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God. Now that's a hard one, that's a hard one.

But of course, what that means is, wasn't that the man, his father had just died, and he was waiting to go to the funeral three hours later? No, if that was the case, he would have been ceremonial unclean, he wouldn't be out talking to Jesus. The custom back then was, when your father got old, and you didn't know

when he would pass away, you stayed with him until he passed away. It might be months, it might be years.

You stayed with him, out of respect. And Jesus said, no, no, I'm calling you, I just called you now. Notice, the man didn't say to Jesus, Jesus said to the man, you come and follow me.

No, well let me go back first, and you know, I got family obligations. So that's another lesson for us. Do you really wanna be used by God? Then you gotta love Jesus more than your family.

And more than your culture. And more than your blackness. And more than your whiteness.

And more than anything. Jesus has gotta be numero uno all the time. Can we say a loud amen? Amen.

That does not mean to disrespect your family. One of the commandments is honor your father and mother. But there was teaching, again, I remember now, years ago, in the 80s, people came to me and told me, oh, there's this teacher going around, and he says, even if God calls you to the ministry, and you're 30 years old, unless your mother and father, who are not even Christians, say that you can go, you cannot go, listen again.

You're 30 years old. An angel appears to you and says, I want you to go to Bangladesh. You go to your parents.

At 30! They're not even Christians. I wanna go to Bangladesh. Niet, no.

And I can't go. Jesus is saying here, oh, how many people have I seen in my life just tied up by this? By their culture and their family, and what the family thinks, and the extended family. He's saying, you wanna follow me and be used by me? Then you have to love me more than your family.

Not dishonoring your family. How many get it? Say amen. Not dishonoring, but there's a possession that a family can have over people.

Oh, are you kidding me? It'll eat you up. Afraid what they'll think. Afraid how they'll react.

If you and I are gonna be radical for Jesus, we gotta care more about what he's saying than how our family might react. Never mind the world and your friends. Gotta be radical.

What else could this have meant? Boy, that was a wake-up call for that man. And it must have been possibly understood by people who said, wow, that sounds radical. Let the dead bury the dead.

Let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead. You go and bring the message of life to people. I have so many stories in my mind of things I've seen around the world and my own experience here in New York and around America where people have missed out with God because of family pressure.

Oh, is family pressure bad? And may I add something to the married couples teaching, although I have nothing to do with it, for anybody here single here. If you're planning to get married and you still wanna please mommy and daddy all the time, do everyone a favor and don't get married. Because when you marry a man or you marry a woman, you leave your mother and father.

You don't disrespect them, but you leave them. How many counseling sessions do we do when parents interfere in people's marriages? And of course, they're gonna side with their kid. They'll justify their

daughter no matter what she does.

Yeah, but she threw a dish at me. You're lucky, she could've thrown a pan. She has every right to do that.

I've heard the craziest stuff. How many wanna follow Jesus and love him more than anything in this world? Put your hands together loud. Come on.

I'm reading to you from God's word. The first one was shallow. Maybe he thought it would be a cup of tea to follow Jesus.

Jesus is warning all of us. You wanna follow me? I'm so glad the way I came into the ministry. I'm so glad the way I came into the church.

Someone was asking me, now they're helping my wife with some personal business, and they can't find when she started to get a salary because she didn't. She worked 10 years with no salary. Then my father-in-law got mad at me and said, you better put Carol on a salary for something.

She does every service, directs the choir, does every wedding, every funeral. You better pay her something. But we had no money.

I made 3,800 the first year, 5,500 the second year in the ministry, and 7,300 the third year in the ministry. And we both got second jobs, but she got no money from the church. So then I said, yes, father-in-law, I will obey you.

I put her on salary, \$100 a week for three weeks, but then things got difficult. I took her right off again. She didn't get a dime.

And now they're trying to find out, like, when did she start? But you know what? You do what you have to do. And if you want a soft life and everything guaranteed, say bye-bye to Jesus. You'll never serve him all out.

You'll never be used by him. We follow him wherever he leads us. Sometimes, for some, it's Coptic Christians who have their heads taken off on the bank of some lake or wherever that was.

But whatever it is, you gotta be ready for it. And you can't love your family and your culture more than you love Jesus. And if they turn against you, didn't Jesus say your enemies will come from your own what? Household.

Lastly, another also said, I'll follow you, Lord, but first permit me to say goodbye to those at home. Jesus said to him, no one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. These are the people, of course, that was just an excuse, one excuse that we have a thousand of, procrastinators.

The Lord says, you follow me. I will, but mañana. I got things to take care of.

Gotta say goodbye to the people in my house. Or I got a little deal working out when it's done, and I got my capital gains figured out and all of that. Then I'll do what you call me to do.

No, immediate, immediate obedience. Immediate obedience. Yeah, but I have to.

No, immediate obedience. I need you now. People are dying.

They don't know the Lord. They don't know the Lord. And sometimes when the Lord puts his hand on us, puts a finger on us, it's ahora, now, not mañana.

Because if you say mañana, tomorrow you'll say the same mañana. Because mañana never comes. It's always next week, next year.

Then I'm gonna step out. You know, I've gotten promptings by the Holy Spirit, but I don't think I'm ready. God is saying now.

Nobody who puts their hand to the plow can look back and say, wait a minute, let me get a couple things done. No, you're plowing. Come on, do it.

Just do it. No, but I'll make mistakes. We all do.

So make the mistakes, but do it. I wanna talk to somebody here today who's delaying and procrastinating. When in the world will you finally do it? Just do it.

Go on that trip. Open your mouth. Pray for somebody.

Do what God's called you to do. Stop saying tomorrow, tomorrow. I did that for a long time when God was dealing.

I was God, I don't know what you have in mind, but one day I'll really serve you. No, no, now's the time. Now's the time.

Now's the time. What do we learn here? The first guy said, I'll follow you wherever you go. And Jesus said, are you ready for everything? Because it's not easy.

Anyone who tells you it's easy to serve God doesn't know what they're talking about. It's better than not serving God, though. How many say amen to that? It's joy unspeakable and full of glory, but it's a lot of stuff.

Lot of stuff. Paul told the early disciples, it's through much tribulation that everyone must enter the kingdom of heaven. Lot of problems.

Come on, let me get, I'll do a vote right now. How many, since you've become a Christian, you found out there's a lot of stuff you gotta go through. Could you lift your hand? Oh, the devil, people, all kinds of stuff.

So if you're looking for some little smiling televangelist telling you just your dream is coming, you're gonna have a bigger car and a bigger house. Let those people do that. But as for me and my house, I wanna serve the Lord.

And where it leads, we do not know. Where it leads, we don't know. Number two, you gotta have a tie to Jesus that's stronger than family, money, whatever.

How? Think of that. Think of all the people, forget money, family. Their family is money.

They're related to \$100 bills. Jefferson, Grant, those are their relatives. And they have an allegiance to that.

They will not step out. I had a minister one time tell me, you know, I watch how you live and you're trusting God with your pastors and all that, but you know what I do? I step out on the limb, but I always make sure I'm not out too far that I can't get back in case it starts to crack. That's not faith.

Faith is, God, you want me to do it? Praise God, I'm gonna do it. I don't care about money. I don't care what the family says.

I've gotten spiritual counsel. I know what he wants me to do. I'm gonna do it.

And lastly, I'm not gonna procrastinate and say manana or give some excuse. Who's the only one who can make us like that? The Holy Spirit. If you thought I gave you this talk as a pep talk to say, boy, I'm gonna be sold out to God, you and I don't know how to do that.

But the Spirit comes. He gives us the spirit of surrender, spirit of faith. We need that.

I don't know where you young people are at. I never met you. Maybe never will see you again, but God might have his hand on one of you.

You gotta say, you gotta say digo si, senior. Yes, ahora, now. No excuses, and whether my family loves it or doesn't love it or likes it or doesn't like it, I'm gonna step out and do what God wants me to do.

Let's close our eyes. God, raise up ministers tonight. Raise up missionaries.

Raise up prophets and prophetesses. Raise up evangelists. Raise up people being used in the gifts of your spirit.

Help us to be radical. Save us from this half-baked Christianity in America, Lord, that is comfort zone, then a little Jesus. Little Jesus, but not out of my comfort zone.

No, no, no, I don't go out of my comfort zone. Spirit of God, stir us. Let your fire burn in us.

Burn away the dross, the selfishness. Every eye closed. Everybody who feels the Spirit is speaking to you in some way, shape, or form along the lines of what I've said, I'm not gonna try to say it and define it because my lips will fail, but you know God is speaking to you through the word we've heard, through the verses we read.

Just get out of your seat and come up here. Radical surrender, radical. Holy Spirit, make me radical.

No more half-baked. No more on the side. I'm gonna step out.

Lord, we pray for our pastor here from Iowa. He's hungry for you, Lord. Touch him tonight.

Give him a new radical devotion to you and your will. Do the work in them that we all need, Lord. Radical for you.

Tender, full of love, but radical for you. Not manana, today. Don't care what people, give us that spirit that doesn't, is not easily moved by people's opinions and the face of man.

And wherever you lead us, whatever we have to go through, as long as you're holding our hand, we're ready for it, Lord. Just save us all, Lord, starting with me. Save all of us from a half-baked Christianity where Jesus is in one compartment that we pull out.

Jesus, be everything to all of us. Be Lord of all, Lord. I want you to turn, everybody, to the first man you see if you're a man.

Woman, the first woman you see. You join hands together, decide who's gonna pray first. Pray from your heart whatever God gives you to pray over that person.

Pray blessing, pray healing, pray whatever God gives you to pray. Brothers with brothers, sisters with sisters, begin right now. Balcony, downstairs, everybody, get a prayer partner and pray.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/28/SID28349.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jim-cymbala/radical/>

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