

The Centrality of Christ in the Christian Life

by Keith Malcomson

This sermon emphasizes the importance of a Christ-centered Christian life, focusing on Christ-centered conversion, discipleship, and sanctification. It highlights the need for true discipleship that embodies the teachings of Jesus, denying self, taking up the cross, and following Him. The centrality of Christ in sanctification is emphasized, showing that true holiness comes through the Word of God and a love for Jesus.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:17, Luke 14:27, John 17:17, Ephesians 5:26, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Ephesians 5:27, John 17:19

Topics: "Christ-Centered Living", "True Discipleship"

Description

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Transcript

The Word of God this morning. I'm going to ask you to turn to 2nd Corinthians chapter 5, 2nd Corinthians chapter 5, and we're continuing with the centrality of Christ. Here this morning, you'll remember last week, we dealt with the centrality of Christ in the church.

We have been dealing over these several weeks looking at this centrality of Christ from eternity, and we're going to carry on and eventually reach eternity again to see that not only was Christ central in eternity past, but we are going to find that Christ is central in eternity future. Everything that's going to go out into eternity is going to be summed up in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. But between that, we have begun to look at his centrality in Israel, in creation, in the Bible, in the church, in all of these different aspects and at the cross.

But here this morning, I want to make this very, very personal. The centrality of Christ in the Christian life. This is our seventh message in this series.

The centrality of Christ in the Christian life. Reading from 2nd Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 11. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your conscience.

For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance and not in heart. For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God, or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all.

But they which live, notice this please, they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh. Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, we now henceforth know him no more.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new. And all things are of God who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and given to us the ministry of reconciliation to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's name, be reconciled to God, for he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Let's pray together here this morning. Thank you Jesus.

Father we do thank you for the centrality of Christ that is so beautiful, that we've seen Lord God, before there was creation, before you created the heavens and the earth, the sun, the moon, man himself, the animal, creation, oh God, before any of this, that you set up your only begotten son, your beloved son, you made him central, and even from before the world, you loved us in him, you chose us in him, you knew us in him, he was the medium of all of creation, and Lord God we thank you that he is the central subject of the Bible that we read from, he is at the very center of the purpose, the divine purpose of all creation, he is the very central reason why Israel is in controversy in world history, Lord God we thank you God for his centrality, that the cross, and Lord God you've raised up a church in the world of God in which Christ is the head, the foundation, he is the source, he is everything, but here this morning I pray impact our lives by seeing us born again Bible believing, spirit filled believers, Lord God that our life is to embody be in Christ's center, that Christ is to be the very center, and the heart and the substance, the meaning, the goal, the purpose, Lord God the very source of our Christian walking life, my God I pray help by the power of your divine spirit, Lord God break into every single area of our Christian life, and raise up your son, make him to be central in our motion, in our will, in our choices, in our desires, in our imagination, Lord God in the words of our mouth, in the actions of our hand, in the direction of our feet, oh God we're praying oh God that we might live out by your grace a Christ centered life, a life that is utterly consumed with the person of Christ, Father I pray you help us oh God individually in our walk with you, that all the glory might go to Christ in Jesus name, amen, amen. Here this morning the centrality of Christ in the Christian life, when we begin to look at the Bible we see that Christ in the individual Christian is to be central, the very center or the very focus of everything we do, here we read in 2nd Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 15, look what it says, and that he, that is Christ died for all, that they which live now notice he's saying about Christ's death at Calvary, the work accomplished in Calvary, Christ died for all, why did Jesus Christ die for all on the cross? That they which live, who are they which live? They that are born again through what Jesus done on the cross, certain individuals have come alive, they have been born again, regenerate, they're no longer dead in their sin, but they're made alive, how do you know a living Christian, someone who is made alive by the finished work of the cross? Well it says here that they which live or are made alive by a supernatural work of God should not henceforth or any longer live unto themselves but unto him which died for them and rose again, since that is the message this morning, that if Christ died for you, and if you are alive in the Lord Jesus Christ, do you know why you're alive? Do you know why you're born

again? It's not just to escape hell, it's not just to get to heaven, do you know why you are made alive by the death of Christ? Why there is a spiritual life in you this morning? Do you know why that from now on, from the point of your conversion, that you will no longer live for yourself? You see I believe the mark of getting born again isn't just that you stop drinking, or you stop fornicating, or you stop taking drugs, or you turn away from atheism and evolution, I actually believe one of the greatest marks of being born again, of that you've been made alive in Christ is this, that you no longer henceforth live unto yourselves. You see if you find a Christian and they live unto themselves, they are the centre, they are the focus, all of their money is steered towards themselves, all of their plans, all of their ideas, all of their little comments, and when all of that dominates, it's a contradiction of being made alive in Christ.

You see the purpose that Christ died for you and made you alive is that you no longer live unto yourself. You know when you meet people who are self-centred, do you know what that means? They are the centre of their world, and you have that in the church of our generation, and you have it even in the ministry of preachers where they are the centre of their ministry, they are the centre of their Christianity, they are the centre of church life, and yet we know that Christ's death on the cross was to set you free, that henceforth you do not live unto yourself, but unto Christ. From now on you'll be made alive.

I'm not going to live for myself anymore, my plans are not for myself. Do you know a selfish Christian is a contradiction in terms? To be a Christian alive, saved from hell, born again by God's grace, having received something we don't deserve, and yet we're self-centred, we're conscious of ourself, always promoting ourself, always manipulating things to get a better place in life. Do you realise what an abomination that is? What a contradiction of the cross, what a contradiction of our life in Christ.

You see you were given life, but you don't any longer live, see that's how you lived in the past, that's how a sinner lives, that's what dead religion does. But a newborn Christian, do you know what? Now, now because there's life in him, he lives unto Christ, not for himself. His perspective has changed, he lives unto the one who died for him and rose again.

Here this morning, I know you know the gospel, I know you know about the cross, but Jesus Christ died for you and he rose again. Now as a Christian you're to live unto him, you're not to live unto yourself. It is a selfish thing.

Listen to the centrality of Christ in the life of the Apostle Paul. In Philippians chapter 1 and 21 he says, for me to live. He's talking about living out his life in this world.

For me to live is Christ. In other words, how he functions in this world. Christianity is not an add-on.

You look at the Christianity of some people, Christ is not central to it. He is an add-on to make their life better, that they can go and live for themselves. And yet Paul said, for me to live my life in this world is Christ.

If you look at everything I do, every decision, all my plans, all my relationships, when you look at those things, my life in this world in the short time that God gives me, when you look at it and you say, what is the life of Paul? You go, it's Christ. Christ was the center of it. Christ was the purpose of it.

Christ was the goal of it. And he said, to die is gain. In Colossians 3 and 4 he says, concerning Christ who is our life.

In 1 Corinthians 2 and 2 he says, for I determine not to know anything among you, the church, the Christians at Corinth, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. Nothing. You know, now with the world government, they are trying to make the internet, media, technology to be the medium.

We meet through internet, we talk through internet, we communicate through internet. Business is going to function through it. Government is going to function.

Church is going to function. Life is going to function. Everything.

You won't know anything apart from that internet. You know, they are trying to make the internet the medium. And yet Paul in these verses, he said, I determined and made a decision.

I wouldn't know anything among you, the church, in any relationship unless it went through the medium of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you realize what Paul done in the first century? The globalists are trying to do with internet so that everything comes through that sphere of the internet. I want to tell you, if you're a born again Christian, you're not to have any association that doesn't get filtered through the Lord Jesus Christ.

You ought to stop before you say anything. You ought to stop before every decision. You ought to stop before you do anything in life.

I don't care if it's in the workplace, the home, in the church, you do not have rights apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. You go, what would he say? What would he think? What would he do? How do I live out my life in this world? We know that Paul was determined, but it was progressive. Don't think he was there at the beginning.

This is a lifetime of working out the centrality of Christ in your life. It was between Athens and Corinth that Paul made that decision. He was a man of God.

He was a Christ-centered man. And yet he said, I have determined on that road between those two cities. He's in ministry.

He's got a lot of knowledge. He's done a lot for the Lord. And yet he determines and said, I will not know anything among you save Christ and him crucified.

You know, along this way, God deals with our heart and we make decisions. You know what? You say, I'm going to make sure Christ is central in that area of my life. In Galatians 2 and 20, he says, I am crucified with Christ.

I am the personal Paul, the man, the person. He says, nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. For Paul to live was for Christ to live.

Here this morning, believe me, I've got an entire series on this one message and we're going to come back to this later in the year or maybe next year. I've got an entire series of messages that I haven't touched on yet, which are actually going to be called the centrality of Christ in the Christian life. And I want to go through step by step.

I can't even condense it this morning to tell you of all the wonderful scriptures and verses and teachings and examples in this book about Christ being central in the Christian life. Do you know it's the dominant theme of the letters of Paul? Do you know it's the main theme of the New Testament? It's one of the most fundamental teachings. It's not the individual teachings of, you shouldn't lie and you shouldn't steal and

you ought to give to God.

It's not those individual things. All of these things only feed into this one subject, the centrality of Christ in your individual life. All these things feed into it, but this is the theme of it.

Here this morning, I want to give you three points as I try to exhort you to be Christ centred in your Christian life. Three points and in these three points I'm going to deal with the centrality of Christ in conversion, the centrality of Christ in discipleship and the centrality of Christ in sanctification. And yet all I'm doing is giving you an overview of something that we've got to plunge into the New Testament to fully understand.

First of all here this morning, Christ centred conversion. Look with me what it says here in 2 Corinthians 5 and 17. It says, therefore if any man be in Christ, what is he? He is a new creature.

Old things have passed away. Behold, all things are become new. All men are not in Christ.

All men are not children of God. All religious people are not children of God. All those that are sitting in churches who claim to be born again are not in Christ.

This verse actually says, if any man be in Christ. What a big F. If any man. I've had Christians this year who claim to be Christians stretching back every year so I'm used to it and when you hear it again you go, I've never heard that before.

I had a so called mature Christian approach me this year and he says, I don't like the way in your preaching when you use the word F. You say F in your preaching an awful lot. I said, guess why I use the word F a lot in my preaching? Because the Bible says, if you be in Christ. If any man be in Christ.

Honestly the utter ignorance of so many in the church of our day, since that's why they get in trouble. That's why they make wrong decisions. That's why they make an absolute pig's ear of their Christian life.

You know why? They're utterly ignorant of this pig and they go to try and correct someone like me and say, I don't like you using the word F in your preaching over people like me. You make me feel bad. Maybe you need to feel bad.

Maybe it's the Holy Spirit convicting you of something that is wrong. But notice this, Christ centred conversion. If any man be in Christ.

It's not talking about being in church or believing a set of doctrines. It is talking about an experience. When you read the word to be in Christ, it is an experience.

It's talking about something that has happened to you. It wasn't always there. It's not just discovering something that was a fact.

It is an experience. When were you put in Christ? When did you experience that you were placed in the person of Christ? There is a time when you are put into Christ. What does it mean to be in Christ? It means union, oneness, identification, communion.

It means you now live your life in a new atmosphere. If you're in something, it surrounds you. If you're in something, you can't look at this world apart from that.

That's why God the Father cannot look at you unless he looks through Christ. Do you realise that this morning? That God the Father always looks through Christ when he looks at you. He never looks at you apart from his son.

But also what about you? You're meant to live your Christian life in Christ. If you're in Christ, it means you can't even deal with this world apart from going through the person of Christ. You are in him and Christ creates a whole new atmosphere for you to live in, to breathe in, to think in, to speak in or to act in.

It says in 1 Corinthians 1 and 30, but of him God or you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Notice here that to be in Christ is an act of God. It's a supernatural experience.

It is an experience that only God can do to take you and to put you in Christ. It is a supernatural work. It's not just making a decision.

It's not just changing your doctrines. It's not just joining a church. It is an experience where God takes you and he puts you in Christ and makes Christ redemption and sanctification and wisdom unto you.

God literally makes Christ everything unto you by this experience of being placed in Christ. Have you been placed in the Lord Jesus Christ? Again it says in Titus 3 and 5, not by works of righteousness which we have done. It's all about conversion here.

It's all about being born again. Not of works of righteousness which we have done. Do you think you can earn your way in, work your way in, be good enough to come in? Christ never saved a good man.

Never in 2,000 years. He only saves sinners who can't help themselves, who cannot be good, who cannot make themselves right. Christ only saves a hell deserving sinner who finds that they cannot get themselves out of sin.

It's not by works of righteousness that you have done but according to his mercy that he saved us. That's the only thing that will save you is God's mercy. How does he save you? How does he act? It comes out of the mercy of God giving you what you do not deserve.

That's salvation. This is conversion. It's a supernatural experience.

Listen to what Titus says. It says he saved you through his mercy by the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Ghost. Look at that for a second.

How does God save an individual? How do you get converted? By the washing of regeneration. Do you know that word regeneration means a rebirth, a new birth in which everything is made new? It means to start over again. I'm talking about a Christ centred conversion.

What does it mean that you get born again and it's Christ centred? You see I've seen a lot of conversions that aren't Christ centred. Do you know how I know they're not? Sin was never dealt with in that life. Repentance never manifested in that life.

They say they're converted to Christ. They're still as selfish. They're proud.

They're arrogant. They're thieves. They're liars.

I look at them and they can sing the songs of Zion and I go but their nature has never changed. They're as selfish and as self centred. In fact their conversion points to themselves.

You talk to them and say how did you get saved and it's me, me, me, me, me, me. I go is there any place for Christ here? Is there any work of the Spirit of God? Is there any spiritual element of supernatural power that you cannot explain? Some people you speak to them and you think that they've done God a favour in getting born again. Well I believed in him.

I've done this for the Lord. Isn't God so good, isn't it so good that God has me? Haven't I done so much for him? He must be really, really happy that I actually chose to follow him. He's so privileged.

We can laugh at these things but I assure you I have seen it in the church where you go it's not a Christ centred conversion. They say oh I believed in. God just accepts me by grace living my life.

I go that is not a Christ centred conversion. He'll deal with your sin. He'll deal with repentance in your heart.

But this word regeneration, the washing of regeneration. How did you get saved? By regeneration. It means to start over again.

This is where you begin. This is a Christ centred conversion. There's a new beginning.

There's a time when you're put into Jesus Christ. It talks about a fresh beginning. You're born again, saved, converted.

Call it what you want. It is an act of God where he spiritually washes you clean from your old life and from your old sin. What does it say there? The renewing of the Holy Ghost.

Do you know what that means? Not only a fresh start, a new beginning. I'm in Christ. How do you know you're in Christ? I've started all over again.

I've received a new beginning. It also says washed. Washed or renewed by the Holy Ghost.

This renewing of the Holy Ghost means to take a bath. This is what you received. A one off bath.

Have you had that one off bath that brought you into Christ Jesus? I mean he took you and he went stinking, lousy, dirty sinner. What could we ever do for you? And he dropped you into a spiritual bath. This is where it begins.

I'm talking about a Christ centred conversion. I tell you there's an awful lot of churches out there. You never need to deal with sin to get in.

I made a decision. I come to the front. I was smiling.

The preacher shook my hand and said, well done young man or well done young lady and clapped him on the back of the back. But do you know what? They were never by the Holy Spirit placed into a spiritual bath to wash them from their past life. Most churches will say you're fine.

Come as you are. God will accept you. You don't need a change.

He just likes you the way you are. It doesn't matter if you keep your blaspheming. It doesn't matter if you keep your lying.

It doesn't matter if you carry on the same as long as you profess to be born again. What is the great mark of being in Christ? Look what it says here. If any man be in Christ, what is he? How do I know a man is in Christ? How do I know that you are in Christ? How do I know? Well it says here, he is a new creature.

If you're not a new creature, you are not in Christ. Many people want to claim all the blessings of Christ. But look what it says.

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. What is a new creature? The Greek word means to return to the original formation. To go back to what the manufacturer wanted you to be.

To form again within a life or to return to the original specification. In other words, God created you. What is a new creature? God actually refreshes everything and doesn't take you back to your childhood.

Oh no. He takes you back to his original plan for man before the fall in the Garden of Eden. He takes you right back there.

It means to return. To go right back to God's original plan for man. It is an inward, not just an outward work.

Conversion is a work in the spirit of man. Everything of the Christian life, of your outward Christian life flows out of an inner experience. If you've got a problem with how you're talking, the decisions you're making, how you're living, how you're acting, do you know how you rectify that? You go back to your inward experience.

If you want to change the outward, deal with the inward. Lots of people say, I'm trying to deal with that. I'm trying to deal with something else.

That's the wrong thing. You see, a new creature is what he says. If you're in Christ, you are a new creature.

To be in Christ, that word, in Christ, it occurs 174 times in the New Testament, teaching you about what you have to be in Christ. The Apostle Paul mentions this term, in Christ, 21 times in the first two chapters of the letter to the Ephesians. In Christ, many in the church claim to be in Christ and to possess every blessing in Christ.

They say, I am justified, I am redeemed, I am forgiven, I am adopted, I am accepted, I am delivered, my name's written in the Lamb's book of life, I'll never go to hell, I'm going to heaven. They claim all this, but the problem is they're not a new creature. They say, I'm in Christ and I possess everything the Bible teaches about it.

It's all mine. But when you look at their life, they're not a new creature. I'm talking about a Christ-centered, a conversion focused on Christ.

You see, there's those that talk about conversion, or being born again, or being a Christian. It's got nothing to do with Jesus. It doesn't recognize the power of the blood on the cross.

They never talk about the blood. They've never had their sin dealt with. They've never had an encounter with the person of Christ.

They claim everything. They say, Christ done everything for me. But there's no new nature.

It says in Ephesians chapter 2 and 1, And you hath he, God quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. Every person before conversion, they are dead. I mean, they are stone cold dead.

You don't get deader than this. It says, but God quickens you or makes you alive. What does it mean you were dead? You were dead in trespasses and sins.

You were dead. That was the atmosphere you lived in. You were dead.

What do you mean dead? I mean dead in trespasses. You know what trespasses are? They are errors, side slips, faults. That's what it means.

To be dead in sins means to constantly miss the mark. It is to have a life where you never obey God. You never do what's right.

You're always missing the mark. You never really see what it's about. And this is the atmosphere you live in.

You see, when you are dead in sins, you are not Christ centered, I want to assure you. You do not bring glory to him. But the Bible says that God quickened you, meaning to make alive.

You were dead in sin. Now you're alive. You have spiritual life.

Saints, I'm telling you about the Christian life here this morning. This is the first great thing about the centrality of Christ in the Christian life. You know what it is? A Christ centered conversion.

Get this wrong, everything in your Christian life is wrong. If you do not get this right, your eternity hangs on this. A real conversion, real repentance, real Christ, real faith, a real experience with him.

You can't afford to get it wrong. It says in Ephesians 2 and 5, even when we were dead in sins, has he quickened us? Notice this very carefully what I'm about to say. You were dead in your sins, but God quickened us or made us alive together with Christ.

Do you realize your conversion is a Christ centered conversion? Do you realize that when you're dead in your sin, fast on your way to hell, the only way to make you alive is with Christ. It is a Christ centered experience. If you've been made alive from the dead, I mean I've had a born again experience, a new birth, it's got to be together with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you know what the Greek means? It means to come alive in unity with. This is an experience you can only have if Christ is there. You can't have it alone and decide to join him later.

You can't have him doing it 2,000 years ago and you just tag on the end. You know what it is? Conversion is a Christ centered experience. He makes you alive from the dead.

He forgives you of your sin. He washes you in the blood of the lamb. It's him that grants you repentance.

It's a very real thing for by grace are you saved. Notice that this new creature is defined here in what conversion is. Old things have passed away.

What do you mean a new creature made alive? A new creature going back and starting all over again. What do you mean old things have passed away? The past is a completed action. In other words, old things, if you're in Christ, old things have passed away.

It happened once. I'm not talking about things just happening. Many things have to happen in all of our lives.

But I'm talking when you look back to your conversion, you say old things have passed away. If old things have not passed away, you take the same drugs. You still gossip like you used to.

You still lie. You still manipulate. See, we concentrate on fornication, drug taking.

I'm dealing with a selfish old Adamic nature that says me, me, me. This church will be about me. The sermon is about me.

Life is about me. My family is about me. My job is about me.

Everything, Ireland is all about me. In fact, the government ought to ask my permission and ought to revolve everything in around me. Do you know what? When you are a new creature, old things have passed away.

They've gone. It means the original, what you had at the beginning, your old life has passed away. Like Israel passed through the Dead Sea, it's the same term.

To pass through something and you leave the Red Sea behind you. You pass through it. You pass by it.

You went on into a new life in Christ. That's what it means old things are passed away. There's some things when you look over your shoulder, you haven't done them in three years or five years or ten years or one year.

There are certain lifestyles you've left boyfriends behind or the bottle behind or something else behind. I'm not talking about sinless perfection. You know that.

I don't believe in that. I know a genuine Christian has problems with their flesh and with sin and with issues and with the past. I know that and you know that.

But what I'm asking is a new creature has passed on beyond certain things. The old life, the past life, things that have been very close to you in the past and yet now they're not. They're an abomination.

You hate them. You get angry over those things. It says old things have passed away.

Behold all things are become new, absolutely new. You are a new creature, a new creation, a new person in Christ. I'm talking about a Christ-centered conversion.

I'm talking about an experience of being born again. Why is it in the church of this generation? We brought the new birth down to something else. You can live like the world, speak like the world, make decisions for the world.

You never put Christ first. You never live for Jesus Christ, yet you're a Christian. Oh I'm born again.

I know Jesus. Then why do you never make a decision that is based through the Word of God, through the person of Christ? This ought to alarm us. You see, behold all things have become new.

It's a new creation. It was not there before. I can look to the day when he changed me.

At four and a half as a child, a new relationship came forth. I wasn't a great sinner, but I was a sinner. I was lost.

I was born a sinner. You don't become a sinner through sin, but you are born a sinner, lost. You know what Paul says in Romans chapter 6 and verse 4? Even so, we also should walk in newness of life.

You see, the Christian life begins with a Christ-centered conversion of new life coming in, in unity with Christ. Can I ask you, was your conversion a Christ-centered conversion? Maybe you're here not born again this morning saying, I've tried. Maybe you've tried by yourself.

I'm trying to get converted by myself. I'm trying to repent by myself. I'm trying to get forgiven of my sins by myself.

Do you realize you can only get converted in union, in unity with the Lord Jesus Christ? It's got to be his power, his forgiveness, his influence. It's got to be him there or you cannot do this. No man, not one of us in this meeting would leave our sin if it was left to us.

For us to try and attain unto conversion, it would never happen. A Christ-centered conversion relies on him totally. It depends on his work, his drawing, his conviction, his power, his mercy, his grace, his love, recognizing that he's loving a hell-deserving sinner.

What do I get? I get a new start, a new birth, a new way of thinking, a new way of desiring, a new way of deciding, a new way of speaking, a new way of living. It does not mean that you're sinlessly perfect, but it does mean you're born again. I'm talking about a Christ-centered new birth, making decisions, and that man keeps getting drunk every night.

There's something terribly wrong with our theology. When we remove Christ, we throw out our Bibles, and we say he's born again. He's not born again.

He's not born again. And those preachers and pastors who tolerate that know nothing of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the first thing, a Christ-centered conversion.

The second thing, a Christ-centered discipleship. Just go with me to Luke chapter 14 and 26 here for a moment. A Christ-centered discipleship.

You see, there is a conversion. That's where you begin, but there's also a discipleship. Joshua, stop it.

Sit down. Sit down. Do I have to come down? There is a Christ-centered discipleship.

Luke chapter 14 and verse 26. Listen this carefully. I'm talking about not what men call discipleship.

I'm not talking about what the church calls discipleship. I'm talking about Christ-centered biblical discipleship. It says in Luke 14, 26, if any man come to me, it's Jesus speaking.

If any man comes to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and listen this, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. If you don't hate your own life, there's a lot of people in the church, they love their life. They protect their life.

They preserve their life. They want Christ. They want salvation.

They claim to have a Christian life, but you know what? They've never learned to hate their own life. They love their own life. Do you know how I know they love their own life? They always put it first.

They don't put Christ first. All of their decisions are made for self. Then you love Christ more, sorry, you love yourself more than you love Christ.

In fact, if you love your life like that, you hate Christ. Oh no, I don't hate Christ. If you love yourself, family, the things of this world, and preserve yourself, you actually hate Christ.

You're showing that by the way you live your life, you hate Christ. Everything within you screams, no I don't. But this isn't a thing of your thoughts or your words.

It's a thing of how you live. And listen, and if you don't hate your own life, you cannot be my disciple. You cannot be.

What is this that we're talking about? It's talking here, Christ said, unless you hate all of these things in comparison to loving me. Do you know he's not saying hate family. The Bible says you're to love your husband, your wife, your children, that you're to love other people around you, that you are to love.

So it can't mean that you're actually to someone in your family. It doesn't mean that. It actually doesn't mean that.

Do you know what the word hate there means? It means to hate in comparison to your love for Jesus Christ. It means when you compare your attitude towards Christ, when you look at other things, it's like you hate them. That's the comparison.

It means to love much less. In other words, Candice will never be first in my life. You and this church will never be first in my life.

Sorry to tell you that here this morning. I do love you. I really, I sacrifice for this church.

I bear burdens of this church. I've suffered much in order to have a church here. But you know what? That's nothing compared to my love for him.

In fact, my love for you seems like hatred of you in compared to my love for him. When you look at how I love him, what I do for you is nothing. Or my love for Candice actually looks like hatred.

Could you imagine thinking that I hate Candice this morning? I most certainly don't. Could any one of you in your wildest dreams, if someone come to you and said, do you know what? I know Keith actually hates his wife. Could any of you be convinced of that? I hope not.

I certainly hope not. But you know what? The Bible commands me as far as being a disciple. I'm not talking about conversion now.

I'm talking about following Christ. What did he say? If any man comes after me, if you're going to be a follower, a disciple, a lifetime disciple of Christ, what is a disciple? You see, I'm not talking about conversion, how you start this. I'm talking about how you live your Christian life.

You know what it is? It's a Christ-centered life. Every other love looks like hatred apart from your love for him. Your love for Christ ought to be preeminent.

It ought to be supreme. It ought to be dominant. It ought to be consuming.

You sound like a fanatic. Yes, I am. He died for me.

I was dead in my sins. He made me alive. I love him.

I absolutely love him. You know what I used to love doing with all of those hard soldiers in the army? There'd be a barrack room of 20 of them, and they're all mocking. They're all womanizers.

They're all blasphemers. They're all running after the girls and fornicating. And I'd stand in the midst of them, these guys, 19, 20, 21, 25.

And you know what I'd say to them? I'd say, hey guys, I love the Lord Jesus Christ. They'd go silent. They couldn't even handle.

How do you compute that this young guy, 21 years old, and he says, I love the man of Calvary. It was a conversation stopper, I want to tell you. But do you know what? This is discipleship.

To love Christ above every other thing is to be a disciple. How do you follow Christ? You live in a certain way to become a disciple. You see, if you don't do this, you cannot, Jesus said it, you cannot be my disciple.

Oh, I want to follow you. I want you to teach me. I want to learn many things.

I want you to show me. You cannot, unless you're like this. Maybe that's why so few in the church learn anything, because they don't have things in the right place.

The word disciple, it actually means to have knowledge, to study, or to learn. Vines, in his commentary about Greek words, listen to what he says about this word disciple, or mathetis. It's the Greek word mathetis.

That's what a disciple is. What's a disciple? A mathetis. He said the word math, and I hated math at school, I want to tell you.

Math, the Greek word math indicates thought followed by endeavors. It's where we get our English word mathematics from discipleship. You'll never be able to think now of discipleship unless you think of mathematics, and I want to tell you, mathematics cost me an awful lot of sweat.

It caused me to die in this classroom many times over, and I promise you discipleship will cost you something. Not salvation, but Christ-centered discipleship. Most churches in our generation have a 10-week discipleship course.

I've had many leaders in other countries write to me and say, Brother Keith, what is your discipleship course for your church? And what they mean is a 10-week program, where once a week I meet up with a

new convert for 10 weeks to teach them all the basics, and at the end of that 10 weeks, now they're a disciple. They have been disciplined. You maybe get paired off with someone else, and that person teaches you something, and after a few weeks we now say you've been disciplined.

You know the Bible never means that. Jesus never actually meant that. It describes a person who learns from someone else, who is actually instructed, one who deliberately learns by inquiry and observation.

It's more than a follower. It's someone utterly dedicated to become that message. It's a trained one.

What is a disciple? You've been trained. Who are you a disciple of? It ought to reflect in your life, and your belief, and your convictions, and your whole way of thinking. You see, I know whose disciple you are.

I know. I know. You know whose disciple you are because you become a trained one.

A disciple is someone who's been disciplined. See, we had a wee bit of discipline there this morning. Discipline is good.

Discipline is of God. Where there's disorder, there's no discipline, I want to assure you. But look at this with discipleship.

You have been taught. In other words, you embody the message of the teacher. That's how I know you're a disciple.

You actually live it out, not in your head. Yes, you need to learn it. Yes, you need to be taught it.

But to learn it, you become that message. Do you realize discipleship in the New Testament for Christians means constant learning? Do you know at the rate of this internet that they're doing now, do you know what they're moving everyone onto in the business or workplace is everlasting learning. In other words, all the experts will say, you'll never at school, you're not going to learn one subject and set yourself towards one profession.

That is finished in the 2020s. It's over. Do you know they're saying that 80% of the jobs that everyone will do by 2030 haven't been created yet.

They haven't been invented or put in place. They're yet to come forth. And you know what they're saying? You won't get trained for one job or one task.

Everyone is going to get educated at school to be constantly learning. It's not that you finish your education at 16 or 21 or 24. You know what they're saying now? You're going to enter as of the 2020s, everyone educationally is going to enter into lifetime education.

Now while I reject their schemes, I quite like that idea. I really love it because I'm learning more now than I ever did as a teenager at school. I'm constantly learning, but it gives you a picture.

You're not going to get converted. Say I've learned all of that. Oh yes, I know all of that.

I've met Christian leaders say, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, I know that. They're the most ignorant people I know. They don't know anything of the Bible.

We had a Christian on YouTube on Wednesday night. He'll probably even listen to this at some point. And he wrote under the video, there's about 3,000 people watched it just on our YouTube channel since

Wednesday night.

And he wrote under there, he was one of the first people to write. And he says, you could have summed all that up in 10 minutes. He said, sure, we all know that.

Who doesn't know what you just said? It's all basic. You should have just condensed it. You were just repeating over and over.

I went, that's an ignorant man who's speaking there. Oh yeah, he could be very sincere, but if he grows in Christ, he's got a lot of lessons to learn. I can tell you.

You see, I'm talking about lifetime discipleship, Christ-centered discipleship. You haven't done it. Brother Jer, the oldest brother in the house here this morning, you haven't finished your discipleship.

Margaret hasn't finished her discipleship. I hope like me, they would say, I feel like I'm only beginning. I feel like I'm only on the low rungs of this.

And I see depths and fullness. I've got so much to learn. You see, we're talking about a lifetime learning from the person of Christ.

This is what following Christ means. I'm a follower of Christ. So you're being taught.

You're learning. You're living this out. That's a disciple.

Oh no, I'm a follower of Christ, but I'm not quite there yet. Then you're not a disciple. In the New Testament, many called themselves disciples.

Look at John chapter 6. Multitudes who are called disciples left him when he began to teach. I mean, they said these things are too hard. Who can hear them? Christ, your message is too hard.

You deal with things. So they turned around and went back to the world. You know what they're called? Disciples.

That's most of what we have in the church of our day. Disciples who say, hey, I'm here. I'm following Jesus.

You're following him for the loaves and fishes. You're following him for the miracles. You're following him so you won't go to hell.

You're following him for all the blessings. But do you know what a real disciple is? I'm being taught. I'm learning.

I'm being disciplined. It says in Acts 11, 26, when Barnabas got Paul and took him to Antioch. And it says at Antioch, it came to pass that a whole year they assembled themselves together with the church and taught much people.

Notice that they're in environment of the church teaching, teaching, teaching. These two great men of God, Barnabas and Paul, they are teaching. And do you know what happens? Listen to the next verse.

And the disciples, notice disciples what we're talking about, were called Christians first in Antioch. Notice who do you call Christians? A disciple. Notice in Acts chapter 11, this is the first time any believer or

disciple is called a Christian.

It began at Antioch. It come out of an entire year of teaching the church, gathering constantly, being taught the word of God, taught the word of God, taught the word of God by two men of God who are greatly gifted. And you know what? At the end of that year in the city of Antioch, the people out there began to call these disciples Christians.

The word Christian here, it actually means, and it's very hard to define what the word Christian means. Some say it means little Christ or little Christ followers. It means little anointed ones, followers, imitators of Christ, those who adhere to Christ or belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Whatever the word Christian means, it means certain disciples. And do you know what? When I look at their discipleship, I know they belong to Christ. You see, when I look at someone, how you're being disciplined, I say, I see Christ.

I see Christ in how you're learning, what you're learning, how you're learning. It says in Ephesians 4 and 20, ye have not so learned Christ, if so be that ye have heard him and have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus. Are you learning Christ? This is real discipleship.

If you're being disciplined, I'm going to call you a Christian, an associate of Christ. I'm going to be able like Peter and John to say, these men have been with the Lord Jesus Christ. When I see them, when I hear them, when I see how they make decisions, how they order the church, these are disciples and you're fit to be called a Christian.

Many are called Christians who should never be called Christians. You know why? They've never been taught. They have never been disciplined.

They have not entered into a lifetime of discipleship. They go to church for one year and they say, there I know everything. I've learned everything.

I've heard it all. I know it all. And you know what? It's a terrible thing, especially when I find an older Christian or a preacher who tells me, yeah, yeah, yeah, I know that.

As soon as those words come out of their mouth, I know they're ignorant. Very, very ignorant. And that's why I find 100% of the time so far, God willing they'll change.

Notice as well, Jesus says in Luke 14, and whosoever in verse 27, whosoever does not bear his cross, you want to follow me? Then whosoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. You see Christ-centered discipleship is marked by the cross. It's marked by someone who follows Christ.

How do you follow Christ? You can't follow him without a cross. You can't say I'm a disciple. I'm a follower of Jesus.

How can you say that unless it's Christ-centered? Christ said you cannot be my disciple unless you follow me. How are you going to follow me unless you bear your cross and come after me? There's no point following me without a cross. What is a cross? It is what he done on the cross.

It's death to your own life, death to your own decisions, death to your own ambitions. Over in Matthew 16, 24, Jesus also said unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself. How do you

follow Jesus in the way of the cross? Do you know bearing your cross, taking your cross up, do you know what it really means? Deny yourself.

It means to say no to yourself, to refuse self. See, lots of people go through some troubles and say, I'm bearing my cross. I'm still walking with Jesus.

Oh, I've gone through terrible trials and burdens and someone laughed at me and I lost a friend and I'm bearing my cross. That isn't it. You see, I know if you're bearing your cross, if you deny yourself, oh yes, we're all good at refusing others, aren't we, and denying others and going, get behind me Satan.

I can see Satan in him. What about your own self? You see, true discipleship are taking up your cross. It is to deny self.

That's the mark of a disciple. He's following Christ. He's bearing his cross.

He's denying himself. Take up your cross and then follow me. How do you follow Jesus? Deny yourself, take up your cross and listen, whosoever will save his life, I love my life, then you hate Christ.

Oh, I'm self-centered, then you're not Christ-centered. Oh, I'm giving, looking, working for my life, then you're not living out the centrality of Christ. If you will save your life, you are going to lose it.

Do you realize that? Like the ones I mentioned for three and a half years, for the sake of a bit of food, they take a mark and damn their soul. They only get three and a half years. Do you realize everybody in our world, they say, I'm saving my life.

I'm doing what's good for me. I'll make sure everything revolves around me. Do you realize you're going to lose all that? Hear me, anything you do in manipulating situations, I'm warning you and since you need to train yourself and deny yourself, self will say, just say this, just do this, just maneuver this.

Do you realize if you save your life like that, everything you touch with that attitude, you're going to lose it. It's not the cross, it's not self-denial, it's not discipleship, it's not following Christ. But he also says, whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

He will find it. Do you want to find your life? Then lose it. Lose it.

Let the cross do its full work. Thirdly and finally, Christ-centered sanctification. And let me finish with this.

It says in John 17, 19, and this Jesus praying to the father, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Jesus is praying for the church. You see, it's a Christ-centered conversion.

It's Christ-centered discipleship. I'm telling you what the Christian life looks like. This is the Christian life.

This is the normal Christian life. Anything else, there's something wrong with it. It's sick.

It's abnormal. It's dysfunctional. It's apostate if it doesn't look like this.

But third and finally, Christ-centered sanctification. What is sanctification? It's that long lifetime process of being made holy, of becoming more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus prayed to the father that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

Do you realize sanctification comes through the truth? For you to become more holy comes through this book. That's why we preach it. That's why we believe it.

That's why we exhort you to read it. Because you know what? The truth of God will sanctify you and make you more holy. Christ prayed this to the father.

Then in verse 16, he says, they, that you've given me out of the world, they've come out of the world. They're in the world. They live in this world.

They're actually living their lives, but they're not of this world. They're utterly irregular. This world hates them.

But listen to what Christ says. They are not of this world, even as I am not of this world. You ever met a Christian who said, yes, I believe in Christ, but I can live like this anyway, because he still loves me and accepts me.

Every verse in the Bible is against us. If you do not look, resemble in some form like Christ, there's something wrong. Christ says, you are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

He then prays to the father, sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth. The word of God is vital for sanctification.

A Christian life that does not emphasize the Bible is not a sanctified life. What does Christ centered sanctification look like? I mean, we've seen before how you can have a discipleship course. It's not Christ centered.

It's not biblical. Look at sanctification. You can say, do this, do that.

Now you're holy. There's churches in America. They say, unless you dress a specific way, you're not sanctified.

Unless your hair is an exact length and some churches in America that even say, if I wear a tie, I'm not sanctified. Do you know what? That's all man made regulations. That is not being made holy.

What is sanctification? It is the consequence of true conversion. It is the fruit of a Christ centered life. It can be seen.

There are evidences and it is your responsibility. It is for you to grow into the Lord Jesus Christ. Sanctification is centered in Christ.

And Christ himself said, you are going to get sanctified through the word of God. You know, this Bible, as you conform to it, it tells you how to think. It tells you the decisions to make.

It tells you how to raise your family. It tells you what you should be as a husband or a wife. It tells you how to function as a member of the church.

That's not legalism. You see, if you do not have Christ, if it's not Christ centered, it'll become legalism to you. You will actually say, yes, I know all those things, but it's a burden to me.

I don't want to do it. I don't like to do it. I don't believe it.

And so you want to be sanctified. You want to obey the Bible, but Christ isn't there. It's not Christ centered.

Do you know, I do things for Candice. I cut the lawn. It's not my ambition to cut the lawn.

I do things in that garden. It has one motivation. Have a guess what it is.

I love my wife. I would never have done anything in a garden my entire life if love was not in this heart for my wife. The only reason I want to dig up the willows that are growing there, and they're a backbreaker.

I want to tell you, they near drive me demented those willows, but you know what? It's not the fear of them that drives me. I go, I love Candice. So I'll go out there and I'll start working.

Do you know why I desire for the word of God to sanctify me and to be changed by it? And to say, I do believe the word of God. Will you wash me, Lord? Will you change my thinking? Will you change my heart? Will you change my life? And the word of God comes, say, oh God, do this in me. Do you know why? I love the Lord Jesus Christ.

The only reason, sanctification isn't a thing I'm trying to do. Make myself more holy. I ought to change.

I ought to be different. I ought to do that. You know, you're on very dangerous ground there.

You know why? Because Christ isn't the heart and the goal of that. You're trying to do things to be a good Christian, to be approved, to fit the bill. But where's Christ? Do you know when I love Jesus Christ, I go, I want to do this.

Lord, you've got to change me. Lord, I need to be this. Why? Because I love him.

I'm talking about Christ-centered sanctification. It says in Ephesians 5, 26, that he, Christ, might sanctify and cleanse the church. How? With the washing of the water by the word.

Do you know how God sanctifies his church? Do you know how Jesus sanctifies his bride? He is the bridegroom. She is the bride. How does he sanctify his bride and make her a pure church? Do you know how? By the water, by washing her by the water of the word of God, that he might present it to himself a glorious church.

Jesus is coming back for a glorious church, and sanctification is vital. It says in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 3, for this is the will of God, even your sanctification that you should abstain from fornication. St. Antonibus, and I've only given you a brief insight here to a Christ-centered Christian life.

It's Christ-centered conversion, Christ-centered discipleship, lifetime of learning. Saints, I really mean, I feel like I'm only beginning to learn the person of Christ. That's not salvation.

This is discipleship. I feel like there's so much. I'm only beginning.

I wish I had another 15 years to walk this out, live this out, and yet the sands of time are going. Time is limited for me to live out as a disciple, and to be sanctified, and to be washed, and to be renewed. Take the Bible out of the church.

Take biblical preaching out of the church. Take biblical Christians out of the church. Take daily reading of the Bible.

A Christian come into this church once, say 40 years, and he actually wanted to take over our Wednesday night Bible study. He told me. He came to our house, and he said, Brother Keith, when are we going to have a real Bible study? I was utterly shocked.

He went to Candice and gone to the toilet, and then he turned around and asked me. I said, Brother, what do you mean? I said, let me ask you. I said, what I taught on Wednesday night, had you ever heard anyone teach that in 40 years? Oh no, no, no.

But you don't think that's a Bible study? And I said, what's your thoughts? What do you think we should do? He said, well, I think we need to all sit around a table, and all give our thoughts and opinions. And he said, in fact, I just happen to have a course I could help teach in the church for you, and I could have us all sitting around. I'm telling you, that's what people think.

Do you know that man, say 40 years, had only read the Bible once in 40 years, and he's a man in his 80s. He's long gone, and you know what? He thought he was in a position to teach others when he hadn't even caught a glimpse of what Christ-centred sanctification. Why would I trust a man to sanctify the church who's not sanctified himself in his attitudes, his thoughts, his conduct? He reads the Bible once in 40 years.

Is that all? Every Christian should read the Bible through in a year. And I know, find your own pattern. Don't have a burden.

If it's one verse a day, fine. But keep reading. Keep washing yourself.

Put it in your heart. If it's five chapters, brilliant. But make sure that one scripture or that one chapter washes you, sanctifies you, becomes real in your heart, and you say, Lord, make this real in my life.

Will you please stand with me here as we close? Thank you, Lord Jesus. Blessed be your name. Hallelujah.

Let's just begin to worship him and thank him for his goodness and his mercy. Lord God, we thank you, God, for a Christ-centred Christianity. Lord God, we don't want a Christianity that is lacking the person of Christ.

We don't want a conversion that's missing the mighty person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't want to go through discipleship of learning things, of simply following without learning, without living, without embodying your life and your testimony. My God, we don't want to simply seek after being sanctified.

We don't want a holiness unless you're the goal, you're the cause, you're the power, you're the motivation. My God, it's out of love for you that we do want sanctified. We want the Word of God to wash us and change us and renew us and mature us.

We want to be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. My God, work in our hearts this morning. Make this a Christ-centred church.

Make us Christ-centred Christians. And Lord God, I do pray that you'd make us Christ-centred discipleships here this morning in Jesus' name. Hallelujah.

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