

# Cost of Discipleship - Part 1

by Paris Reidhead

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of meditation and spiritual experience in one's life, and the need to truly experience God, not just know scripture.*

**Duration:** 25:52

**Topics:** "Cost Of Discipleship"

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## Description

In this sermon transcript, the preacher emphasizes the importance of the first commandment to love and worship the Lord with all our heart, mind, and soul. He references Matthew 22:37 to support this point. The preacher then shares a personal story of his own salvation experience, highlighting the need for a personal and experiential relationship with God. He reflects on his past failures and the realization that intellectual knowledge alone is not enough. The sermon concludes with an analogy of gathering leaves in a compost pit, suggesting the need to let go of worldly ideas and focus on a genuine and transformative relationship with God.

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## Transcript

I want you to think with me, beginning at least with Matthew chapter 22 and verses 34 through 40. This is an important scripture, and I will emphasize that importance in just a few moments. I'd like to have you mark it, and even mark the occasion when your attention was called to it, and if you wish to, mark the initials or the name.

I remember some years ago, a dear lady came to me and said, you know, and she had her Bible and she had the scripture underlined in my name and the date. You brought that same message at such and such a place, and I had to admit it, that was true, because I feel that the Lord may have had somebody else there. He wanted to hear it that hadn't been there the first time, so I've never been too intimidated about that.

But it's only been the last few months that this scripture has been pressed on my heart in an unusual way, and I know the last time I was privileged to be here was in 1969, so I don't think any of you are going to find that the date, name, and initials are alongside of this scripture verse tonight. But you may do that in the morning messages as we're ministering from Ephesians, and again I say without apology. Now listen carefully as I read, as old Daddy Bias used to say, the scripture is what God said, and the sermon is what the preacher thinks God meant.

And if you've got to remember one or the other, always remember the scripture, because that's what God said. That's why I said Mark. But when the Pharisees had heard that he, the Lord Jesus, had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.

Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, testing, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Now notice the importance attached to this scripture. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Change that word hang to hinge, as a door hangs upon the frame, and by means of that hanging or hinging, one can go into the room.

So I would have you suggest to you that he is saying that if you want to go into the room of the prophets and find out the meaning of their message to their day and time and people, then you've got to understand these two commandments. And if you want to go into the room of the law and understand the law, you must understand these two commandments. And having said that, I have to be honest with you and say that for most of my ministry, most of the years of service for the Lord, soon to be in 1977, will be 40 years since I was first a pastor.

So during most of that time, I would suppose that up until at least no later than two years ago, this scripture was just another part of Matthew. And then it was called to my attention by some people that had done a lot of thinking and study. They shared with me their feelings about it, and I began to study it and to meditate upon it.

And meditate. I want to just pause on that word. Some years ago, I was in a meeting down in the First Alliance Church in Atlanta, Georgia.

And in the morning service, the Bible hour and the weekday morning, a dear little lady was there and seemed to understand what I was talking about. There was that warmth and empathy that a speaker feels with someone that's obviously been there. And afterwards, she said, would you please come and have tea with me this afternoon? Well, I was some the one lady that was with her said they gave me her address and told me the one who was caring for the nurse that was making this part of her ministry at the time.

And so that afternoon, I went out to the East Lake Alliance Church in the little cottage in the back and had tea with Aunt Harriet Williams. You know her as the wife of J.B. Williams, who was so instrumental in founding St. Paul Bible College and then the Seattle or the Simpson Bible College and had such a ministry for Christ through those years. And something I had said that morning, it touched her heart.

And she said, wherever you go among our dear Alliance people whom I love and have sought to serve these years, will you tell them something for me? And I made a promise to Aunt Harriet and said I would. She said, please tell them that it's not enough just to know the doctrine of Christ, our Savior, our sanctifier, our healer, our coming king. It's important to know the doctrine.

It's not just to know enough to know the scripture verses. It's important to know the scripture verses. Please tell them for me that there's something else that we have to do.

And I said, Aunt Harriet, what is it? She said, it's what you talked about this morning. Tell them that they must meditate on the word. They must think about the word.

They must digest the word. It must be in their thoughts. They must take it apart and fit it to their experience.

They must ruminate because that's the word, what the word meditate means, to chew it over and over and over again until it, and then she said they must meditate until God reveals it. Please give them two words for me, meditation and revelation. It's not just enough to know the words.

It must become inwardly, personally, vitally, experientially yours. I know in my case as a missionary coming back from Africa in 1948-49, I knew there was something desperately lacking in my life. I'd been on the field.

I'd prepared to go, but I discovered when I arrived that I'd carried with me some things I hadn't declared at customs when I came into the sedan. I had rather counted since I'd graduated from Taylor University where Sammy Morris was our patron saint, that when I got back to Africa, I'd be as prayerful as he and as effective as he. I guess I was counting quite a lot on an ocean voyage in those days we went by ship, or at least we did.

When I got there, I discovered that I was just the same me 10,000 miles from home. I had the same problems, and I found that I had carried with me. I wasn't as spiritual as I wanted to be, and the only way I could survive, it seemed, was to prove nobody else was as spiritual as they ought to be or thought they were.

And so I became critical and censorious and sarcastic, and I hurt people. And when I got back, broken because I did love the Lord Jesus and wanted so to please him, and yet didn't know where to find victory over my own traits and tendency and habits of mind and thought and responses to situations. And so I knew something had to happen.

And so this particular spring in 1949, I went to a pastor in Florida where we were living and asked him what he thought. Well, excuse me, it was at the beginning of the year in 49. And I asked him what he thought I should do.

And he said, I think you need seminary. Bible school and college are fine, but you really need seminary. That's what's going to help you.

So I matriculated at a fine seminary and bought the books and had the room. And I sat one night and looked at them. I'd read some of them and hadn't been too impressed.

And I thumbed through the others and I said, Lord, you know, the desperate hunger of my heart, but I just don't think the answer is going to come there. And whereas I have great respect for this, it's not applicable to my needs. So the next day I dematriculated and got out.

And so I stayed there. I said to the bursar, if I was honorable enough to be here as a student, would you be so kind as to rent me the room for about three weeks? I have some study and writing I need to do. And so he did.

And I stayed there for that three-week period. And I took spiritual inventory. I wanted to find reality.

You see, all those years from the time I'd been a student in Bible school back in thirty-five to forty, I had been building into my Christian life that which was being given me as the building blocks for it. And there had been good teaching, good instruction that I'd received. But something wasn't working.

I'd gotten a straight A in the course on the Christian life. But when I got to Africa, I had to look at my report card to find out that's what happened, because it just wasn't working. And so I began to go back to find out what was real.

How much was theory? How much was figment of the mind or just ideas or intellectual insights or mental perception? And how much was experientially real in my life? Well, this was 1949, and I went back through the years on the mission field and sorted for something real. Oh, I know my failure had been real, but the truth that I had learned with my mind that the courses I had passed somehow hadn't taken effect. Then I went back down from forty-five through the college years back to forty when I had left Bible Institute in the early years of pastoral experience.

And there again, it was words, good words, ideas, other men's ideas. And about this time, I began to view my heart as kind of like--well, let me put it this way. Where do you put the leaves when you rake them up in the yard? We have a compost pit.

You know, we just gather the leaves, cut the brush, and pile them up. And there they sit, and they gradually become mulch. Well, that's what I thought my heart was, kind of a theological compost pit.

I'd been plucking the green leaves off of other men's trees, and I'd been just piling them in on my heart, thinking that if I could trace the leaf and identify it and tell you what kind of a theological shrub it came from, that was enough. Well, what did I find? I just found the kind of the metamorphosis, the decay of what had been a good truth from other people, but you know, it just hadn't been transplanted. It just was laid there in on top of my heart.

Well, I got a little bit frightened. I went back down through the years of Bible Institute with all the splendid truth that I had acquired and the insights that had been helpful, and back down and still hunting for reality. And by this time, I said, Heavenly Father, if there is nothing real in my life, I'm going to be honest.

I'm going to declare it. I will not fool myself or anybody again unknowingly. I'm going to hunt for reality.

I got right back down to that old camp meeting similar to this, Red Rock Holiness Camp Meeting in South St. Paul, Minnesota. It was by a Methodist camp meeting, and the speakers that year were John L. Brasher from Alabama and Joseph Owens, who at that time was president of John Fletcher College, and Paul Reese, whom you know well. And these were the three men that were ministering.

There were giants in the land in those days. And God had spoken in a really a very wonderful way to me. I'd come from a Christian home and a Christian background at about 12 years of age.

The pastor of our church had asked me if I wanted to join the church, and I had, and I did. And I knew the answers to all the questions. Oh, yes.

And he said the day that he invited me to come to be received into membership with others, he said, I've talked with Sonny, my nickname at the time, and I'm certain everything is right with him because he's answered all the questions. Well, of course, I'd been taught the answers all my life, and I had a fairly good memory. I knew what to say.

And so I was taken into the church, and I mean taken in to the church, because the next day when I told my eighth-grade teacher, seventh-grade teacher, Elsie Born, what had happened, the tears came into her eyes. And she said, why are you crying, Miss Born? All I said was, I joined the church. She said, I heard what you said, but I'm not sure you were ready.

Well, I don't know why I answered all the questions the preacher asked me. She said, there's more to being a Christian, Sonny, than answering the questions. I said, what? Preacher didn't say anything else.

She said, no one's a Christian until Jesus comes into his heart. She said, you see, salvation is a person. Salvation is God's Son.

And it's not just to believe he's in the scripture and history and heaven, that he died and was buried and rose again. It's to receive him. And then she turned to that verse in 2 Corinthians 13 and verse 9, examine yourself, whether you be in the faith, and prove your own self.

No, you're not your own self. How did Christ be in you, except you be reprobate? And then she said, I'm going to pray for you. Well, she did.

And every once in a while, she'd say, you know, if you'd stay in after at recess and ask me, I have something I could show you. Well, you know, in those days you couldn't, you couldn't witness, but there were ways if you'd really care. And she cared.

And so I'd say, Miss Bisborne, do you have something to show me? When the others had left the room, and she'd open her little, their little New Testament, and there would be my initials and that date underlined. And she'd read it to me, was honed in prayer, you know, shined with tears. And she'd put it into my heart, a dagger of truth, the sword of the spirit, to let God do its work, his work with it.

Well, that had gone on till that camp meeting. And I'd come as lost as could be, not knowing it, oh, thinking everything, well, the reason I went was because one of the girls in my mother's class was going, and I kind of liked her, and I thought it'd be nice to spend two weeks where I could see her every day. And so I went for that reason.

And I'll never forget, those men, they began to preach the old camp meeting circuit, and they'd alternate the times. And I had to go, had to, or else trouble, big trouble. So I went, and I had a Cheviot suit.

You know what Cheviot, they don't make it anymore, thank goodness. It was horsehair, it was spikes, little wire spikes all through it. And it was just like sleeping on a curry comb, you know, it was just awful.

And that's the only suit I had, and I had to wear it. Boy, I couldn't wait to get home. They thought I was neat.

I wasn't neat, I was just trying to save the epidermis, that's all. But it wasn't just the outside irritation, it was the fact that as I sat there, those preachers didn't have any respect at all. They reached halfway across the auditorium, and they'd point me out, and they'd wiggle their finger under my nose, and they'd tell the people the things I'd done, the things I'd tried to do, and planned to do, and was counting on doing.

And always, it made no difference where I sat. If I sat over there, it was like this. If I sat there, it was like this.

And so it seemed, until God showed me how utterly lost I was. And then there was an invitation given, and that night, Just As I Am was sung, and Paul Reese said, now there's, I've been burdened last night. There's someone, I don't know whether he's young or old, that came to this conference thinking he was a Christian, a church member.

But God has shown him or her, whoever it is, I think it's a man, a young man, boy perhaps, that he was, that he's lost. And he would have come on that first verse, but he's hanging on to the pew in front of him so hard. Now you look, friends, up and down the pew, and if you see someone holding on to it, I dropped it as though it were hot.

And the next stanza, I came forward. And I'll never forget, when I was down at the end of the altar, it was full, and they got three quartets there that year. And I got the last man in the last of the three quartets.

They said, well, you're not with anybody. You go down to him. You know, the Drake, so to speak.

Here's a little boy, twelve, so he's not very important. This boy came, but he was God's choice for me. He said, what'd you come for, son? I said, to be saved.

He said, from what? I said, I don't have a choice, do I? From sin. And he said, well, good. And I didn't know anything good about it.

And I said, why do you say it's good? I'm lost. He said, that's why it's good, because Jesus only saves lost people. And until you know you're lost, you can't be saved.

And so he then took me to that verse, that thou shalt confess with thy mouth, Jesus to be Lord. And he said, that means to be the king and the boss and the ruler, and to be in charge of your life from tonight on, as long as you live. He's the one that's going to govern.

He's the one that's going to control. He said, are you willing for that? I said, I'm willing for that. All right, he said, now I want to--I'm going to just--you pray, and you confess to Jesus every sin you've committed.

And if he tells you something you've got to make right, you just tell him you're going to do it, and remember what it was, and make it right. And then after you've got that whole mountain of your sin up, then you thank him that he died to save you from that. And when you are sure he's forgiven you, you tell me.

Wasn't that boy smart? Wasn't he wise? When you know he's forgiven you, you tell me. None of this telling me. He was going to let the Lord do the telling, because he couldn't stick with me all the time to reassure me in case he told me and it didn't stick.

He said, you get it from headquarters, then you'll know where you got it. And so I did just what he told me. He says, I'll keep people from bothering you.

And I went over the altar, and that pile of sin began to mount up. I wasn't very old, but it mounted up. And finally I just said, thank you for dying for the world, that's good.

And thank you for dying for sinners, and that's better. And thank you for dying for me. And something stole into my heart.

The knowledge that he died for me. And that those sins were washed away and removed. And I was forgiven.

And I was pardoned. And I looked up and he said, I said to him, he's done it. He said, of course, I knew he would.

He always does. Now, I took spiritual inventory and I went down. And you know, the last real thing that ever happened to me in my Christian life as of 1949 was that night in an altar in the straw when I met Jesus Christ.

The next day I went in and saw dear Julia Hibbard. Bless her heart. I love her.

She was our children's worker. And I said, Miss Hibbard, something wonderful happened to me last night. She said, what's that? I said, Jesus saved me.

And she smiled. She said, that's fine. Now you need to be sanctified.

And she talked to me about that. She took me into the altar and she put words in my mouth. And the day after I met God, a Christian worker introduced me to presuming that because I knew the words, I had what the words talked about.

And so I had all those barren ears because of a presumption that if the intellect can perceive and the mind can receive and the tongue can express, that the heart is experienced. And that's not true. It's not true.

And as we're talking about here in this text, first commandment, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and mind and soul. It's a commandment. He didn't say thou shalt have memorized verse 37 of Matthew 22.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.

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