

# The Demands of Discipleship

by Stephen Olford

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*The demands of discipleship require a willingness to surrender to the will of God, to die to the old life, and to live a new life in Christ.*

**Duration:** 38:46

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Matthew 28:19-20, Luke 9:57-60, Luke 14:25, Luke 14:27, Luke 14:33

**Topics:** "Discipleship", "Following Jesus"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of discipleship and challenges the listeners to examine their own commitment to following Jesus. He uses the story of a young man who wanted to say goodbye to his family before following Jesus, but Jesus warns that anyone who looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God. The preacher urges the audience to consider whether they have truly embraced discipleship or if they have turned back since first trusting in Jesus. He concludes by calling on individuals to stand out from the crowd and declare their readiness to follow Jesus, no matter the cost.

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## Transcript

Luke 14, verse 25, And there went great multitudes with him, and he turned and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple, and whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, he cannot be my disciple. Verse 33, So likewise, whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Turning back to chapter 9, verse 57, We read, And it came to pass, that as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee with us wherever thou goest.

And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have host, and birds of the air have nest, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee, but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

May God add his blessing to the reading of his infallible word, and to his name be praise. To you ladies and gentlemen, and a very special greeting to all mothers. This is Mother's Day, or what we call in our country, Mothering Sunday.

And I want to pay tribute to my own mother here, in the presence of you all, and of those listening to me over radio. I thank God that it was through my dear mother that I was led to a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ. And I want to say hallelujah for a Christian mother.

And I pray that you mothers may be encouraged in the ministry of bringing up your children for God, and that if you know not him as Saviour and Lord, this may be the day of salvation for you. Now some of you may have been seeing the bulletin and noticing that my subject for this morning was to have been the man whom God accepts. One of the amazing things about this crusade has been the number of times set messages have had to be changed.

And this morning is such a case. God has laid upon me very forcibly a message which I must bring to you this morning entitled, The Demand of Discipleship. And I want to turn you straight away to that fourteenth chapter of Luke, and ask you to consider with me some of the great utterances our Lord Jesus made concerning this matter of discipleship.

When I stood here a fortnight ago, that memorable Sunday morning, I remember my message to you was this. The commission of our Saviour, the crusading Christ, go ye and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age. As God has enabled me, that's what I sought to do throughout this fortnight, to make disciples of those of you who have listened to my voice.

This morning I want to crown that ministry of a blessed, holy fortnight in which my soul has been enriched, in which somehow I've been married to the people of Minneapolis, to this dear pastor, his ministering staff, and all who supported in music and every other way. My heart's just been welded to you. I want to crown the ministry of this fortnight with a burden discharged in this message entitled The Demands of Discipleship.

Ladies and gentlemen and young people especially here this morning, what concerns me in my country and this country too is the fact that we've reached a point in our religious life, more so perhaps in this country than our country, where religion has become popular. Religion has become popular. I'm amazed at the number of posters and hoardings I've seen in this country, in Chicago and other places that have scripture texts, slogans which are based on scriptural truth.

How many films are produced today with so-called biblical slogans and headings and what language is spoken by the most non-Christian people which one might term Christian language. Religion has become popular and within our churches we've got a whole crowd of people who seem to surge around on a Sunday, particularly a Sunday morning, because it's the popular thing to do, it's the right thing to do, to go to church. But when you come to analyze the measure of experience of these people, you discover that it's all nominal, it's all professional, it's all respectable, it's not discipleship, it's not real, it's not dynamic, it's not triumphant, it's not fainting.

And I want to remind you that when our Lord Jesus spoke these words, to which I'm going to draw your attention with great solemnity and challenge here this morning, a great multitude was moving with Him

down the streets of Jerusalem. There went with Him great multitudes, great multitudes, and He turned and He said unto them, If any man... There's a great congregation here this morning and an even greater one listening over radio. But I want to, in my Saviour's name, to turn to the crowd, the crowd that are surging along with Jesus, because it's the popular thing to do, it's the Sunday morning thing to do.

You've even come along with us during this crusade and you've enjoyed the music, you've enjoyed, it may be, the preaching, you've enjoyed the programming, and there's a great crowd been moving along with Jesus. I want to stop here this morning and challenge you as an individual within the crowd and ask you whether you've got the courage this morning and ask you whether you've got, listen, the deep insight of the Holy Ghost this morning to step out of line with the surging crowd of people, to step out of line and stand with Him and say, Lord Jesus, as from this morning, cost what it will, I'm a disciple for thee. For Jesus said, Go ye into all the world and not make decisions.

Go ye into all the world and not just call for people to raise their hands or to stand or to come forward. Jesus said, Go ye into all the world and make disciples. It's going to be a costly business and I'm going to draw your attention straight away to what Jesus said, but I want you to listen.

I want God's warrior, men and women who know prayer and know intercession and know travel of soul to be praying every moment I speak here this morning. Here is the first word I want to bring you. Jesus said, If any man come to me in hate, not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

Ladies and gentlemen, here is the first demand of discipleship. Listen to it carefully. Listen to it carefully.

Jesus says, No rival, no rival in your life for me. No rival in your life to Jesus Christ. That is the only explanation I have for this hard thing, this tremendously challenging thing from the lips of the incarnate Son, the Son of God.

Listen to me. Jesus is saying, You may have a father and enjoy his loving attention, but however wonderful that father may be, he cannot rival the place that Jesus should have in your life. This is mothering Sunday.

You may have a mother and enjoy her loving attention, yes, and more than attention, her loving affection. But even your dear mother cannot rival the place that Jesus Christ should have in your life. You may be sitting along there with your wife or your fiancé, and I want to tell you that they cannot rival the place that Jesus Christ should have in your life.

You may have little children and enjoy their loving dependence, but they cannot rival the place that Jesus Christ should have in your life. You may have brothers and enjoy their friendship, but they cannot rival the place that Jesus Christ should have in your life. Sisters, and enjoy their sweet fellowship, but they cannot rival the place that Jesus Christ should have in your life.

You may have personal interests, interests of purity, yes, interests of great ambition, but they cannot rival the place that Jesus Christ should have in your life. He claims unrivaled place, and if only you knew, only you knew, the love that pours out to father or mother or wife or children or brethren or sisters, or indeed, the calling to which God has for you is purer and more wonderful when Jesus has His rightful place in your life. There are three classes of people moving to heaven here this morning, three classes of people.

There is a third class who know Christ present in their life. He's got to be present in your life if you're going to heaven at all. He must be the guarantee of heaven, Christ in you, the hope of glory.

But those are third class people who are moving along just with an insurance policy against the lost eternity, living useless, defeated, wasteful Christian lives. There are another class, and that class are called, if you like, Christ prominent in their lives. They draw attention to themselves by being so-called keen, perhaps, or using evangelical clichés and showing out that they do really, do really know what it is to be a Christian.

But somehow or other, you're conscious of the fact that it's very fleshly, it's very keen and very, listen, very impressive, but it doesn't speak of the Lord Jesus. There isn't a depth of life. There isn't a victory of life.

There aren't various organizations. They represent boards and committees. They're good in administrative work, but they're the last people you'd ever pray with if you had a problem.

They're the last people you'd ever go to if you wanted to know the life of victory. They're the last people you'd ever go to if you wanted an explanation from the Word of God. Christ prominent.

I wonder if you're in that class. There is another class, and thank God for them in this church this morning, for I've met them throughout this fortnight. And to that class I want to add a multitude of others this morning as I preach to you.

I'm calling it the class not with Christ merely present or prominent, but Christ preeminent. Preeminent. Jesus unrivaled in their life.

The moment you meet them there's a sense of glow. The moment you meet them you know that Christ has unchallenged and unqualified and unrivaled place in their lives. And I'm putting it to young fellows.

I'm putting it to older fellows. I'm putting it to young ladies, to older ladies here today. Is Jesus Christ unrivaled in your life? For if He is I want to tell you that you're a traitor to the claims of Jesus Christ for God has declared and decreed that He shall have preeminence in all things.

God has exalted Him about every name that is named beyond dominion, beyond powers, beyond principalities. He has put Him at the highest place in the universe and God says I'll give my Son no lesser place than the throne of men and women's lives in an unrivaled place. I'm asking you is that where Jesus Christ is in your life today? Never mind whether you've made a decision for Christ at any other time.

Never mind if you call yourself a Christian. I want to go radically, fundamentally to the very base of Christian experience today and ask you is Jesus Christ unrivaled in your life? If He isn't then I'm going to ask you to pray. I'm going to ask you to pray very fervently before we go a step further.

Jesus, thy boundless love to me no thought can reach, no tongue declare than bend my wayward heart to thee and reign and reign without a rival there. No rival in the life for Jesus Christ. Demand number one but move with me quickly into the next for it goes even deeper.

It goes even deeper. Jesus says in the second place that the demands of discipleship mean listen carefully no refusal in the life for Jesus Christ. No refusal in the life for Jesus Christ.

Listen to the word. It comes from the Savior's lips whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me he cannot be my disciple. What does the cross mean? The cross in this subjective sense, the cross in this

personal sense is something far more than just the cross to which you went when you came as a sinner in the first place and brought your burden of sin and sought forgiveness and cleansing and justification.

This is something deeper. This is something deeper. This is the cross in your life and the cross tells an eternal yes to all the will of God.

When the Lord Jesus came from heaven it was yes yes yes right to the garden of Gethsemane where he said not my will but thine be done. And yes right through to the cross. Some people imagine that bearing the cross is living with an irritable wife or husband or boss.

Some people imagine that bearing the cross is carrying a cymbal around their neck. I know one man in Plymouth, England who used to carry a wooden cross of tremendous weight on his shoulder every day down the streets of Plymouth right to his office and he bore all the scorn and scoffing and misunderstanding because he felt that was bearing the cross. My dear friend, I want to tell you I know no teaching in the Bible that supports any of those ideas.

The cross the cross here in the context of the whole sweep of Scripture and after all after all the Bible explains itself. The cross here my friend is the cross in your life. Your life.

When Jesus uttered these words undoubtedly he was thinking of the Roman gibbet. He was thinking of the shame and suffering and sacrifice. He was thinking of the death of a felon.

But when Paul takes up that word and brings it home spiritually to the hearts of men and women he teaches something like this that in the first place the cross means for you and me this morning listen carefully no refusal no refusal to recognize that you have died that you have died to the principle of the old life. Listen to his words I have been crucified with Christ nevertheless I live yet not I but Christ liveth in me. You've come to the place where you've recognized that Jesus not only died for you but you died in him and if you've died with Christ if you've died with Christ then my friend the cross has come right into the middle of your personality and the eye of your life has been crossed out.

Up until now your life has been listen carefully but this morning as you're going through with him you're going to sing as you leave this place not I but Christ not I but Christ the old principle of the life ruled out and a new principle introduced Christ all in all in everything in your life.

When I talk to young people and they ask me whether they should read this or read that go there or go there I know instinctively at once that they don't know what it is to know the cross in their lives the principle of the old life is still there it's I and not Christ instead of Christ and not I I'm putting it to you are you prepared to say amen to that today I accept the cross in terms of the old principle ruled out and the new principle introduced I go deeper still and I remind you that they that are Christ have crucified listen the affections and the lusts and passions that you will recognize that you've died to the passions of the old life I'm speaking to older people as well as young people here today who are tangled tangled tangled and defeated in your sex life all your affections

and desires are centered on things on the earth it might be money it might be things it might be people and the associations of your life are not pure because of it you know very well as you sit there sit there if you were right with God and honest with God this morning you would have to lay lay it before him that some of the relationships of your life are not pure they're not noble they're not sweet they're not sacred why? because the passions of your life haven't been submitted to the cross you haven't allowed the Lord Jesus

Christ with his cross work to come bang into the center of that passion life of yours it hasn't gone through the grave it hasn't gone through the cross the grave it hasn't been sublimated to the higher purposes of his risen life the Lord Jesus this morning wants to

come into that love life of yours into that passion life of yours and catch it up and harness it to the higher purposes of his risen life and draw from you a passion and a dynamic Christian living and a keen Christian living a deep, spiritual, keen Christian living such as you've never known before some of you my friend don't know anything about that you know how defeated you are even as I speak to you but oh I pray that you're going to say no refusal to recognize that I've died to the principle of the old life no refusal to recognize that I've died to the passions of the old life and listen no refusal to recognize that I've died to the program of the old life for Paul says God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ by which the world is crucified unto me

and I unto the world what was the program of my old life? the program of my old life was what's the program of the new life? the cross coming right into that and lifting me out of my going with the world to going into the world not pandering to the world but preaching to the world being caught up in a redemptive concern with the failure for dying perishing souls around me day by day if I dare to stop here this morning and make you stand on your feet and give a testimony to your life during this past week in relation to dying souls to men and women out of Christ I wonder how many of you could say thank God all the passion and concern of a risen Christ for a dying world so seized me that this week I've led three souls to Christ this week I've witnessed to my boss this week I've told my

fellows at college that Jesus Christ lives in my heart I wonder how many of you have done that if you haven't if you haven't it's an evidence that the cross has never come into the program life of you whoever you are old or young deep or shallow simple or wise Jesus Christ the risen Lord hasn't caught you up yet into his redemptive program for a lost world I want to ask you my friend here this morning do you know anything about that?

I know a day in my life when my diary was packed out with engagement for nothing to do with the will of God at all when Christ broke into my life as I was sharing with you the other day the cross smashed that my diary had to be burned and reconstructed that I might say honestly before God every day I live I'm living in the center of his will and serving him as he intends let me put it to you then let me put it to you is Jesus Christ is Jesus Christ sovereign master and Lord in the program room of your mind in the passion room of your heart in the principle room of your will has the cross come into your life have you accepted it as something more than just objective have you accepted it as something subjective which has ruled out the old principle and put in a new principle the old passion

the new passion the old program a new program is your life no refusal to the life of Jesus Christ for you see my friend the Christian life is an eternal no to Stephen Olsen and an eternal yes to Jesus Christ no no to everything that's wrong and y-e-s to the Savior Jesus all day long yes to the will of God the demands of discipleship listen no rival in the life for Jesus Christ no refusal in the life for Jesus Christ but lest lest somebody should make a hasty decision lest somebody should say now look what does this really mean I'm prepared for that if you go no further let me state our Lord's last word here and let me point it out with tremendous solemnity when Jesus Christ said demands of discipleship he said no refusal no rival but something more than that listen to me so likewise

whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath cannot be my disciple forsaketh all that he hath cannot be my disciple my risen Lord is standing here in the name of his servant in this great concluding morning service of this crusade and he's saying this saying this if you're prepared for no rival and no refusal I demand also no retreat for following the Lord Jesus Christ means listen carefully no going back no going back it means forsaking all to go with him it means burning the bridges behind you it means never looking back again it means going on and on and on not for a day not for a week not for a month not for a year but forever and no consecration no dedication no surrender not even conversion means anything before God that doesn't go right through with his life and in

case you don't know what that means I want to illustrate it very briefly in this way Jesus looked into the face of three young men three people who were asking whether or not they might go with him the first said Lord I'll go wherever you want me to Jesus said listen do you know what you're talking about do you know what you're talking about foxes have holes birds of the air have nests but the son of man has not where to lay his head listen young man if you're going to follow me if you're going to follow me I'm not going to I'm not going to promise you an easy time you see that mountain steep there it means climbing to the very top of it it means thorns in the path it means great boulders it means hot sun upon your head it's going to mean sweat it's going to mean discipline determination

it's going to mean all that and more through the joy of the Lord will be your strength through you'll know an unspeakable peace in your heart but oh it's not going to be easy to follow me now young man will you follow me will you follow me will you follow me when the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests and the son of man has not where to lay his head will you follow me then will you follow me then following Jesus means following him with no retreat yes and that means without tiring without tiring without tiring costs what it will and Jesus turned to another young man and said and will you follow me he said let me go and bury my father first Jesus said let the dead bury their dead but go thou and preach the kingdom of God my Lord wasn't being severe and unkind in such a

statement as that the fact of the matter was this his father wasn't dead he would have been buried the very same day the fact of the matter was that that young man had his mind on the inheritance that would come to him when eventually his father died that might be many weeks many months many years he wanted to go back and live with his father until he came into that inheritance and when he had a big fat bank balance so that he could be independent of Jesus Christ if necessary then he would follow the savior and Jesus said you're following me without trifling or you're not following me at all you're talking the language of the unregenerate let the dead bury their dead but go thou and preach the kingdom of God I'm asking for no trifling no nonsense no nonsense we've had enough of it let

your pride be crushed let your will be bent God says no tiring God says no trifling God says throw with my son or not at all but furthermore men and women listen to me listen to me Jesus looked into the face of another young man and said now then what about you he said I want to go and say goodbye to them that are at my home at my house Jesus said no man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God I want to say to you fellows and girls I want to say to you older people you elders you brethren here you who are exceeding gracious in all your ways I want to ask you I want to ask you whether down deep in your heart you know of anything anything of discipleship in your life I want to know today if you have turned if you have turned back since the day you

trusted Jesus Christ or whether you've been going on in terms of what I've been preaching about this morning for let me remind you let me remind you with great fidelity Jesus said if any man put his hand to

the plow and looks back he's not fit for the kingdom of God even if it means going back to say goodbye to your people and Jesus says no you can't do it you can't do it you can't do it will you go on with him will you go on with him without tiring will you go on with him without trifling will you go on with him without turning for no retreat means just that following Jesus without tiring or trifling or turning and I'm putting it to you this morning my friend are you prepared for those demands I believe the apostle Paul believed that while he laid hold of his Lord there was for him an

eternal security in Christ that no devil in hell no man on earth no angel in heaven could ever take away from him but to his dying day he carried a fear right through right through lest in his ministry in his service in his running he should be disqualified he says I discipline my body I keep it under lest having preached to others I myself be a dachshund disapproved rejected I look into the Old Testament and I see examples there of that very thing I think of Lot's wife Lot's wife who having been dragged out of Fathom in Gomorrah released from the conflagration of that vague city released to a new life hankered after the old life again and she turned in a moment of temptation she turned and she's become right down through history the symbol of uselessness and shame she was turned into a

pillar of thought but I think of another man I think of another man who having promised to God that if victory were given him he would yield his life and his death to him utterly, completely whatever it cost in family or relationship or anything came back from the victory with the laurels over his head and the first one to meet him constituted the darling of his heart that he had to lay down an absolute sacrifice before God and oh how overwhelmed he became in that moment but looking up into the face of his God he said this I have opened my mouth to the Lord I have opened my mouth to the Lord I cannot, I cannot go back that man was Jephthah he's become down through the centuries a symbol of usefulness and sacrifice my dear friend here this morning over radio I put it to you in this closing

moment listen to me very carefully the demands of discipleship the demands of discipleship they're addressed to the individual in the crowd you're sitting here on this great Sunday morning in a great multitude you're listening to me over radio in a great multitude Jesus steps into the crowd and he hits the individual and he says if any man are you prepared to stand out today are you prepared to stand out today and say cost what those demands will no rival no refusal no retreat I'm ready Lord I'm ready Lord cost what it will I'm ready Lord for only thus shall I know dynamic, victorious, effective, holy, rewarding living when I see thee face to face in a coming day somebody says oh what heavy demand what tremendous demand before you hesitate on that score before you hold back on that

account may I remind you of the Christ of Calvary may I remind you that Jesus hung there at Calvary's cross and went all the way for you he held back nothing and in the light of Calvary love broken with repentance and willingness and humbleness will you look up into his face and say these words this morning will you make them your prayer listen, listen dear Lord in full surrender at thy feet I make my consecration thou complete my life I yield to thee hence forward there shall be no rival no refusal no retreat I have opened my mouth to the Lord I cannot go back let us bow in prayer a man who becomes a disciple becomes a Christian in the first instance Jesus said go and make disciples my burden this morning has been to go for this great word of the Master and include in first time

decisions also disciples for Jesus Christ there'll be some here who have never made a decision but are going to make a decision in the full light of all that it costs to be a Christian

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