

The True Discipleship Broadcast-1983-08 True Discipleship

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald emphasizes the importance of true discipleship through character, judgment, and building one's life on the teachings of Jesus.

Duration: 23:23

Scripture: Matthew 7:17-18, Matthew 28:19-20, Luke 6:38-39, Luke 6:45

Topics: "True Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of character in ministry. He compares a person's ministry to a tree, stating that the fruit it bears reflects its true nature. The speaker challenges listeners to consider what kind of representation of Jesus Christ they are giving to others. He also contrasts the teachings of Jesus with the beliefs of the world, highlighting the need to build one's life on the solid rock of Christ's Word rather than the quicksand of worldly teachings. The sermon concludes with an invitation to request a free tape cassette catalog and a book called 'Hunger for Reality' for further spiritual growth.

Transcript

Verses 37 to 42, the Lord Jesus tells the disciples, now I don't want you to go out with a critical, censorious spirit. That gives a very bad representation of Christianity. And you know, there are people like that.

There are people like that. They just, they have the gift of criticism. It's not a gift of the Holy Spirit, but they got it anyway.

And they can criticize anything, and usually do. Well, it's a bad business for one who's in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ to be always critical. Reminds me of the old man that went and slept under a tree outside the village, and while he was there, some of the young pranksters in the village came, and they spread green cheese all over his beard.

And when he woke up, everybody smelt of green cheese. Not himself, everybody else smelt of green cheese. That's the way some people are.

Everybody else smells of green cheese. You know, I'm okay. You're so-so.

And so the Lord Jesus says, judge not, you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

Now, judge not that you be not judged. A lot of people who don't know very much about the Bible know that verse. And no matter what you say, they say, well, judge not that you be not judged.

You know, there's a man that just killed his wife in cold blood, and they say, well, judge not that you be not judged. Actually, there are certain things in the Bible we have to judge, and there are certain things we mustn't judge. And the Bible itself explains this.

So, we're not really contradicting the Word, we're just amplifying it. For instance, we must judge teachers and their teaching by the Word of God. You have to do that.

It says that. It says, let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge. Doesn't it? There's a situation where you have to judge.

You listen to the radio. Sometimes I think that's fun, to listen to the radio, and you hear a voice for the first time. How long do you have to listen before you know it's the voice of God speaking through a man, or it's a false voice? Kind of fun, you know.

You judge. You have to judge. You're supposed to judge in a case like that.

You have to judge whether other people are true believers or not. They say, oh, don't judge. Who are you to judge? Well, then how could you obey the Scripture that says, be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers? If you don't judge, how could you ever obey that verse? You say, well, I mustn't judge.

I'll marry her anyway. Well, you'd better. You'd better judge.

Find out whether she knows the Lord or not. We have to judge disputes between believers. Paul got after the Christians in Corinth for not doing that.

We have to judge sin in our own lives, don't we? There's another case where we have to judge. If we judged ourselves, we'd not be judged of the Lord, it says in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. And the local church certainly has to judge extreme forms of sin.

It says, therefore, put away from among yourselves that wicked person. I can hear somebody say, oh, judge not that you be not judged. Well, the Bible tells you to judge there.

And then I think we have to judge whether men are qualified to be elders and deacons, don't we? In other words, the Bible sets forth the qualifications of elders and deacons, and the people of God are responsible to judge whether men have these qualifications or not. But there are some areas where we must not judge. Where? Well, for instance, we should never judge a person's motive.

Why? Because we can't read motives. Only God knows motives. Why a person is doing a certain thing.

You say, ah, the only reason he does that is so that men will see him. Well, you don't know. You really don't know that that's the only reason he's doing it.

Actually, his motives might be quite pure, and yet they might have that appearance, you know. As far as that's concerned, I think that we have to realize that everything we do is stained by sin. It says, required in

stewards that a man be found faithful, judge nothing before the time.

It's all going to be brought out before the Lord. And who art thou that judges another person's service? And then it says in Romans 14, we shouldn't judge a brother with a weak conscience. We shouldn't look down our theological noses superciliously at him just because he thinks it's wrong to eat pork or something like that.

Matters of moral indifference. And we mustn't judge by outward appearance. We mustn't judge people by outward appearance or show respect to persons.

I think when I get to heaven, that'll be one of the greatest regrets of my life. Judging according to appearances instead of judging righteous judgment. Terrible thing.

So, there are areas where we should judge, and there are areas where we shouldn't judge. And the Scriptures make them plain. Well, what did Jesus mean when he said, judge not? Well, I think he meant, don't go around with that critical spirit.

Finding fault with everything. Go out with a positive spirit. Present a positive Christ to the world.

Don't go around condemning everything. There are segments of the evangelical church, and they're in the government. You say it's black, they'll say it's white, and vice versa.

And I would warn you against building your ministry on that basis. You know why? Because if you do, you'll attract people just like that. And I don't like it.

If you build your ministry on a censorious, critical basis, attacking Billy Graham, attacking everybody else that comes along, there are people that just have that kind of a personality. They're not the most pleasant people in the world to live with. Forgiven you will be forgiven.

There are two types of forgiveness. Judicial forgiveness and parental forgiveness. Which one is spoken of here? Obviously, parental forgiveness.

We obtain judicial forgiveness for all our sins when we trusted Christ as Savior. But this says, if you don't forgive, your Heavenly Father won't forgive you as far as fellowship in the family is concerned. Then, give, and it shall be given unto you.

It says, you go forth with a broadcast ministry of generosity and it'll come back to you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. What do you mean, into your bosom? Well, I think it means the apron that he's carrying, don't you? It comes back to you. And that's certainly one of the lessons that you learn in the Christian life is you can never outgive the Lord.

You show me people who are generous in the work of the Lord and I'll show you people that the Lord is always pouring it in to them in one way or another. So, there it is. The Christian ministry is a ministry of giving, not of getting.

And the measure with which we give determines the measure we will receive. Okay. He spoke a parable to them, can the blind lead the blind? You think, well, he changed the subject.

And it's easy in studying the Gospels to think that you come to abrupt changes in the subject, but it's still the training of the twelve. And what he's saying here is that if you have a blind spot in your life, you're

never going to be able to help your disciples in that area. For instance, supposing you've seen a young man come to faith in the Lord Jesus.

You yourself have never been baptized, but you start to say to him, now that you're saved, don't you think you should be baptized? And he'll look up at you with jaundiced eye and say, Physician, heal thyself. Who are you to tell me to be baptized? You haven't been baptized yourself. Or it could be some sin, some secret sin in your life that you've never had victory over.

And one day your disciple comes to you and says, you know, I'm having a problem. And I wish you could help me. And you say, well, what is it? And he tells you.

And you have the same problem, only you have it to an exaggerated degree. You have it worse than he has. You won't be able to help him.

The blind can't lead the blind. They'll both fall into the ditch. You can't expect your disciples to advance beyond what you are yourself.

That's what the Lord Jesus is telling his disciples here. Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch? A disciple is not above his master. But everyone who's perfectly trained will be like his master.

You can lead him up to what you are. That's as far as you can go. And any blind spots in your life, your lips are sealed.

How true that is. It really is true. If a man isn't convinced of the authority of the Scriptures, the infallibility of the Scriptures, he'll never raise up disciples who are willing to shed their blood for the inspiration, the absolute infallibility of the Word of God.

The disciples detect those weaknesses, and they won't be any stronger themselves. The ultimate goal of discipleship is that the disciple be as his master, but not beyond. You can't help somebody with a besetting sin if you've never got victory over that sin.

There would be a credibility gap in any advice you give. And you know, people are wonderful readers of character. It's wonderful how even unsaved people sometimes can read a Christian.

Quite an insight. And that's what the Lord Jesus goes on to say in verses 42 through 45, that fundamentally your ministry is going to be a ministry of character. Just as a tree is recognized by the kind of fruit it bears, so we produce fruit according to what we are.

That's pretty solemn, but it's true. Years ago, when I was a younger Christian, I wrote in the flyleaf of my Bible this little ditty. You've heard it before, I'm sure.

If of Jesus Christ their only view may be what they see of him in you, McDonald, what do they see? That's it. If of Jesus Christ their only view may be what they see of him in you, McDonald, what do they see? What kind of a representation of the Lord Jesus Christ do I give to them? The man is the message. So, Jesus says a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit.

The good tree is a disciple who exhibits Christian character. The bad tree is a phony. The bad tree produces phony fruit.

Every tree is known by its own fruit. Men do not gather figs from thorns. They don't get figs from a thorn bush.

And they don't gather grapes from bramble bush. Interesting to think of fruit and lives corresponding to these things. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart springs forth good.

And it's true. What we dwell on and what we talk about is really a gauge of our characters. You find a man who's talking about sex all the time.

Well, you know what he's thinking about most of the time, don't you? It's a wonderful thing when you meet a man and when he opens his mouth Christ comes out. It's a wonderful thing. I would covet that more and more for my own life.

And I've known people like that. I used to go back in Philadelphia and visit a godly Christian lawyer there. His name was Edward Harshot.

And I'll tell you it was a sheer delight to be in the presence of that man. He was always edifying people, not consciously. He was always pouring out things about the Lord Jesus.

Sometimes quoting beautiful hymns. I can think of some of them right now that he shared with me. Really, that's another test, really, of what do people remember from their contact with us ten years later? You know? Do they say, Hey, I remember back there at Fair Haven one day you said so and so to me.

I never forgot it. That's a good index of what we're really accomplishing for God. A good man out of the good treasure his heart brings forth good.

An evil man out of the evil treasure his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. And how true that is.

Then the Lord Jesus closes his discourse to the disciples, at least this part of it, with a story about the two builders and the two foundations. And when we read this, we almost unconsciously make a gospel application because we sung the chorus in Sunday school. The wise man built his house upon a rock and the rains came tumbling down.

The rains came down and the floods came up and the house on the rock stood firm, right? And the wise man in the gospel story is the man who builds his house upon Christ, from the gospel of the Lord Jesus. The foolish man is the man who builds his house on the sinking foundation. He has no room for Christ.

The floods come and he's washed away and goes to hell. But that's really not the way the Lord used it here. He says, Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? The subject of this whole passage is obedience to the word of the Lord.

And especially to what he's just been teaching us here. Notice, Whoever comes to me and hears my sayings and does them. Now you say, What sayings? Well, in the broadest sense, it means all his sayings.

But in a narrower sense, it means everything he's been teaching them in chapter six, against which our spirits rebel oftentimes. We fight against something. We couldn't have meant that.

It must have meant something else, you know. He said, Whoever comes to me and hears my sayings and does them, I'll show you whom he's like. He's like a man building his house who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock.

And when the flood arose, the storm beat vehemently against that house and could not shake it for it was founded on a rock. What he's teaching here, as I see it, is that if you build your house on the teachings of Christian discipleship, the stern demands of Christian discipleship, you're building on a solid foundation. It doesn't mean you're going to have a trouble-free life because the storms come in everybody's life.

But, he says, if your life is built on these principles, the storms can come and the winds can blow, but your house will stand firm. And I believe that. I've seen it in life.

I remember a couple in Chicago years ago, godly wife anyway, a man had given the best years of his life to a corporation. And God took the second place, I'm afraid. Well, the wife was stricken with cancer.

And here she is, dying with cancer, and the man says to her, If anything happens to you, who'll take care of me? What a selfish thing to say, huh? A wife dying with cancer. If anything happens to you, who'll take care of me? His house was built in sand, I think. She said, Dear, the Lord will take care of you.

Her house was built on a rock. And you can find numerous illustrations of that. Of people who have gone to the Word of God and seen the teachings of the Lord Jesus and built their house on those teachings.

And they were like trees planted by rivers of water. Their roots were deep. And when the storms come, my, they really stand firm.

They can really endure the storms. So remember that the wise man in this passage is the man who hears the saying of Jesus on Christian discipleship and says, That's what it means. That's what I'm going to do with my life.

Whether anybody else does it or not, I'm going to obey the Lord in that. He says, Good for you. The storms will come and beat against it, but it'll stand firm because it's founded on the rock.

Who's the foolish man? He who heard and did nothing. Get that. He who heard and did nothing.

It's possible to hear everything we've gone over and do nothing about it. It's possible to just relegate it to a pigeonhole. A dispensational pigeonhole, if you wish.

He who heard it and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation against which to scream vehemently and immediately fell. And the ruin of that house was great. Does this mean the man's life is lost? I don't think so.

I mean his soul. I don't think it means this man goes to hell at all. I think it means his soul is saved, but his life is lost.

And that's what you have to face. That's one of the realities you have to face in life, that your soul can be saved and your life can be lost. The Lord Jesus says, If you want your life to count, listen to my saying and obey them and you'll build your life on the solid sand.

This man comes to the end of life, the storms blow and he's got no stability and he goes out like a puff of wind. Very, very sad. So, these are the revolutionary teachings of the Lord Jesus in Luke chapter 6. You

know, I can't help thinking as we come to those closing verses, it's the very opposite of what the world believes.

The world believes that the wise man is the man who puts himself first, you know, and follows all the current advice in the business world and the secular world and he says, if you went by the teachings of Jesus, you'd go bankrupt. That's what he says. The world's idea of a wise man and a foolish man are very, very opposite.

The world pictures the wise man there sitting in his mahogany panel office at a beautiful desk with gold fixtures on it and all the rest, and his heart shafts are in marks. The Word of God pictures that man on his knees in humble submission to the Word of God making his life count for God and for eternity. What marvelous teachings from our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

On what are you building your own house? The quicksand of the world and its teachings? Or the solid rock of Christ and His Word? I'm so glad for this fresh approach to the Scriptures and trust you and I will never be the same again. I do want to tell you about our free tape cassette catalog. It describes this message and other fine messages available to you as individual tapes or as a complete series on this topic of discipleship.

Also, during this series, we are offering to you free of charge a powerful book called Hunger for Reality. It's yours for the asking. We want you to have it, so please write today for your free copy.

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One other thing. When you write, will you please include the call letters of this station? Thanks. We appreciate this.

Now Bill would like to tell you a closing illustration just before we go off the air. Something that David Livingston once said has been a key for me. I don't think I've given it yet, but he said, I'm determined to possess nothing except in relation to the kingdom of Christ.

That meant he would take an inventory of his material possessions, and if he could use it for the kingdom, use it! If he couldn't, get rid of it and use the proceeds for the kingdom. You know. I think that's a good rule of thumb.

I really do. It helps in most cases that I can think of. It helps.

Is this something? That typewriter, can I use that for the kingdom? That automobile, can I use it for the kingdom? That house, can I use it for the kingdom? Praise God, there are a lot of houses, a lot of Christians' owned homes that are like the house in Bethany where Jesus loved to be. The house of Lazarus and Mary and Martha. There are houses that are being used for the kingdom today.

There are houses that are being used very selfishly. Because nobody wants... I mean, the owners don't want anybody to disturb the slightest bit of dust. You know.

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