

# True Discipleship - Part 5

by William MacDonald

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*William MacDonald emphasizes the radical call of true discipleship, urging believers to forsake all for the sake of following Christ.*

**Duration:** 27:54

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Matthew 19:21, Luke 14:33, Luke 18:22, Acts 2:44-45, James 3:1, 1 John 2:17

**Topics:** "Discipleship"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the verse Luke 14:33 and its implications for Christians. He acknowledges the doubts and reasoning that may arise when considering the idea of giving up everything for the will of God. However, he emphasizes the importance of prioritizing eternal blessings over earthly treasures. The speaker shares examples of individuals who have demonstrated this commitment, such as Jim Elliot and a couple who gave all their money to the work of the Lord. He also highlights the issue of hypocrisy in prayer and how obedience to Luke 14:33 can deliver a person from it.

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## Transcript

Shall we turn this morning to Luke chapter 14 and verse 33? We're continuing our subject of discipleship. This morning we're coming to that most unpopular verse in Luke 14, verse 33. It says, So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

Yesterday we listed seven terms of discipleship given by our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. This was the seventh. Supposing you were going to teach this portion of scripture next Sunday in a Sunday school class, how would you explain this verse anyway? Perhaps that doesn't bother me as much as the fact that someday I'm going to stand before the Lord and He's going to ask me, what did you do about the verse anyway? I think that's really the point we should face this morning, is that this is the Word of God.

The Lord Jesus must have some meaning in it, and each one of us will have to decide what it means. And I cannot tell you what it means to forsake all in your life. I think I know pretty well what it means in my life, and I've got to battle that out with the Lord.

But it's not for me to tell you what it means in your life to forsake the Lord, to forsake all to follow Him. Now, I think there are certain things, however, we should notice in the verse. There's no suggestion in the New Testament that this verse of scripture is just intended for a certain select few.

There's no idea of an inner circle, an elite to whom this verse applies. It says, so likewise, whosoever he be of you. Whosoever.

And if in your Sunday school class you were to suggest to your pupils that this verse only applies to those in full-time work, probably some clever little brat in the class would ask you if that's what whosoever means in John 3.16. Then you would be up against it, wouldn't you? What does whosoever mean in John 3.16? Oh, it does? Well, then why doesn't it mean it here? And then secondly, I think we should notice that the verse doesn't say simply that we must be willing to forsake all. If you put that in it, you're putting something in that isn't there. And your clever little prodigy in your Sunday school class would soon trip you up on that as well.

It doesn't say whosoever he be of you that is willing to forsake all, or is not willing to forsake all. It says, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath. And then I think that we should notice that it doesn't say in this verse that if you don't do it, some deluded form of discipleship is possible.

I think that the words of the Lord Jesus are most remarkable here. He cannot be my disciple. Now, actually, we really shouldn't be too surprised at this verse of Scripture because it's not the only portion in the Word of God where this same thing is taught.

The Lord Jesus taught, lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. And it's just as contrary to the teaching of Christ, as Wesley said, to lay up treasures on earth as it is to commit murder or adultery. Just as contrary with the same Lord who forbade all three.

Then the Lord said, sell all that ye have and give alms. And as we read last night in the story of the rich young ruler, the Lord said, sell all that thou hast and distribute to the poor. Come, follow me, thou shalt have reward in heaven.

And actually, as you read the book of Acts, you'll find that this is what the early church did. The great passion and aim of the early church was to make Christ known and everything else in life was subordinated to that cause. They held a very light touch on material things.

There was an even flow. If there was a need here, funds flowed. If there was a need here, funds flowed so that there might be an equality.

You know, it's interesting to me to know that one of the earliest men in the so-called brethren movement, Anthony Norris Grove, faced this verse of Scripture and similar verses of Scripture, and he felt he had no alternative. The light of the Word of God, then, to literally forsake all and follow Christ. And he gave up wealth and fortune and went out to Baghdad to serve the Lord there.

And I think it might be interesting for some of you to know that the first publication of the so-called brethren movement was a little booklet by Anthony Norris Grove called Christian Devotedness, a most devastating treatment of the subject. I don't like it at all, but I can't disprove it from the Scripture. C.T. Studd faced this same thing.

C.T. Studd inherited a fortune, and he read these verses of Scripture and said, well, what about it? And so he said, well, he said, I have the priceless opportunity of doing what the rich young ruler failed to do. That was nice, wasn't it? I have the priceless opportunity of doing what the rich young ruler failed to do. And so he put his money to work in the service of the Lord, all except the equivalent of about \$9,000.

He was just getting married, and he thought, well, I can do this for myself, but I think I really should set aside \$9,000 for my wife. And so he did. He gave all to the work of the Lord, except \$9,000, which he gave to his new bride.

And she was not to be outdone by him. She said to him, Charlie, what did the Lord say to the rich young ruler? The answer was, sell all. And she said, well, let's begin our married life with a clean slate.

And so she did the same as her devoted husband had done. And I was interested to notice in reading the book about Jim Elliot, the diary of Jim Elliot, that he was animated by the same spirit. I think this is most beautiful.

He writes as follows in his diary, Father, let me be weak that I might loose my clutch on everything temporal. My life, my reputation, my possessions. Lord, let me loose the tension of the grasping hand.

Even, Father, would I loose the love of fondling. How often I have released a grasp only to retain what I prized by harmless longing, the fondling touch. Rather, open my hand to receive the nail of Calvary as Christ was open.

That I, releasing all, might be released, unleashed from all that binds me now. He thought, heaven, yea, equality with God not a thing to be clutched at. So, let me release my grasp.

If you haven't read the book Shadow of the Almighty, you really should. It's really one of the most amazing books that has come out in our generation. With regard to the love of temporal things, Betty Elliot wrote this about her husband.

When he died, Jim left little of value as the world regards values. He and I had agreed long before that we wanted no insurance. We would store our goods in heaven, share what the Lord gave us as long as we had it, and trust him literally for the future.

In accordance with the principles Paul sets forth to the Corinthians. When the children of Israel were given manna in the wilderness, they received enough for one day. They were not told to lay up for tomorrow.

So, of material things there were few. A home in the jungle, a few well-worn clothes, books and tools. The men who went to try to rescue the five brought back to me from Jim's body his wristwatch and from the Keurorai beach the blurred pages of his college prayer book, prayer notebook.

There was no funeral, no tombstone for a memorial. No legacy then? Was it just as if he had never been? The world passeth away in the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. Jim left for me in memory and for us all in these letters and diaries the testimony of a man who sought nothing but the will of God.

Who prayed that his life would be an exhibit to the value of knowing God. Now, when I read a verse like Luke 14, 33, my infidel heart tells me that it's impossible. And all kinds of reasonings arise in my mind.

I say, why if we followed that verse we'd starve. And supposing all Christians did this, who'd support the work of the Lord? And after all, isn't it true that there must be Christians in every strata of society so that men and women might be reached with the gospel? We do have to provide for the future, don't we? Well, I think the answer is found in the word of the Lord Jesus, The kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you. There's only one real impossibility in the Christian life, and that's for

God to lie.

It's really the only impossibility, for God to lie. And God says if we are industrious and frugal and conscientious in doing his will, we'll never starve. We say it's impossible, but that's not an objection.

If I'm living my life on the plane of the possible, it's not the Christian life. The Christian life is impossible. The Christian life can only be lived in the power of the Spirit of God.

The Christian life is as impossible as it's impossible to walk on water. The only way Peter could ever have walked on the water was by keeping his eyes on the Lord and being sustained by the Lord. That's the only way we can live the Christian life.

If my life is lived on the plane of the possible, it's no different from the lives of the ungodly men about me. Unless my life crackles with the supernatural, I'm really not living the life God wants me to live. Unless the life of the Lord Jesus is being lived out through me, it's not the Christian life.

Then as far as the argument that if we all did this, who would support the work of the Lord, well, I think that one answers itself. If we all did this, the work of the Lord would be better supported than it ever was before, wouldn't it? There wouldn't be any lack in the work of the Lord. And as far as the answer that, after all, there must be people in every strata of society to reach others with the gospel, it really isn't true.

It really isn't true. Paul reached Caesar's household while he was in prison. I tell you, our responsibility is to obey God and to leave the consequences with Him.

And if we obey God, He'll see that men and women are reached with the gospel, and He'll do it in most marvelous ways. In fact, I think the more we think of this verse of Scripture, the more we ponder it, the more we meditate on it, the more we realize that the Lord Jesus was right, and this is the only way that the job will ever get done. The only way that the job will ever get done.

Now, I think there are several considerations which we should keep in mind before we completely discard this verse from our theology. And one is this, if I spend my life accumulating earthly treasure, while a world is perishing about me for want of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the question might very well be asked of me, how dwelleth the love of God in such a man? If I dare to keep above my personal necessities that which could be used for the eternal blessing of souls, I stand in an awkward position before God. You know, to me, one of the most thrilling things about the Christian life here on earth is that you and I can touch other lives in such a way that they're affected for good for eternity.

I think that's a marvelous thing. I never get over the thrill of it, to think that God could use me, and God could use you. We could pass a piece of Christian literature, maybe a correspondence course, a tract, or speak a word, and a person could read that, and the Spirit of God could get a hold of him and save his soul, and that person would be a worshipper for Christ throughout all eternity.

I don't think there's anything greater than that. And I ask you then, is it reasonable, is it reasonable that I should withhold that which can result in eternal blessing to man when I have it in my power to do it? Way back in the book of the law, the Lord Jesus said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. God said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

How can I be said to love my neighbor as myself when I have within my power the means of his eternal blessing, and I withhold it from him? A second consideration is this. If the Lord Jesus Christ should come

today, and I believe he could, our material possessions would take a sudden drop in value, wouldn't they? How much would things be worth to me tomorrow if Christ came today? Well, you know the answer. In fact, there's only one material thing that I have in the world today that would be worth that much tomorrow if Christ came today.

That's this book I have in my hand, because this book is going to abide forever. The only thing. Now, if I really believe that, if I really believe that Christ could come today, and if I'm a clever investment man, I'll be careful where I invest.

You know, back in the Old Testament, God instituted what was known as the year of jubilee, and in the year of jubilee, all property reverted to its owner. Now, I might have a farm, I might buy a farm, and the years go by, and I know very well that in 50 years, that farm will no longer be mine. It's going to revert to its owner.

And every year I get closer to the year of jubilee, that farm is worth less and less. Isn't it? If I went out to sell it in the market, I wouldn't get very much for it the 49th year. In fact, nobody would want to buy it at all.

Dear friends, I believe our year of jubilee is very close, don't you? And listen, if I really believe that, I'm going to invest for eternity. I might just say that all my training in secular life was in the realm of investment. In the realm of investment, I was an investment analyst at the First National Bank of Boston.

When I say these things, I know they're contrary to everything I learned in the business world, but I believe them with all my heart. I believe if Christ came tomorrow, a lot of Christian property would fall into the devil's hands. Would fall into the devil's hands.

Now, another problem in this connection is this. How can I conscientiously pray to the Lord for the supply of the needs of the work of the Lord if I have it within my power to provide those needs? What I'm trying to say here is that obedience to the word of the Lord in Luke 14, 33 delivers a person from hypocrisy in prayer. It really does.

It delivers a person from hypocrisy in prayer. Recently I sat in a meeting and heard a man get up and make an eloquent plea for a certain particular need on a mission field. \$2,000 were needed for a certain particular project on this mission field.

That man had just concluded a deal whereby he sold a piece of property for \$90,000. \$90,000. Now, I wonder if we're being honest with the Lord.

I wonder if God hears that kind of a prayer. But we pray for the supply of the needs of the work of the Lord, and we have it in our power to do it, and we withhold our hands. But you know, there's something else that comes home very seriously to me in a verse of Scripture like this.

Our obedience to a verse of Scripture like this affects our ability to teach and preach the Christian faith. It really does, and this speaks to my heart. No wonder James said, Be not many teachers.

Don't hurry to be a teacher, because they stand in greater condemnation. What do I mean? Well, here you are in the Sunday school class, and your little scholar asks you, Well, what does verse 33 mean, teacher, anyway? Well, really, what you've done with verse 33 determines what you tell him it means, doesn't it? And this is true in all areas of the Word of God. It is.

We teach not always according to what we might know the Word of God means, but according to what we make it to mean in our own lives. And that's a very serious thing. A very serious thing indeed.

And finally, I would just mention this, that clever men of this world spend their time providing reserves for future security. Mr. Woods was speaking about security last night, the god of this age. Clever men of the world.

A good banker is a man who knows how to provide adequate reserves. Now, if I pattern my life on that basis, how am I any different from the men of the world? The Scripture says we walk by faith and not by sight. And if I go according to the same principles that the ungodly men of this world go according to, I'm walking by sight and not by faith.

Dear friends, when you see, you can't trust. When you see, you can't trust. Now, I'm not unaware of the fact that there are objections in the minds of some here this morning to these things, and I'd like to just bring the objections to the surface, objections from the Word of God.

The first is in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 14, where the Apostle Paul says, "...Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be burdensome to you, for I seek not yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." Now, this verse is often adduced to show that Christian parents should spend their lives providing for the future security of their children. But, you know, the verse doesn't teach that.

Paul, in this verse, is not speaking about the future. He's speaking about current necessities. The question in this passage of Scripture is the provision of Paul's immediate needs.

Now, the Corinthians were not careful in this matter, and Paul says that's perfectly all right. Parents ought to provide for the children, not the children for the parents. I'm ministering to you gratuitously.

I look for nothing from you. There's no thought of the Corinthians putting aside a retirement fund for Paul. That's not the point.

The whole passage of Scripture is an ironical statement by the Apostle Paul having to do with the provision of current needs, not future necessities. The other verse is 1 Timothy 5.8. 1 Timothy 5.8, and it says there, "...but if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Once again, this passage of Scripture has to do with the care of widows in the local church. It doesn't have to do with providing a fund for widows, but with providing their needs day by day.

That's the whole argument. And the burden of the New Testament is that a Christian should be zealous and industrious and frugal and hardworking to provide for his current needs and trust God for the future. Actually, a Christian who starts out to provide for his future will never have enough.

He'll never have enough. It's impossible to provide enough for your future. And you come to the end of the journey and find that you don't have enough and that if you had only put God first in your life, he would have provided all your needs anyway.

But then I think perhaps the most telling point in this whole thing is the example of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. You know, the Lord Jesus Christ was fabulously wealthy. Fabulously wealthy.

What did he do? He voluntarily became poor that others might be rich. This is an argument I can't answer. I just can't answer it.

George Mueller says that ill behooves the servant to seek to be rich and great and honored in this world when his Lord was poor and mean and despised. Long as I live, I'll never get over that fact that you dwelt in courts of bliss and glory above.

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