

# The Most Important Message of Discipleship

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the foundational teaching of being a disciple of Jesus Christ, focusing on the three essential conditions of discipleship: loving Christ supremely above all loved ones, denying self-will daily to follow God's will, and surrendering all possessions as an act of worship. The speaker challenges listeners to assess their commitment to discipleship and to constantly check themselves in these areas to avoid backsliding.*

**Scripture:** Luke 14:26, Luke 9:23, Romans 12:1, Psalms 36:9

**Topics:** "Discipleship", "Commitment to Christ"

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## Description

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## Transcript

I have been thinking as to what I should share with you today. There's always a temptation for all preachers to say something new, something fresh, something that was never spoken of before, but for years I've resisted that temptation. And I feel burdened to speak to you about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, which is basic foundational teaching for building your life, building your home, and building your church.

And I'm not talking now about forgiveness of sins. I'm not talking now about going to heaven. That's all kindergarten stuff, which I trust we have moved on from.

You can't build a church with people whose only interest is to have their sins forgiven and to go to heaven when they die. There are lots of Christians like that. I don't know whether it's right even to call them Christians, because we read in Acts 11 that it's the disciples who are called Christians first.

The word Christian came in relation to people who were disciples, but unfortunately backsliding has come. And now it's no longer like it says in Acts 11, 26. It's no longer for Christians are not even converted in most cases.

So let me talk about being born again. That's another phrase that came up to distinguish between those who are just nominal Christians and born again Christians. But even born again, like currency, is devalued so much through the years that every Tom, Dick, and Harry in Christendom calls themselves born again, especially if you're wanting to become the president of the United States.

And it's very important to say you're born again because the Christians vote for you. It's devalued so much nowadays. So we have to go to disciple.

And that also I find particularly in CFC circles where we speak so much about it. Remember, every word can get devalued. Words that we hear frequently are currency, like currency.

They get devalued. So it's good to check up again whether our understanding of being a disciple is correct. In fact, I believe that we should have just like we have a physical checkup.

If you're getting older, you check up your blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol levels, et cetera, because you want to stay healthy. So in the same way, if you want to stay a healthy Christian, check up on the conditions of discipleship. So Luke 14, this is the basic passage on discipleship.

Luke 14, verse 25 to 35. And I want you to see at the end, verse 34 and 35, what Jesus says. Let's begin with verse 25 first.

Large crowds were going along with him. And that's when he turned and said to them, the three conditions of discipleship. So today we find large numbers of people say they are born again, become very popular.

There are lots of people who say they are baptized in the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues. I'll tell you quite frankly, in my opinion, I believe more than 90% of it is fake and not genuine, because if it were the real baptism of the Holy Spirit, it would make them disciples. So there's so much of counterfeit and fake, just like in currency, in Christendom.

You see, only something valuable is counterfeited. Nobody counterfeits brown paper or toilet paper or something like that. What's counterfeited? Gold, diamonds, true disciples.

Those are the things counterfeited. So, and I believe discipleship, Christian disciple is more valuable than all the gold and diamonds in the world. So you can be pretty sure that Satan is going to produce numerous counterfeits.

Now, we don't have to judge others. The Bible says, do not judge lest you be judged yourself. So we're not here primarily to judge other people.

If you're a leader in the Christian church, then you need to have discernment. I would never be able to fulfill my function as an elder if I don't have discernment. It's one of the primary needs of any elder, but God doesn't give that gift to everyone because you probably don't need it.

You just need to watch your own life and be aware of false teachers. But we had to be careful that we're judging ourselves here, not to check up whether that guy's a disciple, but to check whether I'm a disciple. And I tell you honestly, I check up myself, even though I preached this message for 46 years now, I still do check up myself.

I say, Lord, do I fulfill these three conditions today? It's like checking your blood pressure and your blood sugar and your cholesterol levels. Those are the three things people want to check. But here are three

things you need to check if you want to see if you're spiritually healthy.

So, when great crowds came out to him, he turned and said to them some of the hardest words that he ever spoke to anyone. See, there's a big difference between Jesus as a preacher and today's preachers. He was not at all interested in saying things that would keep the crowd happy or saying things that would increase the numbers.

Not at all. In fact, he was complete opposite of today's preachers because Jesus was always reducing the numbers. To say these words to a crowd will definitely reduce the number.

I don't have time to turn to John chapter 6. You read there too. Huge crowds were following him. Thousands.

There must have been 10,000 people at the breaking of bread, 5,000 men alone. And he turned around and says to them some hard words like similar words, eat my flesh, drink my blood, et cetera. And it says a number of those disciples, that means those who followed Jesus in those days, left him until there were only 12 left at the end of John chapter 6. And he doesn't even tell them, hey, I hope you brothers won't leave me.

No. He says, do you want to go away? Thank God for people who said, like Peter, who said, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. If you can say like that to Jesus, and remember, Peter says that to Jesus after Jesus had turned on and rebuked him saying, get behind me, Satan.

You're interested in the things of men and not the things of God. And what is Peter's response to that rebuke? Lord, these are the words of eternal life. Thank you for rebuking me like that.

Blessed is the man who can receive a rebuke from God directly through the scriptures or through some godly man and won't get offended, but will say those are the words of eternal life. Those are the people who stuck with Jesus till the end. And so the Lord is, I mean, we got to see that Jesus was a completely different type of preacher from the average run-of-the-mill preacher you see today.

Number one, he was not interested in numbers, because if he was, he would never say things to hurt and offend people. He would never put difficult conditions before people when they were following him, seeing his miracles. So please remember that and don't be fooled by what you see in Christendom today.

And don't imagine that a lot of these preachers are really representatives of Jesus Christ. Then the other thing I want you to see at the end of Luke 14 is again relating to discipleship. In verse 34, salt is good, but if salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? So he's talking about discipleship in all the previous verses, and he says a disciple is like salt that has not lost its taste.

And he mentions the possibility of salt looking like salt. The color is the same, but when you add it in the food, it makes no difference. It's lost its taste.

True Christians are supposed to be like the salt of the earth, to bring taste, to bring the taste of being a disciple of Jesus, keeping that standard. But as I have observed Christianity and Christendom for 61 years, I've discovered in most places, more than 90-95% of places, the salt has lost its taste. And that's because the conditions of discipleship are not kept on being stressed.

I want to do that till Jesus comes, to keep on preaching the conditions of discipleship. I preached it first 46 years ago in our first church in Bangalore, and I never want to stop preaching it again and again. And then he says, if it has lost its taste, here's a person who started out as a disciple, first came to a CFC church and was gripped by the calling, and kept on listening to the messages that would challenge him, and gradually cooled off.

Or as he got more acceptance in a CFC church, he began to think, I'm okay. In the early days when he came, he was a backbencher, he was happy to just be accepted as an ordinary brother there, but now he's become a senior brother. He's been in the church for eight or nine years.

He's not a newcomer, he's got a respectful place in the church. You're the one who's in danger. Because if you think your seniority in the church matters anything to God, you're fooling yourself.

It matters zero. The only thing that counts with God is whether you're a disciple today. Today, not yesterday.

God says, I am that I am. His name is not I was, or I will be. God's not looking at us as we're going to be in the future, or as we were yesterday.

I am. That's his name. He sees us as we are today.

And so, he says, if you've lost that taste of being a true disciple of Jesus, look at the word Jesus uses, verse 35, it is useless. Would you be offended if somebody told you that you're a useless Christian, sitting in NCCF, useless to God, useless to the church? It's a strong word. Jesus used words like this.

He called his disciples, you know, the two disciples walking to Emmaus after the resurrection, you know what he called them? Fools. Foolish. Jesus loved people so much that he used strong words, especially to his disciples.

Foolish people, read Luke 24. Useless, Luke 14, 35. Satan to Peter, Matthew 16.

And those who are not disciples, like Judas Iscariot, what does he call him? Friend? You betray the son of man with a kiss? Yeah, Jesus may call you friend. And he may also say, it's better you were not even born. That's what he said about Judas Iscariot.

Blessed is the man whom the Lord rebukes. Because, I don't know whether you know this word in Revelation chapter 3. Revelation chapter 3 and verse 19. Remember it all your life.

How do I know Jesus loves me? Those whom I love, I rebuke. When I became a Christian first, way back 60 years ago, if you had asked me, how do you know Jesus loves you? I'd say, he died for me. Who would give his life for me, for me a sinner? I know he loves me.

I still believe that. But I have something more to say. I've come to know the Lord deeper.

You ask me, how do you know Jesus loves you? He rebukes me. He corrects me when I read his word. Or even during the day.

Through something or the other, I hear a spirit rebuking me in my conscience. That is a wrong attitude you have towards that person. Get rid of it.

That's not a good thought. You have an unforgiving attitude towards that person. I know he harmed you.

But that unforgiving attitude is unbecoming of a disciple of Jesus Christ. He rebukes me. And oh, I want to be loved by the Lord to the end of my life.

Till Jesus comes. Therefore, I want to be rebuked. I've seen Christians who are so happy when somebody appreciates them.

Praises them. But they sort of cool off when somebody rebukes them or corrects them. You know that verse in the Psalms which says, let the righteous smite me.

It's like anointing oil upon my head. You want people to, some godly man to come and pour oil on your head and anoint you. He places his hand on you and pray for you.

It says, let the righteous man smite me. That's like anointing oil upon my head. I don't know that there are many Christians who receive rebuke like the anointing upon the head from a godly man.

So I've certainly learned to love the Lord's rebukes because it has always made it, the rest of that verse says, those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline. Not just rebuke. In some way, I've known numerous times in my life where he's disciplined me.

See, I finished with gross sins and all long, long ago. It's the little, little things that he rebukes and disciplines me for. You know, small little things.

And if you're like that, it's a proof that if you experience that, it's a proof that God loves you. If you find the Lord rebuking you for little, little things, you went off the track by one degree. You didn't turn 90 degrees away from following the Lord.

Just one degree off dead center. And if you find the Lord rebuking you because you turned one degree off center in some area, I tell you, you're a blessed man. You're a blessed woman.

May it be like that till the day Jesus comes. Keep that. It's a mark of God's tremendous love for you.

And if he disciplines you, maybe he gives you a little fever, knocks you down and puts you in bed for a while. Humble yourself. Paul had a thorn in the flesh to discipline him from becoming proud.

Don't ever think that you're not in danger of becoming proud. I live in fear of that all the time. But I know I will not fall into it because I have a loving father and loving savior who will rebuke me and discipline me because he knows I want it when I wear even 0.1 degree off center.

That's how much he loves me. I'll tell you something. I've also discovered that if the Lord finds that you got a little offended when you're corrected, he'll leave you alone.

I've seen that, too. He does not keep on correcting those who he sees get a bit offended because they're corrected. I follow the same principle, and I find that I corrected someone.

I remember correcting someone some time ago, and he said to me, Brother Zach, I'm not used to being corrected like that. I said, oh, I'm sorry. Don't worry.

I'll never correct you again. I never corrected him again for the rest of my life. Believer.

I'm not responsible precisely. So the Lord will not keep on correcting us. His spirit, like even in the days of Noah, it says his spirit will not always strive with man.

It's a very great privilege to have the Holy Spirit correcting us. Don't lose it by being insensitive to his correction. Be zealous.

How shall I respond? Like it says in Revelation 3:19, be zealous and repent. Repent means about turn to some direction you're going. Maybe it's one degree off track.

Repentance means come back to death center. So let's turn back to Luke 14 and verse 25. So he says here there are three conditions of discipleship, as you've often heard me speak.

The first condition is in relation to our loved ones, whether relatives or family members, immediate family or church brothers and sisters. Those are our loved ones described in Luke 14:26. And the second condition is our own self that sits on the throne of every child of Adam.

There's a throne in our heart occupied by self from the day we are born. And you see that in every child self sits on his throne. And that's why the Bible says that if you don't discipline your child, you lose it.

That self on the throne will take that child of yours straight to hell. And that's why God appoints parents to correct their children, to teach them to submit to authority. It's the first thing they need to learn.

That it's more important for your children to learn obedience to parents than to learn to brush their teeth. Or to have a shower regularly or to change their clothes or to learn their ABC or their math or science or anything. Most important of all, those ignorance in math and science won't send anybody to hell.

But if they don't learn early in life to submit to authority, they've missed out on the most important lesson in this universe. Sin came in this universe because a created being dared to rebel against authority God had placed over him. That was God himself.

And that head of the angels became the devil in a moment. It doesn't take long for an angel to become a devil. In one single moment, that perfect angel became a devil.

Not because he committed adultery, not because he told lies, not because he stole money. Only because of pride that made him rebel against authority. That made him the greatest liar of all time.

So we got to learn from that. That's why children are to be taught the number one lesson. We need to teach them not to tell lies, sure.

But first of all, submit to the authority God has placed in your home, your parents. Submission to authority is a very, very important thing. So he talks about that first and then about putting self away from the throne in our heart.

And then the third condition of discipleship in Luke 14:33 is our attitude to our possessions. So first, our attitude to our loved ones. And second, our attitude to a self that sits on the throne.

And third, our attitude to our possessions. If we don't have a clear attitude in all these three areas and we don't keep checking up all the time, we will backslide. Backslide is another way of saying the salt has become tasteless.

And then it is, verse 35, useless. A disciple who has backslidden is a useless Christian. He is no longer of any value to the kingdom of God.

We have to make sure that the salt remains with its taste till the day Jesus comes. We should not be looking forward to death. The sky, not the grave, is our goal.

And I don't care how long I live. I should not look forward to death, but to the coming of Christ. And I look forward to that day and I want to be ready when he comes to have confidence in that day and not shrink away from him in shame.

So I need to keep my heart always checking on discipleship. So let's go through these quickly, one by one, and then you can meditate on them on your own later. You've heard me before, but please listen to me as if you've never heard it before.

Then it'll probably help you. Luke 14, 26. This is new covenant.

In the old covenant, there was no such requirement. The old covenant is like a kindergarten class. And the new covenant, we come to grade one and you move on till you go to university.

But this is not kindergarten stuff. In the kindergarten, they were taught, honor your father and mother. And you have to begin there.

You don't get to first grade before you have gone through kindergarten. You either go through the kindergarten lesson at home with your parents and then join grade one or go to school and go to kindergarten, then go to grade one. But you cannot go to grade one before you have learned your ABC in kindergarten.

You can't learn anything if you haven't learned ABC. So the ABC is not to hate your father and mother. No.

There are many people who are very happy to hate their father and mother because their parents injured them in some way or hurt them in some way and say, oh, this is what I love. Hate father and mother. Great.

I don't have to do anything more with them. No, sir. You don't.

You're trying to jump to grade one. You got to go through kindergarten first. You got to go through a period where you learn to honor your father and mother.

When you graduated from honoring your father and mother, then you are fit to go to grade one to hate your father and mother. So the first question you need to ask yourself is, have you learned to honor your parents? And when you were a child, did you obey them? I believe we should honor our parents to the end of our lives. So we obey them only when we are in their home.

Once we leave home, we don't have to obey them, but we still have to honor them. But then comes this higher standard to hate. And what does that mean? We need to understand it.

The way I have pictured it in my mind, the illustration that has helped me the most in this area, I find many scriptures I understand better when I use a word picture. And I find that's the reason why Jesus used word pictures and parables, which make the meaning so clear. I mean, for example, what better explanation of repentance is there than the prodigal son coming back from the pig's farm to his home? What better

expression of self-righteousness is there than the elder brother standing at the gate, refusing to come in because he despises his younger brother, the prodigal who came back.

Word pictures that define what repentance is, that define what self-righteousness is, that define what despising a brother is. Wonderful. So here is a word picture that's helped me.

I try to create my own. Hate, hate is the opposite of love. And that's like darkness is the opposite of light.

So I look at my love for my parents and my loved ones, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and brothers and sisters in the church, like the light of the stars. And my love for Jesus, like the light of the sun, definitely much more. It should be like that.

But the interesting thing is that when the sun comes up in the sky, noon day, you cannot see a single star in the sky. It's almost as though the stars have disappeared. And you know, they haven't disappeared, but the light of the sun is so great.

That is as though the stars did not even exist. So that helps me to understand this word hatred. It's not that my love for my loved ones does not exist, but in the light of my love for Christ, like the sun coming up, it's almost as though that's not even there.

It is there. The stars are there. We know the stars are there, even when the sun is shining.

But love for Christ is so supreme that it blocks that other one out. So that's how I understand it. It's not that the stars cease to exist.

It's not that you stop loving your father or mother or wife or children or brothers and sisters. You do, but you need to ask yourself whether your love for Christ so supersedes your love for your parents, your wife, your children, and your brothers and sisters in the church, that there's absolutely no question about who you love supremely. You should love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your strength, and all your mind.

Where is there a place for strength or mind for anyone else? So I've understood from this that a true disciple loves his loved ones in a different way from the way Old Testament people were to honor their parents and love them. And that is, I'm not to love my wife directly. I'm to love her through Christ.

Then you will never stop loving her, even if your wife behaves like the devil himself. You will still love her if you love her through Christ. But if you don't love her through Christ because you don't love Christ supremely, you'll easily get upset when your wife hurts you in some way or offends you in some way.

A true disciple will love her mother-in-law through Christ, no matter how she behaves. You may not agree with her, but love does not require agreement. Love is not the same as submission.

You don't have to obey everything your dad and mom say, if that is different from what Christ says. But there will be zero hatred or bitterness in your heart, as we tell you this, against any human being if you love Christ supremely. If you find in your heart today some bitterness, some unforgiving spirit towards some human being, I'll tell you the answer.

It's not that person. That person was evil towards you. Okay, the devil made him do that.

But the devil's killed two birds with one stone. He made you react in a bad way to him, and he's killed you as well. Even the devil didn't have to touch you.

He touched only that person. But touching that person, he knocked you down as well. And you claim to be a disciple of Jesus.

I want to make sure that the devil doesn't kill two birds with one stone. If he wants to knock that fellow down, let him do it. But that's not going to make me knock down in an unforgiving spirit towards him, no.

Because I love Christ with all my heart, soul, and strength in mind. It's impossible for me to hate somebody. We must come to the place where we say it's impossible for me to hate anyone.

To the best of my knowledge, I'm seeking to be there. I hope I've come there. But it's impossible to hate anyone.

I disagree with more people than many Christians do in doctrines and so many ways people behave and the way Christians act and preach. But I will not have hatred. Impossible.

I will not do it. Because that's for the devil. It's like inviting a little bit of the devil in my heart.

For example, if I'm unmerciful towards someone. Do you know there's only one place in the universe where there's no mercy? God's mercy extends over the whole earth. But there's one place in the universe where there's no mercy.

And that's hell. And if there's a little corner in your heart where you don't have mercy towards someone, you've got a little bit of hell in your heart. Let me tell you that.

Make sure mercy never goes out of your heart towards any human being. Because if it does, it's got nothing to do with the other person. It's got to do with hell in your heart.

So when I love Christ supremely, I'll be able to love my parents the right way. I will not listen to them if they ask me to do something contrary to what Christ says. I will love my wife and my children the right way.

I will not try to please them so much that I displease the Lord. No, I love them. I love my wife better than any earthly person can love his wife if I love Christ supremely.

That's the way to love your wife. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. How in the world can you do it? By loving Christ supremely.

And also your brothers and sisters in the church. That's also important. We can have special friendships in the church.

I've seen that in so many churches. I've seen that with elders. If you ask me what is the number one sin I have seen among CFC elders, it's not adultery.

It's not telling lies. It's not cheating on their taxes. It's partiality.

Partiality, it's something we hardly sometimes recognize it's there. We don't treat everybody equally. I have a partiality towards someone because of some reason.

Maybe he's done me a lot of favors. Maybe he's my relative or some other way. I cannot be a disciple of Jesus if partiality is in it.

It's a sin. In fact, there's a whole section in James chapter two devoted to this sin of partiality. Elders showing partiality to somebody in the church.

It happens all the time in Babylonian churches where rich people are shown partiality or some influential person is shown partiality. Could be in other ways in our churches. But if I love Jesus supremely, none of these people are important to me.

I love them all through Christ. Every brother. There's no special friend of mine whom I will give him a pass if he does something wrong.

Now, I'd say, sorry, I don't agree with that. I'm not called here to rebuke every person. If you're an elder, you have that responsibility.

But otherwise, you're not called to rebuke every brother in the church and you see he's doing something wrong. You probably need to tell the elders about it. But if you're an elder, you have to be very careful that there's no partiality.

Very, very important. If you're a father and mother, you need to be very careful that there's no partiality at all in the way you treat your children. You cannot be that unless you love Christ supremely.

So this is the first condition of misstatisip. And you know, Jesus was living in a culture which is very similar to Eastern culture, like in India. In Western culture, there's not so much of an attachment and respect for parents as there is in India.

In India and Hinduism, it's very common for parents to touch the feet of their father and mother, no matter how old they are. If you're 50 years old, you touch the feet of his 80-year-old father and mother. That's the sort of respect.

I'm not saying it's a spiritual thing. But what I say is that such people need to hear that when you become a disciple, you've got to make sure that Christ takes over that place of supreme respect and authority in your life. And I've seen, even among Christians, though I've preached this for years, I find many believers, even in CFC churches, because they don't love Christ more than their father and mother, they compromise when they get married.

They don't obey the scripture which says, leave your father and mother and cleave to your wife. If you ask me what is the most disobeyed command in marriages in India, it is this. Leave your father and mother and cleave to your wife.

If you don't leave properly, you don't cleave properly. Yeah, that's what brings the distance between many husbands and wives. All over.

I see that all over India and all over in many other places. And all that is solved. You just fulfill the first condition of discipleship.

Jesus Christ is supreme to me. His word is supreme and nobody else. You know, we can have, we feel sorry for our old parents.

Oh, they need us so much. By all means, help them, provide for them and do everything you can for them. But don't let them take the place of Christ in your heart ever.

And if you're married, don't let any of them take the place of your wife or your husband in your heart. Because that's what Jesus commanded. But I'm sorry to say many Christians, even in CFC churches, I've seen they do that.

They're not disciples. And I don't go around telling them that. But if they were to ask me, I'll tell them to their face.

Brother, you're not a disciple. Sister, you're not a disciple. Your parents mean more to you than your marriage partner.

Why? Because Christ is not first in your life. That's the reason. You can talk about discipleship till Jesus comes.

But you'll discover when Christ comes back that you are not a disciple. So this is something you've got to really take to heart and see whether it's true in your life. We move on to the second condition.

There's more in it that you can meditate on on your own. Go before the Lord and ask the Holy Spirit to show you. And the second condition, what does it mean to carry your cross? The cross is where Jesus laid down his will.

The strongest thing in our life is our self-will. That shows that self is on the throne. Before Jesus went to the cross, he said in the Garden of Gethsemane, Father, not my will, but thine.

Imagine that the Son of God, who had all his life, said in John 6, 38, I came from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. That was his principle by which he lived. And I'll tell you, it's not easy.

A true disciple is one who really longs to do God's will and not his own. Now, we may say that lightly. Oh, yes, Father, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Thy will be done in my life as it is in heaven. Millions of Christians, billions of them have said that through the years. 99.9% of them don't mean it and certainly don't practice it.

It's just a pious word to say thy will, not mine. Because this is the thing that indicates that you are king in your own life. Self sits on the throne, proved by the fact I want to do my will.

It's wanting to do my will that makes a person angry, loses temper. It's wanting to do my will that makes a person lust after a woman, not his wife. It's wanting to do my will that makes a person cheat when he files his tax return.

It's all based on self being in the center. That's what makes him do all the wrong things the Bible forbids. That's what makes a man say, I won't forgive that man because he did so much harm to me or to my children.

Yeah, self is on the throne. So Jesus said, there's no way to be my disciple because the footsteps of Jesus are like this. Not my will, but God's will.

Not my will, but God's will. It's like in the military and they march in parade. They say left, right, left, right, left, right, left, right.

And all through the parade ground, they go left, right, left, right. And so it is in the Christian life. That's how our entire life is to be.

And that's why Jesus said, you can't be my disciple unless you carry your cross. And he specified in Luke 9, 23, that must be daily. This is not a once for all decision.

You receive Christ as Lord in your life once for all. But this is a daily thing. It's the one thing Jesus said you must do daily.

In Christendom, I remember when I was a young Christian, they said, you must read the Bible daily. You must pray daily. You must seek fellowship with others daily as far as possible.

And you must try to witness to someone daily. These are the four things they taught me as a young Christian. That means take the opportunity.

I would always pray and read the Bible daily. Seek fellowship at home with your family daily. And then where opportunity affords, seek to be a witness daily.

Very good. But the one thing that Jesus said we have to do daily, not a single church I went to taught me that. And that's why for 16 years after I was born again, I was a backslider.

Not all of that time, but up and down, up and down, up and down. My life was constantly like this wavy sine wave graph. And I never knew the reason until I discovered that the one thing Jesus told me to do every day I was not doing.

I read the Bible. I really studied the Bible. I would pray daily, read the Bible daily and seek fellowship as often as possible and seek to witness as often as possible.

But nobody told me you got to die every single day. If you were to ask me what is more important to read the Bible daily or to die daily, I would say without a doubt, die daily. Maybe you didn't get a chance to read the Bible one day.

Not bad. It's good to read every day, but supposing you missed it one day, it's not a big crime. But if you didn't die daily, that's a big crime.

You're not a disciple that day in your relationship as husband and wife. Imagine what it'll be like heaven in your home if each person dies to themselves every day and not lives on past experience. This is discipleship.

You cannot be my disciple if you don't take up the cross and come after me. All his life, he joyfully said, not my will, but thine. Not my will, but thine.

All the time. And towards the end of his life, as he came to the cross, it was a struggle. Father, do I have to do your will and drink this cup? Now that's something we will never have to face because his cup was facing hell for eternity, for three hours on the cross.

It was eternal hell for him, for our sake. That is a cup we never had to drink because he drank it once for all, for all humanity. So that was a struggle which we never had to face.

But even there, because he loved us and because he loved the father, it was a great day when I discovered that Jesus died on the cross, not because he loved me first, but because he loved the father. His proof of his love for his father was that he went to the cross. The first commandment that Jesus obeyed was not to love me, no, but to love his father.

He went to the cross. I mean, when we are young believers, we say Jesus died for me. He loved me.

He died for me. But I said Jesus loved the father and therefore went to the cross. And because he loved the father, he loved me.

That's why his love for me will never fluctuate. Our love for others fluctuates because we don't love the father first. We try to love that person.

Oh, I want to love. Jesus said, must love one another. I'll tell you, you'll never be able to do that if you don't love God with all your heart.

When you do love God with all your heart, this other thing comes out from there. And when you put the cart before the horse, the cart does not move. The horse must be in front of the cart.

Every sensible person knows that. So you can't really love people if you don't love God first. And that means the proof of Jesus' love for his father was he laid down his will every day, however painful it was.

And look at the cross and see the agony that he was willing to go through, not just because he loved you, but because he loved the father. And say, Lord, what is this petty little thing that I have to give up? To do the father's will. I'm glad to give it up.

When you were willing to face eternal hell on the cross to do the father's will. One of the silly things that we say, oh, I have to deny myself. Well, you know, in the light of Calvary, I'm not trying to act spiritual or say something very sound and very profound or spiritual, but this is the honest truth I can say in my life.

I have never made a sacrifice for Jesus Christ in my life. Zero. It's a spiritual thing to say, I know, but I stand before God and I mean it.

Only because of one reason. I have seen the depth of the sacrifice Jesus made for me on the cross. And we say a drop in an ocean.

What I have given up is not even a drop in the ocean. So taking up the cross, you think it's such a difficult thing. Oh, you mean I have to die there? I have to die there? Brother, you haven't seen the cross of Calvary where Jesus died for you.

One of the first things the Lord taught me as a young Christian, and nobody taught me this. I learned that my life was to be lived. I don't know how God impressed that on my heart as a very young Christian, because I never heard it in the Brethren Assembly I attended, was looking unto Jesus who endured the cross.

Hebrews 12. Not just looking unto Jesus. Everybody says I'd like to look unto Jesus.

But Hebrews 12 verse 1 and 2 is looking unto Jesus who endured the cross, despising the shame. That's the Jesus I have to look up to. Otherwise, it's a very pious thing to say I look up to Jesus.

Looking unto Jesus who despised the shame and endured the cross. So I learned pretty early in life to look at Jesus dying for me on the cross. Meditate more and more on that.

And I'm still—that's the thing that's in front of me. I'm trying to plumb the depths of Calvary. And it's amazing the revelations I've got just on that.

And then in the light of that, I'll tell you how you know you're plumbing the depths of Calvary. That more and more you feel you've never sacrificed a single thing in your life for the Lord. If you're thinking of some sacrifice you've made for the Lord, brother, I'd say look at Calvary again.

Brother, sister, please look at Calvary. You feel you're suffering so much because you're being badly treated in your office because you're a Christian. Oh, brother, I feel sorry for you.

Not because you're suffering, but because you haven't seen the cross. Are you being badly treated by your unconverted relatives? Ha! You're treated like—I used to say mosquito bite. I've stopped saying mosquito bite because mosquitoes bring sickness.

I say ant bites now. An ant bite. Nothing.

It's just an ant bite. That doesn't kill you. Just knock it off.

It's gone. What is it, the thing you feel you've suffered so much? Don't meditate on the way people treated you badly or misunderstood you. That's another thing I find.

Oh, brother, these people are misunderstanding me. I'm really a serious Christian, but they don't seem to understand that. Really? You feel sorry for yourself? Go and look at Calvary, my brother, sister.

Go and look there and die to yourself. Meditate on Calvary, and you'll find it's very easy to deny yourself anything. Anything.

I mean anything. You can apply that in your life. In fact, in connection with this, Jesus said, if you want to build a tower, you want to build a skyscraper, let's say.

Today he would say skyscraper. Luke 14, 28. That reaches—you want to become like Jesus.

This is the skyscraper I want to build. Don't you want to build it? Becoming like Christ? This is the real tower that reaches up to heaven. The Tower of Babel was just a few hundred feet.

They would have got—where would they have got up to heaven? But this is the tower that will go up to heaven. Becoming like Jesus. Sit down.

Don't say that, I want to be like Jesus. Sit down first and calculate the cost. He said that.

What is the cost? Die to yourself every single day, and probably a hundred times in one single day. You want to build a tower or not? Otherwise, you will start and you won't finish. You know the number of believers that I have seen like that in CFC churches who started and fell away? They heard about the cost, but they did not calculate the cost.

They lived on the approval of men. They did not count the cost and they fell away. And there are some people who sit in the church and fall away.

Inwardly, they have fallen away. But they put up a good front and they're accepted before others. Good brother, good sister.

The opinion of men fit for the trash can. If you want to know, if you want to value your opinion, go to some godly person and tell you the truth about yourself. They are rare.

Calculate the cost. Otherwise, you won't complete it. Otherwise, one day people will ridicule you.

This man began to build and he's not able to finish. This man said he's going to be a wholehearted disciple of Jesus and said he's going to pay the price, et cetera, et cetera. But where is he today? He was seeking his own.

Or, verse 31, it's like a king going to battle. He's got to first sit down and count with these few people that I have. Can I encounter this devil who's coming with millions of demons? You know, this is Jesus.

The king here is Jesus. And he wants to know, can we go against the devil and his hosts with these few people? Who are my disciples? And the answer is yes, if they are disciples. If they are not disciples, send a delegation, verse 32, and ask for peace.

But the church will be triumphant because Jesus is counting on his disciples. A few of them. They don't have to be many.

Jesus plus a few disciples, a handful of them, can encounter these millions of demons coming at him as an army. He'll overcome. There's no asking for peace.

But if you have a bunch of half-hearted people, it's better to compromise with the devil and say, listen, we won't trouble you. You don't trouble us. We won't preach radical discipleship in our church, Satan.

We won't preach that you've got to hate father and mother. We won't preach that you've got to overcome anger and sexual lust 100%. We won't preach it, Satan, in our church.

We won't talk about such things. We just talk about being nice and good and helping the poor, et cetera, et cetera. And we have made peace with Satan.

He won't trouble us because there's no disciple there who's willing to pay the price. But when you have disciples in your church, you can preach the whole counsel of God, infuriate Satan. I love to infuriate Satan.

I think it's a great honor if Satan thinks I'm someone to be hated and detested. If Satan leaves you alone, that's not a compliment. That's an insult.

No, we don't seek peace with the devil. We build a church with disciples, even though there are very few. Jesus had very few.

Many people will fall away. It doesn't matter. But we'll have a few.

And the last condition. If a person, if you want to be a disciple, you've got to give up all your possessions. So, like the illustration I've always used, here are my possessions, and I can cling to them tight, or I can

open my palm and say, Lord, I have it still, but I don't possess them.

This is possession. This is having. I want to ask you about all your possessions, and your possessions means your money, your house, your car, your job, your ambitions.

Nothing wrong with any of them. I believe it's right to have godly ambitions and even ambitions in your profession to do well, go higher. Nothing wrong with it, provided it's not held like this, but have them.

And say, Lord, they're in my hand. The sale deed of the house is in my name. It's not in the name of Jesus.

But I'm not clinging to it. The car is in my name, but I'm not clinging to it. I have a very good job, but I'm not clinging to it.

It's yours, Lord. You can take it away anytime you want. I don't possess anything.

I have so many things. You can have a million dollars in your bank account. If you hold it like this, you can have 10 million, 100 million, whatever it is.

But if you possess it like this, even \$10 in your bank account will prevent you from being indecisive. This is the one meaning of give up your possessions and let the things you have remain as in an open palm, belonging to the Lord. All my possessions, I have to open my palms and say, Lord, yes.

The greatest example of that is Abraham offering up Isaac. This is what worship means, because that's the first place in the Bible the word worship comes in Genesis 22, where Abraham told his servants at the foot of the Mount Moriah, I'm going up with my son to worship God. He was supernaturally inspired to use that word, because it's never used anywhere else in Genesis before that.

Worship. He doesn't say, well, fellas, you know, I'm just going to show my love for God. I'm going to give up my son to kill him there, as God told me.

No, I'm going to worship my God. And you say, Abraham, how are you going to worship my God? By giving up, by not hanging on to my only son. I'm going to worship him by saying, here, Father, take him away.

The most precious thing I have in my life, my son, you can have him. I'll take the knife and kill him and sacrifice him to you. And as he lifted up his knife, the Lord said, stop, Abraham.

Now I know that you fear me. How do I prove that I fear God when he asked me to give up what I possess? Then the Lord would say, now I know you fear me. And you can say that that is not a great sacrifice.

No, it's worship. When you give up your possessions, call it worship like Abraham did. That is a true worshiper.

It's not singing songs. You just got to have a good voice to be that type of worshiper. That's cheap worship.

This is costly worship like Abraham offered up. That's what the Bible calls worship. Romans 12.1 says, present your bodies and living sacrifice.

Holy, acceptable to God. Which is your spiritual worship? Which is the worship in the spirit, which the Lord told the woman on Samaria, God is a spirit and those who must worship him must worship him in spirit and truth. That's the way Abraham did.

That is worship in the spirit. The rest is only worship and emotions. 99.9% of so-called worship in many Christian churches is worship in the emotion, which is a part of your soul, not your spirit.

It's a soul. Mind worship and emotion worship is what happens in most churches. And people feel so elated.

Well, it's just like a guy who went to a rock music concert. He also feels elated. But true worship is when you offer up your prized possessions.

Say, Lord, they are yours. You don't give them up, but it's an open palm. You have them, and then you can be a disciple.

Now, I believe these are, like I said in the beginning, these are areas where we need to check ourselves constantly. Constantly. God is my witness that I check myself in all these three areas constantly.

And I've done so day by day for many years. And I say, Lord, otherwise I'll be a backslider. To me, the evidence of backsliding is not losing my temper or lusting out a woman or telling lies.

No, no, no, no, no. To me, the evidence of backsliding is that I've backslidden in one of these areas. I'm backslidden.

What do you call backsliding in your life? It depends on how seriously you've taken the matter of following Jesus. Dear brothers and sisters, I've not spoken to condemn anybody. In the words of Jesus to the Apostle John in Revelation 4-1, come up here.

Come up higher. My message is an invitation from the Lord to come up higher. I hope you'll take it like that.

Let's pray. Let's bow our heads. You may not have time right now, but sometime during the day, later on perhaps, when you're alone, before you go to bed perhaps, take a little time today to think about all that you heard and say, Lord, like the Psalmist says in Psalm 36, in your light, I will see light.

I want light, Lord. Please give me light on myself. I'm not looking for light on other people.

I'm looking for light on myself. Not on my wife, not on my husband. Myself.

Help me. Thank you, Father. Help us all, we pray.

Help me, I pray. In Jesus' name, amen.

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