

Three Pictures of Discipleship

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of discipleship and the cost of following Jesus, highlighting the difference between a shallow version of Christianity and a deeper, more committed faith.

Duration: 1:16:44

Scripture: Matthew 13:22, Luke 14:26-27, Luke 14:33, Luke 21:15, John 10:18, James 1:22, 1 Peter 4:10-11

Topics: "Discipleship", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the three key conditions of discipleship based on Luke 14: building the skyscraper of faith by counting the cost, fighting the battle against the devil by denying self daily, and maintaining the saltiness of our lives by giving up possessiveness. The importance of standing before the Lord, sifting precious from worthless in our conversations, and being the mouthpiece of God with wisdom is highlighted to live as true disciples.

Transcript

When we think of the Great Commission that Jesus gave his disciples, we all must know that there are two parts to it. And it's because one part has been emphasized way out of proportion compared to the other, that we see a shallow version of Christianity in the world today. This is true in every country.

So let's look at these two sides of the Great Commission. This is the last words of Jesus before he went up to heaven almost. First is in Mark 16.

Mark 16 and verse 15. And Jesus said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. That's basically that Christ died for our sins and he rose again.

And we can, if you repent and trust in him, your sins can be forgiven. And if you sin again, you confess your sin and he'll forgive you again. And if you keep on sinning, you just keep on confessing and he'll keep on forgiving you.

Till one day he comes in glory and we're taken up. So the goal of a person who's heard this gospel is finally to make sure that every sin is confessed and to go to heaven. That's about it.

And in this business of going and preaching the gospel to all creation, he who has believed and is baptized will be saved. In verse 16, he who disbelieves will be condemned. So this is speaking about going into new areas and preaching the gospel to those who have never heard.

And when we go like that, in fact, the Acts of the Apostles is basically all what I call frontier evangelism. Frontier evangelism means going into areas where the gospel has never gone. Many people don't realize that when they read the Acts of the Apostles.

And everything, it was always the Apostles going to some new place, a new place, a new place. They're preaching the gospel where it had never been preached. People had never heard about Jesus.

And when you go like that, the Lord confirms the word, as you see in the Acts of the Apostles also, and even today, with signs following, verse 17. In my name, they will cast out demons. They will speak with new tongues, and you see that again and again in the Acts of the Apostles.

They'll pick up serpents, and basically what that means is that if you get, accidentally pick up a serpent or get stung by one, it won't harm you. And you see an example of that also in Acts of the Apostles, where when Peter was in the last chapter, sorry, not Peter, Paul, when he was gathering sticks, a serpent came out of it, and the people in Malta thought, oh, well, this guy's going to die. There's a viper or something has bitten him.

Nothing happened. And if they drink any deadly poison, it shall not hurt them again. You see, when you go into new areas, you're not going to be able to live, in those days anyway, you're not going to be able to live in comfortable places.

You don't know anybody there, and the food you eat may not always be healthy. And so all these things mentioned here are in relation to the gospel going out to new places, and they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. And this is so necessary, and if we don't see all this happening in, if you don't see all this happening in your life, it's because you're not doing frontier evangelism.

That's all. But we've seen it again and again in India. We go into areas where the gospel is never gone, like we have some churches where there was no church for 2,000 years.

So you go into those places, you got to deal with demon-possessed people, the demons need to be cast out. And there must be some supernatural manifestation of the power of God. Otherwise, how are these people going to believe? And that's why these signs are here.

Now, the great mistake is when people take this, and apply it to situations where the gospel is not going for the first time. And they wonder why it isn't happening. Then people try to manufacture it and pretend it's happening and all.

But you don't need to have any pretense where you're really going out for the gospel for the first time. And the reason for it is, if you ever try to preach the gospel in an area where it has never, never been preached, where nobody even knows the name of Jesus, there's no Bible in the language, nobody's heard of Christianity, and no Christians in that village. And if you go to that village and... Have you ever thought how you will preach the gospel to them? How will you tell them that Jesus came to earth and died for their sins? You'll have to tell them 2,000 years ago, in the land of Israel, they never heard of Israel.

They haven't studied geography. They don't know where this is. Is it another part of India or is it some other country? They don't know.

You're faced with people who know nothing. And you tell them, well, it's a great distance away. They'll ask you things like, how do you know what happened 2,000 years ago? It's written in the Bible.

What is that? Is that a history book? You think of the questions people ask and then you say, this baby was not born like other babies. His mother was born without any earthly father. And immediately he thinks you're telling him a fairy tale.

Such things don't happen. And then you say he grew up and he healed all the sick people he met and opened blind eyes and raised the dead. And he's absolutely convinced it's a fairy tale.

Because such things don't happen. And then you say that he was killed on a cross. And the question comes, you say it was God Almighty in human form.

Then why in the world was he killed? Why couldn't he just finish him off? All these questions. And then you say, well, he was in the grave and after three days he came out of the grave. He's absolutely convinced now you're off your head to teach such a story.

And then you say he died for your sins. He just can't understand that. And then you say he's gone up and he's coming back again.

That's it. How is he going to believe? And then you say, okay, how do I know he's alive? You bring your sick people, bring your demon-possessed people whom all your religious folks couldn't help. And now you'll see in the name of Jesus, in the power of Jesus, you'll see that he's alive and that's how he's going to deliver these people who are sick and demon-possessed.

That's what happened in those days and that's what's happening today. But that's one side of the gospel where people are just converted. And so people get converted.

And they believe in Jesus, that he's alive in them. Then they begin to read the Bible. Or you explain the Bible to them because in many of those cases there's no Bible in their own language.

So you've got to teach them, you've got to read scripture publicly. Like it says in one, you know, Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 4, you must read scripture publicly. Because all the people sitting there in those days had no Bible.

So unless somebody read the scripture publicly in the church service, nobody would know what's in the Bible. So when you think of gospel going to unreached places, you're dealing with all types of situations which all our theories here won't work. You have to manifest the power of Christ through the Holy Spirit's gifts in those places.

That was why it was so essential for those apostles to be anointed in the Holy Spirit and to have supernatural gifts. Because that's the only way they could preach the gospel. Now if they were going into the synagogues, there was no need for that.

They had to just take the Old Testament scriptures and prove to them that this Messiah you've been waiting for is Jesus Christ. So this is one side of the Great Commission. And very often, even when the gospel is preached in places where the gospel has been preached for hundreds of years, it's basically repent and believe.

Sometimes even repentance is left out. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved. And ask Jesus to come into your heart and your sins are forgiven.

And years later, when you look at some of these Christians, and I've seen many of them in many countries in different denominations, there's not much difference between them and nominal Christians, those who don't claim to be born again. If you go into their homes, I mean, they're fighting quarrel there just like in any other non-Christian's home. So what is the essential difference? Is it really true that all things, old things have all passed away and everything has become new? It doesn't look like that, like the Bible says in this so-called converted person.

And so gradually what happens is churches begin to accept this is all there is and it's an intellectual acceptance of the fact that Christ died for my sins. And there's nothing really more than that. All types of sins found among nominal Christians are found among born-again people also.

There's divorce among born-again people. Like there's divorce there, there's pornography among born-again people as there is among them. So what is really the difference? It's because of the shallow type of conversion where repentance is not being preached and where seriousness of sin is not being highlighted.

And so over a period of time, even if a new church started out with great zeal and some really fervent disciples of Jesus, over a period of time as more and more people come into that church, you find after a few years, it gradually becomes like any other dead church. And that can happen here. It can happen anywhere.

So the other side of the Great Commission is what saves us from that. Here it is only believe and be baptized. That's it.

That's the end of the gospel. But if you turn to the other side of the Great Commission in Matthew 28 and see what it says there. To me these are two sides of a coin.

You can't have one without the other. If you have one without the other, it's a counterfeit coin. A good coin is always printed on both sides.

Like a currency note, it's printed on both sides. So here the Lord says, 28-18 All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Now he doesn't say go and preach to all people.

Go and make disciples. Baptism is again emphasized. It shows how important what a baptism is because it is mentioned in both commissions.

And make disciples. That's the first thing. And once you have made them disciples, teach them to observe or do every single thing I commanded you.

And lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age. So when we started our church, it was exactly 40 years ago that we started in August 1975. We started on the basis of this commission.

This part of the commission. Because the other was already being preached by everybody. I looked at it like a hundred people carrying a log which is the Great Commission.

Great Commission is a log. And 99 people were holding up one end of the log. And there was one person holding up the other end of the log.

And so which side should I go and help? It's pretty obvious. Any sensible person would know where to go and help. So I saw 99% of Christians emphasizing evangelism, man healing, and speaking in tongues.

Everything mentioned in Mark 16. Okay, fine. I accept all that.

And casting out demons, etc. But what about this Matthew 28 part? It's one in a hundred. And that also is difficult to find.

Who would go and make sure these people have become disciples. A disciple is a learner and a follower. And if you are honest and you found frustration in your Christian life, and your Christian life is not exciting and satisfying, the failure could be here.

I can honestly say, I've been a believer now 55 years, 56 years. My Christian life is really exciting. Every single day.

I'm never bored with my Christian life. Not even a single day. My service with the Lord is exciting.

My walk with the Lord is exciting. It has to be like that. You know, it's like electricity.

When there's electricity, everything lights up and works. When electricity goes, everything becomes dark. And when we live in the power of the Holy Spirit, it's like that.

And so, we started out like this. And so we decided, okay, first of all, let's make sure these few of us who are gathered here, are they all disciples? Have they understood what it means to be a disciple? We don't want to assume that everybody knows that. Because when Jesus told these apostles to make disciples in every nation, he had already told them earlier what a disciple was.

They didn't have to ask them. They didn't ask the Lord, how do I make disciples? He had already told them. So when we studied the Gospels, we found that Jesus had already told them who a disciple was.

And that's in Luke chapter 14. So we spent quite some time studying Luke 14. The particular section on discipleship from verse 25 to 35.

Because in this passage, Luke 14 25 to 35, we first of all see a great multitude going along with him. And he said to them some of the hardest words that he ever spoke to a crowd. Now, today, if a preacher sees a great multitude, he thinks, well, it's time to take an offering.

Or say something nice so that these people will bring others and increase the numbers. This is like a mega church. The potential for a mega church here.

And he turned and said to them, if any of you in this big crowd, verse 26, Luke 14 25, now in 26, and you don't hate your father, and you don't hate your mother, you don't hate your wife, you don't hate your children, you don't hate your brothers, you don't hate your sisters, you don't hate your own life, just forget about being my disciple. You cannot be my disciple. And then he said, if you don't carry your own cross in another place, he said, every day, and you come after me, you cannot be my disciple.

And the third condition was, verse 33, he said, none of you can be my disciple who does not give up all his own possessions. So can you imagine saying this to a great multitude of people? Can you imagine a preacher who's getting nowadays 10,000 people in a church and he gets up and tells them words like this. How many people would come back next Sunday? They'd find some other church.

And that's why these words are, you almost never hear them preached in any church. Or if they preach this, skim over it and go on to other things. I mean, even if you were to search YouTube for all the

thousands of sermons there are, and find how many there are sermons that are preaching about taking up the cross every day, or what it means to hate father and mother.

You know, it's very easy. Just search and find. You can find if there are messages teaching that and giving up your possessions.

You'll find it's pretty close to zero. You can try it out. And then he uses two or three examples.

So I believe these examples are related to disciples. Converts versus disciples. Converts are Matthew 16, Mark 16.

Disciples are Matthew 28. So the first example he uses is a man who wants to build a tower. Today we'd call it a skyscraper.

It's not just a one floor building. It's a skyscraper. The Christian life is like a skyscraper.

When you become a disciple you're going to be building a skyscraper. Many, many floors of obedience to all his commandments. But a sensible person, before he does that sits down and calculates the cost.

What do I have to pay? How much is it going to cost me to build this 100 floor skyscraper? And the cost is a father, mother, brother, sister, wife, children and your own life. And every day you die to yourself. Every single day you die to self which wants to assert itself and forsake all your possessions.

And the chap says, well I don't want to pay that much. But I've laid a foundation. Foundation is what? The foundation is, I've repented.

I believe Jesus died for my sins. I've accepted him as my savior. My sins are forgiven and I'm on my way to heaven.

I keep singing. My sins are all forgiven. I'm on my way to heaven.

Foundation is there. He's already laid it. This is not talking about a man who's never accepted Christ.

It's not an unbeliever. An unbeliever hasn't even laid a foundation. You know, it says in Hebrews 6 1 Therefore, leaving the elementary teaching of Christ, let's not lay again a foundation.

Here's the foundation. Hebrews 6, 1. Repentance, faith, washings or baptisms, that is baptism in water and baptism in the Holy Spirit. By the way, that's also part of the foundation.

And teaching about the resurrection of the dead, finally, and laying on of hands spiritual gifts and eternal judgment. That's just the foundation. He says, don't let's let's move on from there, beyond the foundation.

Press on to perfection and maturity. The same thing there, let's build a skyscraper. So here is a person who laid the foundation.

That means he came to a place where he, to a church where he was told about faith in Christ and receive Jesus into your heart and get baptized. He's done that and he's sitting down now in church, coming regularly to the meetings, to the services and singing and happy. Of course, just defeated constantly, but that doesn't matter because everybody around him is also defeated and the pastor is defeated himself.

So he's just a happy bunch of people who singing, my sins are forgiven, I'm on my way to heaven. Not even one floor built on this foundation. And it says, people who watch it begin to ridicule.

People are watching, the angels are watching, the demons are watching and they laugh at this guy. This guy claims to be a disciple of Jesus. Those are the ones who are ridiculing.

This man began to build but he's not able to finish. Why in the world did he start then? Have you ever seen people in a housing area just laying a foundation and then 25 years later it's just a foundation? Lots of people sitting like that in Christian churches today. Thousands and thousands.

They never built a house, just the foundation. And if you talk about building, they say, hey, that's the gospel of works. We don't believe in the gospel of works.

Salvation is no works. So when you think of a foundation and a superstructure, turn to Ephesians in chapter 2, because this is the favorite verse of no works. The gospel without any works.

Ephesians 2, 8 and 9. I want to say I believe it completely. But it's only part of the truth. That's the point.

The problem with a lot of false teaching is they take one verse and neglect the other. Sometimes the very next verse. And I'll show it to you here.

Ephesians 2, 8 says, By grace you have been saved through faith that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Gift means you don't pay for it. Right.

Forgiveness is absolutely free. The gift of the Holy Spirit is called a gift, which means you don't pay for it. Not as a result of works.

Because like it says in Isaiah 64, 6, all your righteousness are like filthy rags. All your righteousness, ton of righteousness will not forgive one sin of yours. So not a result of works, because then no one can boast.

Otherwise one man can say, I did more works than you. No, nobody can boast. The man who's done a lot of good works, and the man who's just lived in sin all his life, both are forgiven on exactly the same basis.

Christ died for you, brother. You live a very righteous life, good. But you're a sinner.

Christ died for you. And this rotten sinner, Christ died for him. That's the message in Romans 1 and Romans 2. Romans 1 is about the godless sinner.

And Romans 2 is about the religious sinner. And then it says in Romans 3, there's no difference. All have sinned.

Forgiveness is by the death of Christ. But, see the next verse. 8 and 9 is the foundation.

No works in the foundation. But now you come to the superstructure, the skyscraper, you begin to build that. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

So there are certain good works that we have to do, but they're not in the foundation. They're in the superstructure. It's like saying, when you lay the foundation of a building, you don't put doors and windows there.

No crazy person will put doors and windows in a foundation. That's the meaning of no works in the foundation. But when you build a superstructure, it's full of doors and windows.

That's the point here. No works in the foundation. Not even one door, not even one window.

It's solid concrete. And then, on top of that, plenty of works. Every floor.

Works, works, works, works, works, works. A hundred floors full of works. What type of works? Not any odd work I feel like doing.

Works which God prepared beforehand that I should walk in them. In other words, a plan God made for my life long before I was born. Because He knew that at a particular age, I would lay a foundation in my life.

I would accept Christ, in my case, when I was nineteen and a half. And from that point onwards, God planned that I should do certain works of which baptism, water baptism, was the first one. That's not necessary for salvation.

It's one of the works subsequent to being born again. That comes in verse 10, not in verse 9. Baptism is not in verse 9. There's no works there. In verse 10, it's one of the works God has planned all believers should do is get baptized.

And then, from there, many other works God has planned. I'm so thankful that way back in the beginning, almost immediately after I got baptized, I took about a year and a half to be baptized because I wasn't so sure whether my Orthodox Church infant baptism was valid or not. See, that's how blind I was because I was sprinkled as a baby and everybody said that was baptism.

I didn't know the Bible. And I studied the Bible and I discovered that was not a valid baptism. But it took me one and a half years to discover that as I read the Scriptures.

I wanted to get all my answer from Scripture. Then I got baptized. And when I got baptized, then the Lord began to show me the next work and the next work and the next work.

He showed me about money that I had taken wrongfully that I needed to return, taxes that I had not paid that I needed to return and things like this, apologies that I had to make to people whom I had hurt in some way. And I wouldn't have seen that if I hadn't done the first work. There were works.

And as I did that, the Lord showed me something else and something else and something else, something else. Until about three years later after my baptism, the Lord told me to quit my job in the Navy and come out to serve Him. It was one work but if I had not done these works, you know, I would not have built floor after floor after floor of my life and I think a lot of people are like that.

They never make much progress after their baptism. They're not discovering new new things that the Lord is saying, another floor, another works that I planned for you, here's the work I planned for you to do next. Okay, you finish that, now I'm going to show you something else.

Works that God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. We're not to stand still. There's no such thing as standing still in the Christian life.

To walk in the light means I'm progressing. Every step is a progress. So whether you look at it as a walk or as a building, it's progress.

And so, that is the picture in Luke 14 of a building, foundation and superstructure. So when you have a church with thousands of people who have just laid a foundation, that's not the type of church Jesus wants. Every single person in that church must be told that God has prepared works for you.

Specific works that He planned for you from before you were born that you should walk in them. So you've got to find out what those works are. And it's unthinkable that God would make a plan for you and refuse to tell you what it is.

That's crazy. He brings you to Christ and you have taken one step in baptism. Is He going to say, I'm not going to tell you what the next thing you have to do is? Impossible.

He is more eager to tell you than you are eager to know. The lack of eagerness is on your part, not His. He is just desperately eager that you should see the works He has planned instead of doing what you think is right.

I believe in those days, and I was only 21 years old, I said, Lord, there are works that You planned. You know, amazing, I discovered these things from Scripture. There was hardly anybody teaching me these things those days.

But I discovered one thing when I was baptized. God's got a plan for my life. I don't know what it is, but I saw it like the pillar of cloud that would show me day by day where I've got to go next.

If you ask those Israelites, where are you going tomorrow? They'd say, I don't know. If you'd ask them, where are you going this evening? I don't know. Because sometimes the pillar of cloud would move off in the evening and they'd pack up, roll up their tents and start moving.

And little by little by little that pillar of cloud finally led them to the borders of the land of Canaan. That's where God's plan was for them. But you know, they turned back and then God's so angry with them, He said, okay.

They took two years to get there and God said, next 38 years, you're going to be in the wilderness. That is the example set before us, people who did not follow God's plan all the way. They did it a little bit and then that's it.

They turned back and they were lost. Lots and lots of believers like that today. It says in 1 Corinthians 10, the thing that happened to the Israelites has been written for an example for us.

You don't fulfill God's plan. God was not well pleased with them. God is not, believe me when I say, God is not well pleased with most believers of later foundation today.

Because they're not walking in the plan God's made for them. It's almost like saying to God, I don't care for your plan. I got my own plan.

I've already decided what I'm going to do. I realized that in God's plan, He had planned who I should marry. I was single those days.

And what I should do. I didn't know that He would call me to quit my job. He doesn't call everybody.

I think one in a thousand believers He calls to quit their jobs. 999, He calls them to stay in their jobs. But I did not know that I would be one of those one in a thousand.

I didn't know at all. So I just wanted to say, Lord show me day by day what your plan is. That's a disciple, one who as the Lord leads them on, He follows.

So that is foundation and superstructure. The next picture we read in Luke 14.31. Two or three pictures He uses here of discipleship. The next picture He uses in Luke 14.31. Is when He sets out to meet another king in battle.

The first one is a picture of building. The Christian life is pictured like a building. The second picture of the Christian life is a battle.

That's a picture that comes many times in the Christian life. And we know that battle is with Satan. Throughout the New Testament, the Christian's battle is with Satan.

And disciple is a builder first of all, and then a warrior. I mean, the Christian life is not a picnic. It's a building process, and it's a battle.

So the next picture, verse 31 is of a king setting out to meet another king in battle. And God is a king and the devil is a king. The devil is called the prince of this world.

Jesus himself called him the prince of this world or the ruler of this world. And here is Jesus Christ on one side and the devil on the other side. And it's a battle.

And that battle's been going on for 2,000 years. I mean, Jesus defeated him on the cross. So as far as He's concerned, there's no battle.

It's already been won. But there are billions of people on the earth who are on the devil's side. Even Christians who don't know that the devil was defeated on the cross.

Who are oppressed by Satan and Satan tempts them and knocks them down day after day after day after day after day. Who's winning in this battle? Is it Jesus or the devil? In most believers' lives. Very often it's Satan.

But he was defeated on the cross. So here this king is now thinking, I don't have enough men. See, that's the point here.

Forget the numbers. Just look at it like this. Let me paraphrase it.

Here's a king who's got very few people in his army. And he's got to fight with another one who's got many more in his army. And that's a picture of Jesus with very few people fighting the devil with many more people.

I mean, everybody knows there are more followers of Satan in the world today than there are followers of Jesus. Without a doubt. Any true disciple knows that.

And so, if he feels, well, I can't fight with these people. There's no hope. He'll overwhelm me because he's got more people.

What will this king do? While the other is still far away, verse 32, he'll send a delegation and say, let's have peace. I will not fight with you. Now that's not a disciple.

A disciple never makes peace with Satan. But a lot of believers, so-called believers, have made peace with Satan. Okay, Satan, I won't trouble you too much.

I won't go and try to win souls out of your kingdom. I'm not going to have a passion to bring people to Christ. I'm okay if the people around me are lost, let them be lost, Satan.

I won't trouble your kingdom at all. I won't try and snatch anybody out of your kingdom. That's the condition of lots and lots of believers, I tell you that.

They have zero interest in bringing other people to Christ. They have zero interest even in inviting somebody to the church to hear the word of God. They have zero interest in giving somebody a book or a DVD or something to try and win that person or at least be a witness to that person.

They have made peace with Satan. I will not trouble any of your members. I have peace with you.

But Jesus is not like that. A disciple says, it doesn't matter, numbers are not important. You know, the Old Testament is full of examples.

Think of Gideon's army. He had 32,000 people. I don't have time to go and read it.

You read Judges chapter 7 sometimes. 32,000 people and the Lord said, there are too many. All those afraid, tell them to go home.

That's the first word. All who are afraid of the devil, go home. Now itself, otherwise you bring fear into the hearts of others and 22,000 people went home.

Two-thirds went home. And the Lord said, 10,000, that's also too much. These are not wholehearted people.

We've sent away the people who are afraid of the devil. Afraid the devil may harm them or do some witchcraft on them or do something for them. So they made peace with the devil.

Like, I won't trouble you and you don't trouble me. Okay? I won't disturb your kingdom. You please don't disturb my life.

And the Lord says, okay, that's one group gone. But there's another 10,000 left here. They're also too much.

And if you remember the story, the Lord said, take them down to the river and I will test them there. Now they did not know they were being tested. Do you know that most of the time when the Lord tests us, we don't know that we are being tested until the test is over.

After the test is over and the Lord selected some people and said, hey, I didn't know that was a test. In our schools in India, sometimes we have a thing called surprise tests where there's no warning given to the students that there's going to be a test. All of a sudden, students go to school and the teacher says, today we're going to have a test.

That's the way they make sure that people have really studied the subject and not just studied it just for the examination. They know it all the time. So, these 10,000 people came to the river.

They were all thirsty. That's okay. And that river of water is a picture of the world.

You know, it's one of the verses in Revelation 17. The last verse is the seas of the world. So, the waters are a picture of the world and 9,700 people forgot all about the enemy, laid their weapons aside, buried their head into the water because they were thirsty and began to drink.

They were not alert to the enemy. They laid their weapons aside and put their head down and began to drink. But 300 stood on their feet.

They said, we got to be alert to the enemy and they just lapped up the water with their hands. And the Lord said, I'll select those 300. It's a picture of 300 people who will, you know, use the world but not make full use of it.

It's like saying in 1 Corinthians 7 Paul says that you use the world but don't get taken up with the world. We all have to use the world because we need to use money, we need to work, we need to earn our living. But we can be like those 9,700 that bury our heads completely in our work and in making money and everything in the world.

And the Lord says, not fit. And then there are others who are also living in the world, who also are thirsty, who need to drink but they lap up with their hands. Take your time to read Judges 7 sometimes, very interesting to see it.

And these are the 300 who went to battle and the enemy was routed. That's the picture in the Old Testament. And so it's a beautiful picture of discipleship.

So here's Gideon was scared, you know, about, can I fight these people with 300? Let me show you something there which, turn to Judges 7 and I'll show you something interesting there. Because Gideon must have thought, how in the world can I go with 300 people and fight? You read about this verse 6, Judges 7, verse 6. The number of those who lapped putting their hand to their mouth was 300 but all the rest of the people knelt down and began to take, drink the water. They buried their head in the water.

And the Lord said, with these 300 I will deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let the other people go to their home. Let them all go.

Earlier in verse 3 He had sent away those who were afraid. And then, you know, Gideon was still afraid. And so, to encourage Gideon, this part I want you to see, the same night, verse 9, the Lord said to him, before you go to this battle, I want you to go to the camp and hear something.

If you are afraid, verse 10. Some of you, Gideon, you are still afraid of the devil? Okay, go down. Go with your servant and hear what they are saying.

Verse 11. And then your hands will be strengthened. So Gideon went with his servant down to the outposts of the army and the Midianites and the Amalekites were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts.

And their camels, verse 12, were numerous as the sand on the seashore. What a massive army! It's a picture of the devil and his demons. And Gideon came and he heard a man telling his friend a dream,

verse 13.

I had a dream. A loaf of barley bread was tumbling into the camp of Midian. It came to the tent and struck it so that it fell and turned out flat.

And the friend answered and said, This is nothing less than the sword of Gideon. And verse 15. When Gideon heard this, he bowed in worship and he said, Arise! Verse 15, last part.

The Lord has given the enemy into our hands. So what I see here is the devil and the Lord says, Are you still scared? Just go down and listen to what the demons are saying to each other. And you'll hear what they're saying.

We've been defeated. We have no hope against these believers. But some of them don't know that we've been defeated.

So we can have power over them. We can scare them. We can make peace with them.

And they're scared of us so they'll make peace with us. So we need to hear that. We need to hear that the demons are scared of true disciples.

It's a wonderful thing to be in that small army. So that's the second picture of discipleship that Jesus spoke about. You know, we started out with go and make disciples of all nations.

Disciples are builders. We're building a skyscraper. And disciples are people who have a very small number.

I mean, think of 300 Gideon's army compared to 32,000. You know how much that is? It's 1 in 100. 1 percent.

Less than 1 percent. 320 would have been 1 percent. 300 means less than 1 percent.

That means 1 in 100 among Christians who really want to be disciples. It's a picture like that. So it's a very small number.

And here's this massive army of the devil. It says they're spread out like locusts. As the sand on the seashore.

Such a huge number of demons. And here we are a small group of disciples. Very small church.

Not a big mega church. Small church really seeking to fight the battle against the devil. And we don't seek for peace.

Our king is Jesus. And we don't seek for peace. We say that's alright if you're a small number.

We're going to overcome. So that's the second picture of discipleship that we need to see. The way to life is narrow, Jesus said.

Very, very few find it. So if you're going to gather those few, you're not going to have a very big church. And even if the church increases with somebody's relatives coming along and somebody's friends coming along and somebody's children growing up, yet they will only be like passengers.

The real church will be a group in the midst of that church. They're fighting the battles and winning the victory. And moving the church forward.

That number, that core is what must increase and keep on increasing. A core of disciples who are wholehearted, radical, wanting to follow the Lord. So that's the second picture.

And then a third picture in Luke 14. And that is salt. Now we all know that when you put salt into your food, it's a very small quantity that you put.

Think of a whole bowl of food, whatever it is. How much salt do you put in it? Just a few grains of salt. He says, salt is good.

Verse 34. But if the salt is tasteless, what's the use? If you have a plate full of food and the salt has got no taste in it, the seasoning is gone, you put a plate full of salt, useless. That's the picture of believers who are not disciples.

A plate full of salt. But if there's real disciples, you need just a few grains. And otherwise, if you've lost the seasoning, if it lost the taste, then it is useless.

Verse 35. Believers who are useless. They're useless for the soil or for the manual pile.

They're useless for everything. It's thrown out and he who has ears to hear, let him hear. So here the picture is of our retaining the strength of saltiness.

Retaining our saltiness. There's another passage, I think it's, let me see if I can find it. Yeah, Mark 9 49.

Mark 9 49. It says here, everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good.

Verse 50. But if the salt becomes unsalty, Mark 9 50. With what you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another.

So, it speaks about being on fire. Being salted with fire. The fire of the Holy Spirit.

Always retaining. So retaining the taste of salt. When I compare Luke 14 with Mark 9. As I see it as retaining the fire of the Holy Spirit all the time in my life.

Never losing it. Even in our speech. Especially in our speech because we sin most with our tongue.

I think most of the sins we commit are with our eyes and our tongue. More than any other part of our body. You examine your life and see.

Most of the sins you've committed are with your eyes and your tongue. And it says in Colossians chapter 4. Colossians chapter 4 and verse 6. Colossians chapter 4 verse 6. It's talking about your speech. Your speech must always, always means 24-7.

If you want a good Bible study take a concordance and look for the word always. In the New Testament. Very profitable.

The things that you have to do 24-7. Here's one of them. Always your speech must be with grace.

Seasoned with salt. So that you know exactly how to speak to each person who comes across your body. How to speak to a child.

How to speak to an adult. How to speak to a person who's discouraged because he's fallen into sin so much. How to speak to an argumentative so-called believer.

How to speak to a Pharisee. And how to speak to a seeking hungry soul. Your speech must be seasoned with salt.

That means I have to be very careful of the fire of the Holy Spirit. You know everyone is salted with fire. Must be there even in my words.

Not just when I'm preaching. I remember years ago when I was seeking God about Lord, how can I make sure that whenever I preach your word it's always, always, always with the fire of the Holy Spirit. Not just once in a while.

Not even most of the time. But always. And one of the words the Lord showed me was Jeremiah 15.

Jeremiah 15. And verse 19. You know if you take God's word seriously I want to tell you something.

There's no partiality with God. God doesn't have preferences for some of His children over other children. But those who respond to His word and fulfill His conditions He does more for them.

There's no partiality. All are equal. The conditions are the same for everyone.

And everyone is welcome to come. So Jeremiah 15. The Lord is speaking to Jeremiah who was a prophet.

And he says if you really want to be my prophet let me give you something. Some advice. If you return then I'll restore you and you will stand before me.

This is very, very important. That always I must stand in God's presence. When I'm speaking to my wife any time of the day or night Jesus is between me and my wife.

Always. That is standing in the presence of the Lord. You will stand before me.

And then I speak to my wife. So imagine if Jesus were physically there in your house how would you speak to your wife? That's how I want to speak to my wife. Every single moment of every single day.

I stand before the Lord. And then when I'm standing with people who are fighting with me. Or shouting at me.

Okay. Jesus is there again. I stand before the Lord and I want to reply to this guy who is shouting at me or somebody else is calling me a bad name.

And I'm standing before the Lord. Jesus is between me and that person. And I want to speak.

I tell you it makes a tremendous difference in your speech. If you stand before the Lord. And then what will happen is whenever you get a chance to share the word somewhere you'll be standing before the Lord even in the pulpit.

He'll be there in front of you. And you're not one bit interested in impressing anybody sitting there or trying to please anybody or not even seeing whether anybody is nodding their head. It doesn't interest you one bit.

It's Jesus who's there. And you say everything that he wants you to say. You don't hold back anything to let somebody get offended.

If they get offended let them get offended and go. And you don't say anything to tickle anybody's ears or to get some honor or no. You're standing before the Lord.

Anything that I cannot stand and say before the Lord I never want to say at any time in my life to anybody. In a pulpit or outside the pulpit or even on a phone conversation. The phone conversation the Lord is there.

I stand before him. That's what the Lord said. And you know it's possible for every one of us.

It's difficult in the beginning because we are not used to standing before the Lord. We are used to standing before people. We are only conscious of people when we speak.

But you know an act if you keep sowing an act it becomes a habit. I often use the example of brushing teeth. If you were to go to some African jungle and teach some barbarian to brush his teeth I'm almost certain that most days he'd forget.

And you again remind him hey you got to brush your teeth man. But how is it nobody has to remind you every morning to do that. You got to remind your children.

But you've done it so often that you can walk in your sleep and brush your teeth. An act that you keep on repeating becomes a habit. And so if you really seek particularly when you're alone with somebody your wife or people in a place of work or with difficult people and you say Lord I'm going to stand before you.

All the time. It'll become a habit after a while. So stand before me and something else you got to do.

Jeremiah 15 19 This is what the Lord spoke to me when I was asking him this question. How to be your mouthpiece. Take out the precious from the worthless in your conversation.

That means in my conversation my mind tells me to say so many things. But the Lord says you got to do a little sifting here. Take out the worthless words.

Throw them away. And keep what is precious. Precious doesn't mean always serious.

There's a difference between precious and serious. For example humor. I believe humor is a very good thing.

It's not it's precious. It's not worthless. Humor that makes fun of other people that's worthless.

But humor that you know binds people together in a relationship that's good. I've often said that the test of a good relationship between a husband and wife is humor. Not that they read the Bible together.

Not that they pray together. A husband and wife can have tension. But they will still pray together.

Oh! Every husband and wife will admit that. They can be fighting with each other and they'll pray together. They'll read the Bible together.

But they will not joke with each other when they have a tension. It's absolutely true. The same with your relationship with brothers.

You can pray with a brother. Read the Bible together. Do so many things with a brother.

But if you have a tension with that brother, you will not joke with him. Humor is the test of a relationship. I don't have a verse for it.

But I say what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7. I have no commandment from the Lord but as one who has received mercy from the Lord, I give my opinion. So Paul was permitted to give his opinion in 1 Corinthians 7 and I'm giving my opinion. You can take it or leave it.

But I've taken it and I've found it's an absolute perfect test for me whether I have a good relationship with the person. Can I have humor in my relationship? Not humor that hurts him. I mean, I can crack a joke at myself.

That's okay. But there is good humor and clean humor. Okay.

So precious from the worthless in my conversation. That again, it takes time. So an act gradually will become a habit because usually in the past there's been so much of worthless stuff in our conversation.

Gossiping, backbiting, accusing people. Oh! So many things. Now we're going to sort it all out and take only what is precious and keep only that in our conversation.

And if you do these two things, you stand before me and get rid of all the worthless stuff in your conversation, what will happen? You will become my spokesman or as the literal in the margin of my Bible, NASB margin, it says, you will be my mouth. Wow! Imagine being the mouth of God. Is that possible? In the Old Testament God didn't say that to everybody.

He told it to a few people like Jeremiah. But in the New Testament you know that we can all prophesy. There was no command in the Old Testament that you should all seek to prophesy.

But in the New Testament 1 Corinthians 14, 1 says, all of you must seek to prophesy. So I learned from the Old Testament prophets, they stood before the Lord and they got rid of that which is worthless in their conversation and they prophesied. It says, let me show you New Testament verse 1 Peter 4 1 Peter 4 verse 10 As everyone as everyone has received a special gift employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold manifold means many colored many sided grace of God.

The grace of God has got many colors many sides to it and each of us can manifest one color of it one side of it and we must manifest we must serve others with the gift God has given us and if your gift is speaking, verse 11 speak as the mouth of God as if God himself is speaking. This is in the New Testament not just for Jeremiah now and do it with the strength that God supplies so that God may be glorified. It's a beautiful verse.

I must speak as the mouth of God with the power of the Holy Spirit and for the glory of God so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom belongs really all the glory. So, this is you know, our speech being seasoned with salt so that I know exactly how to speak to every person. So, that's the third

picture we read in Luke 14 of three pictures he used of discipleship.

Remember again, once is the building and he said, sit down and count the cost Is it really worth it to build a skyscraper? Then, the picture of a battle. We are few in number, but we are going to win because the devil has already been defeated on the cross. And the third is salt.

I never, never want to lose my taste. I want it always to be strong salt so that even a little bit you know, little bit means few in number or in speech means just a few words. You know how when the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery to Jesus.

It says he was scribbling on the ground. I don't believe he was writing anything. He was just you know, sometimes he scribbled thoughtlessly.

He was saying, Father, what shall I say? He lived as a man, remember. And I believe he was saying, what shall I say to these people? Am I going to give them a big sermon on legalism? No. And the Spirit of God said to Jesus, tell them, the one without sin should cast the first stone.

He was without sin, cast the first stone back to his scribbling on the ground. That was enough. Problem solved with a few words full of salt.

Or somebody tried to capture him with should we pay tribute to Caesar or not? You know, and Caesar was ruling Israel in those days. They wanted to get something out of his mouth to trap him. Just like I met lots of people who come to me, try to trap me with words to try and prove that I'm preaching some wrong theology.

They tried to trap Jesus and said, just show me a coin. Whose picture is this? Caesar's. Okay.

Give to Caesar what is Caesar's. Give to God what's God's. End of discussion.

They didn't know what to say. And the wonderful thing is you know, Jesus says in Luke 21 and verse 15. It's a promise for us now.

I will give you a mouth. If you've got a margin in your Bible it says in the margin, the actual Greek word is mouth. I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your enemies will be able to resist or refute.

I remember how many years ago I think it was in North Carolina, I was speaking in a New Order Amish church. It's the only time I got a chance to speak there. And it was a full day session.

The bishop had asked me to take a full day session for them. And I preached the whole council of God there. And in between was a lunch break.

And we were all sitting at the table. And every single man, all the men were together and the women were separate, every single one of those people had a beard. It was their culture and their teaching.

All men must have beards. And I was the only one sitting there without a beard. And one of the people sitting in front of me, he was probably upset with what I was teaching.

So he tried to humble me saying, Brother Zach, did God make a mistake when he gave you hair on your face or did you make a mistake by cutting it off? I said, Lord, you've got to give me a word now for this. A mouth and a wisdom. And I got it pretty quickly.

I said, Brother, did God make a mistake when he gave you nails or did you make a mistake in cutting them off? End of discussion. But I didn't want to embarrass him further so I changed the subject so I didn't want to humiliate him. I've had examples like that sometimes with one sentence.

End of discussion. I remember I was with some Pentecostal people once, two pastors, arguing, arguing with me about their definition of prophecy which I didn't agree with at all. I said my definition of prophecy is 1 Corinthians 14:3. Not you guys just go around telling people all types of funny things about the future.

I said, that's not what the New Testament teaches. So we went on and on and on, I think about one hour. I said, Lord, it's getting late at night, I have to go to bed.

You've got to give me a word now. So, and the Lord gave me a word. If there are gifts of prophecy, they'll be done away with.

If there are tongues, it'll cease. But there remains faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love. Pursue after love.

Yeah, they all had to agree on that. And that was the end of the discussion and I could go to bed. So, if you really seek God, you know, it's really amazing.

And I always think of that verse in Luke 21:15. You said, Lord, you'll give me a mouth and a wisdom that'll shut the mouths of my enemies. And sometimes it's just one sentence.

I want to encourage you all to seek God for this. It's a wonderful thing to be the mouth of God as a disciple. So when Jesus said, go and make disciples, these are the pictures he had in mind.

And very quickly, Luke 14 the three conditions of discipleship that he mentioned, which help us to build this building, fight the devil, and have salt in our lives. Number one, hate father, mother, brother, sister, wife, children, disciples. It means when compared with Matthew chapter 10, if anyone loves father or mother more than me, he's not worthy of me.

So I pictured it like this, that compared to my love for Jesus, the love, my love for Jesus must almost extinguish the little bit of, that means my love for my father, mother, and more becomes so small. And the picture I got was, it's not that I don't love my father and mother, it's not that I don't love my wife. The Bible says I must love my wife as Christ loved the church.

So how does that fit in with hate your wife? So I was trying to get an answer to this, and the picture I got was like the stars in the sky. My love for my, some people, their love for their parents and their wives is like the sun. It's not to be like that.

It's to be, the stars have got a light. I love my father, I love my mother, I love my wife, I love my children, I love my brothers and sisters, all of you. But when the sun rises, I can't see the stars.

It's not that they've disappeared, they're there, but I don't see them because the light of the sun is so great. So that's the picture I got. You can say that stars become dark.

It's not dark, but it has become dark in the light of the sun. So in the light of my love for Jesus, it's almost as though my attitude to my wife and children and all is, it looks like hatred. So that is the picture.

It's not real hatred, but it's a comparative statement. And the second condition, that means nobody on earth, basically it means the first condition of this habit is nobody on earth must be more important to me than Jesus Christ. If Christ tells me something and the whole world says something else, I'm going to do what Christ says.

It doesn't bother me what other people say or think. What do you mind? Whether my wife thinks it should be done another way. No, Christ has said this.

The second condition is I've got to deny myself and take up the cross every day. That means the self that's ruled my life ever since I was born. As a child, like all children, I'd fight and grab.

It's me, me, me, me. I want the best of everything. And now I have to put it to death.

What self rises up to respond to somebody in an unchrist-like way, put it to death. That's the meaning of taking up the cross is that every single day. The cross is not something I do once for all like baptism.

Baptism is a testimony that I'm willing to let people bury me. That's what baptism is. Down.

I believe God will raise me up. That's the testimony in baptism. So I say, Lord, that's the way I want to go.

Every day. If people put me down, I'll accept it. I'm not going to resist the guy who's pushing me down.

You'd never get baptized if you keep resisting the guy who's pushing you down. You yield. So it's the picture of the cross.

I yield. Somebody's crucifying me by yelling at me or calling me a bad name or treating me badly or cheating me. I say, okay.

God will raise me up. I don't resist that fellow. God will do that.

The raising up part is God's. It says, you know that Jesus says in John 10, I have power to lay my life down and I have power to take it again. He said in John 10.

But he only used the first part of it. He laid down his life but he never took it up again. God raised him up.

If you look in the New Testament it always says God raised up Jesus from the dead. God raised up Jesus. God raised up the spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead.

But you read in John 10, he had power to lift it up again. So I have the power but I won't exercise it. Jesus had the power to exercise his own will but he wouldn't.

So I must deny myself and die every day. And the third condition is Luke 14, 33. I must give up all my possessions.

Possessions are the things on earth that possess you. There are certain things on earth that can possess you. Possess your mind.

They are your possessions. Your mind is grabbed hold of them. You won't give it up.

You're with a tight fist. You hold on to earthly things and the Lord says you can't do that. You gotta let go.

You can still have it. And it's like I'm gonna hold on to this. I'm not gonna let anybody take it.

It's my possession. But if I open my palm it's still there. It's mine.

I don't possess it anymore. This should be my attitude to all material things. I have a car.

I'm not gonna grab onto it. I have it. I use it.

It's in my name. But Lord, it's not mine. It's yours.

House, property, bank account, money, business, anything. There can be a possessive attitude towards it. It cannot be a disciple.

Or I give up that possessive attitude and say it's not my possession. I've given up my possession but I have it. And one of the clearest examples of that is Abraham offering up Isaac.

Until Isaac came along in his life, Abraham found it easy to worship God. But once Isaac came along, the son of his old age, the age of a hundred, the one God had promised, supernaturally born, he became so precious to him that God saw Isaac has become an idol in Abraham's life. He possessed him.

This is my son. God said, kill him. And walk for three days to Mount Moriah so that you can think about it.

You don't have to do it in a hurry. Sit down and count the cost. Same thing.

Don't be in a hurry. That's why he told him to sacrifice him not nearby but three days away in Mount Moriah. And he went to Mount Moriah to walk three days and the devil says, is it worth it to serve a God like this who wants you to kill your son? And Abraham says, worth it, worth it, worth it.

And he goes up. He's gonna take the dagger and kill his son and the Lord says, stop. I don't want you.

I was only testing you. Now I know that you fear me. The first time in the Bible where God says about anybody you are a fearer of God.

I want that certificate from God. God telling me you fear me. I've seen it.

And when did he say that? When he gave up that which was most precious. Abraham would have given up all his sheep and camels and everything or whatever he had to keep Isaac. But God said give up Isaac.

If you look in your life also you'll see that there are certain things you possess. They're very precious to you. And one way to find out is what is your mind always on? If your mind is always on something that's usually what you possess.

I'm not saying our legitimate work. We have to do our legitimate work to earn our living. That's okay.

See I've used this illustration of the rubber band. You probably heard me use it. I can have a rubber band.

Here's the heavenly things that I keep my mind set on. Then I stretch it down to the earth for all my earthly work. Maybe 8 hours a day.

Maybe 12 hours a day. The rubber band is stretched down to earth to be occupied with my work or the office or a factory or a business or whatever it is. And then my work is over and the rubber band is released.

It goes back to the heavenly things. The mind I mean. The mind is back to heavenly.

But many Christians most Christians is the other way around. The rubber band is tied down here to earthly things and is stretched on Sunday morning for a little praise and worship and singing a few songs and then when that's all over back to earthly things again and then stretched maybe on Wednesday evening when we think again a little bit about heavenly things and then back again. Where is your mind connected? That is the question.

It all depends on what is your possession. You cannot possess what you can have. So when Abraham came back from Mount Moriah that day, he still had Isaac.

Isaac hadn't disappeared. He was still his son. But he never possessed him.

And that is what it means to be a disciple. To possess nothing. But maybe you have many things but you possess nothing.

And this is not a once for all thing because I found that you can give up something and then you put your hand on the altar and take it back after a while. That's how backsliding happens. That's how you find some people who started their life with tremendous devotion to Christ.

You see them years later. I've seen that so many cases like that. Wonderful young people who in their early 20s were radical disciples.

You see them 20 years later Oh! It's gone. I'm concerned about young people who are radical Christians. They don't lose that fire.

They need older people who keep challenging them to keep that fire by their own example. So those are the conditions of discipleship which will make sure the salt remains salty, which ensures that we keep building the skyscraper and which ensures that we win the battle every time against the devil. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we just want to commit this what we have heard today that it will not be taken away. It will not be something that goes in without depth of earth but will sink deep. It will not be something that's crushed out by the thorns, cares and worries of this life but will produce fruit for eternity.

We trust you Lord. Please help every one of us to meditate on what we have heard, whatever you have spoken to us individually and to live by it every single day of our life that we can here build a church against which the gates of hell will not prevail. We pray in Jesus name.

Amen.

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