

Cost of Discipleship - Part 7

by Paris Reidhead

The sermon emphasizes the importance of following Christ, obeying his words, and rendering to him all that you possess, and provides guidance on how to distinguish God's leading in your life.

Duration: 27:34

Scripture: Matthew 16:24-26, Matthew 22:36-40, John 12:23, Colossians 3:17

Topics: "Cost Of Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of negative feedback guidance in missile technology as an analogy for following Jesus. He emphasizes the importance of committing oneself to follow and obey Jesus as Lord and Savior. The speaker also shares a personal experience from 1955 when he had multiple opportunities for service in Christian ministry. The key text for the sermon is Matthew 22:36-40, where Jesus states the greatest commandments are to love God with all one's soul and mind, and to love one's neighbor as oneself.

Transcript

If you turn please to three scriptures this evening, Matthew 22 is the first, then Matthew 16, and then John 12. I want you to see as we endeavor to sort of braid the truth together, or like a cable we twist and wind it together to make a chain of truth, a table of truth for your heart to rest on. Matthew chapter 22, and our text is found in verses 36 to 40.

This is the key text, the anchor text for our evening services together. Master which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.

The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. We have seen in the nights past the nature of the great commandment to love God with all of our hearts, with all of our souls, our emotions, and our minds, our intellect.

That this is the equivalent of repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. The evidence and the proof that we do love God, this in this fashion, is that we love our neighbors as ourselves. I remind you of the definition of love, that love is the committal of the will to the principle of seeking the blessedness and joy and happiness and satisfaction of God in relation to our love for him or of others and ourselves in proper respect for that love for God.

Now to Matthew chapter 16. Last evening we heard our Lord Jesus say from John 14, He that heareth my words and doeth them, he it is that loveth me. If you love me, you will keep my commandment.

Now tonight I want you to listen as the Lord Jesus speaks to Peter here beginning with the 24th verse of Matthew 16. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any, any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, then whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Now will you turn please to John chapter 12. And I'd like to begin reading with the 23rd verse. John 12 verse 23.

And Jesus answered them saying, The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

He that loveth his life shall lose it. And he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me.

And where I am, there shall also my servant be. If any man serve me, him will my Father honor. I would like to speak to you tonight on the theme of the great commitment.

Not so much the commitment that we make to the Lord Jesus Christ, though that certainly is involved. But I'd rather have in mind the commitment that the Lord Jesus Christ is making to us. You recall after his resurrection, our Lord said to his assembled disciples, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

And we have it elsewhere. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.

The commitment to which I refer is the commitment that the Lord Jesus Christ makes of himself to you. Now we've seen several things, and these ought to be borne in mind by us as we approach the study tonight and the message tonight. First, that the essence of sin, the very nature of sin, is a committal of the will to the principle of pleasing ourselves.

You did this at the age of accountability. You followed every bent and inclination of your heart and nature, and so you did make this the choice and the operating principle of your life. I will do what I want to do.

Like others, we turn to our own way. And this is, I say, sin. This deciding how to rule our lives, how to be happy, how to satisfy our appetites.

And the Lord Jesus Christ has told us that except we repent, we perish. To repent is to change our mind and purpose from pleasing ourself to pleasing God. And this we have made synonymous with loving God.

For whom you love, you seek to please. Last evening we saw that the words of the Lord Jesus Christ are very specific and very definite. He that heareth my words, and doeth them, he it is that loves me.

And his words were, if any man hate not his father, mother, husband, wife, brethren, sister, jay, and his own life also, he can't be my disciple. If he doesn't take up his cross and come follow me, he can't be my

disciple. If he doesn't forsake all that he hath, he can't be my disciple.

So I'm assuming, for the purpose of our study tonight, that you have met him on these terms. That you have heard his words, you have accepted his words, and you are doing his words. Because that's the evidence that you love him.

If you love him, you will hear his words. If you love him, you will keep his commandments. If you don't hear his words, then you have the inference that you can draw, that it is you don't love him.

If you do not keep his commandments, all protests of your experience to the contrary, he said the evidence is that you don't love him. It's a very simple, open-shut sort of a thing. If you love him, you will keep his commandments.

If you don't keep his commandments, you don't love him. Now, isn't that simple? He said it, I didn't. I didn't put it together.

I'm only, uh, I'm only giving it to you the way he gave it to us, because that's the way he intended we should have it. Now, we hear a great deal from missionaries, which I delight to include myself as one, talking about a call, call to the mission field, call to be a foreign missionary. And I know precisely what my fellow colleagues and I myself have meant by such an expression in the, in, that I've used in years past.

I, I don't use it particularly anymore, because as I've searched the scripture, I have failed to find that the Bible teaches a specific call to the mission field. Now you, you're going to, you're going to break and run, I know, and you're going to think it's heresy, but it's not really. The call is to follow Christ.

Come, follow me, is what the word of God teaches. And if you are a Christian tonight, then you have had the only call that I find set forth in the Bible. That is the call to the person of the Son of God.

A call to him, to follow him. Now, have you received that call? Or have you, for better still, have you responded to that call? You have received it, certainly. But have you consciously and deliberately, professing child of God, recognized that when you received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you had, you responded to his call.

The call was to follow him. And that meant that whatever he wanted you to do from that time on, you had made a commitment to do. Now that's implicit in our definition of a one of Christ.

A follower of Christ is a person who is a follower of Christ. Now that doesn't sound too odd, does it? If you are one of Jesus, now Christian comes from the Armenian word, christian, one of Christ, or follower of Christ. And if you are, then you are a person who has said to Jesus Christ, Lord, what do you want me to do? And you have had the only call that the Bible teaches.

Now while we're clearing the ground and getting a couple of misconceptions out of the way, let me really give you a difficult one. You've heard from me and perhaps from many others, sermons on that commandment, go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. But I was studying this and trying to execute it in the Greek sometime ago, and was rather astounded to find out that there's only one imperative in that verse, not two.

It sounds like go is one imperative and preach is the second. But when you read it in the language in which it came to us, in the text we have, this is the way it comes out. As you are going into all the world,

there's no commandment to go.

As you are going into all the world, preach! That's the commandment. You say, but you've just broken, you've broken the whole chain of mission. Why, if you take that commandment out to go, well let me ask you, how well are we doing today with it? Huh? I understand there's quite a need for missionaries today, and we've been reading it go.

Maybe we'd better go back and find out what he said. Literally he said, come, not go, come follow me. Follow, that's the commandment.

Come, that's the invitation. But when you come, the commandment is to follow. So is it difficult for us then? As you are following Christ into all the world, now the commandment, preach the gospel to every creature.

What does it mean? Simply this, that everyone who names the name of Jesus Christ, has by his receiving of the Son of God on biblical terms, already told the Lord Jesus that he will follow him. My life is in your hands to do what you would have me to do. I bring to you all I am and all I have.

I give to you my life, I give to you my talent, I give to you my money, everything I have Lord Jesus belongs to you. And I am committed to follow you as long as I live. Now this doesn't seem to break the chain of missions, does it? But what it does, it saves you from being a spectator.

It takes you out of the bleachers and puts you right down on the field. And it makes you a direct participant with the Lord Jesus, in getting the gospel out to the ends of the earth. This is the thing that we're intending you to see tonight, that as you have received the Son of God, as he is presented to you, Prince and Savior, Lord and Christ, you have committed yourself by very definition to follow him as long as you live.

Not only to follow him, but to obey his words, to render to him all that you possess, to allow him to dictate in all the decisions of your life as precisely and exactly as though you were nailed to a cross and had no choice of your own. And his lordship transcends all other relationships, so you cannot plead that these are going to take precedence over what is to be his will. Well that's pretty complete it seems to me.

That gets you into the harness with him, into the yoke if you please, with him. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, take my yoke upon you and learn of me. And if you're a Christian, you're already yoked with the Son of God, because you have committed yourself to follow him.

Well you say, I haven't been doing that. That means one of two things. You didn't understand the implications of being born again, or you're not born again.

There's not a third alternative that I can find. And if you hear it tonight and you say, well that's what I intended, then you can make pretty sure that you aren't born again. Because he said, my sheep hear my voice, and they follow me.

They follow me because they're my sheep. And consequently, if you are the sheep of his fold, if you have been born into his family, if you have partaken of his life, if you've been begotten from above, then you do hear his voice. And you follow him.

Because this was how he distinguished his sheep from those of the world. Now let's follow for a moment the implications of it. What does it mean? As you commit yourself to him, that's the beginning, then you are to follow him.

Now how are you to distinguish his leading? What's the manner by which you are to discover his will? Well there are several ways. First the word of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is never going to ask you to do anything, ask me to do anything, contrary to his word.

So when there is something before us, the first question we have to ask is, is this according to the word of God? Because we know full well that however much you want to pay your missionary pledge, he has not given you permission to go out and rob a store to get the money to pay your pledge. Because he said thou shalt not steal. Therefore there is just no question about it.

You have to be absolutely honest in your dealings. Is it according to the word of God? That's the first test for guidance. He never leads us contrary to his word.

Secondly, is it in accord with the desire of my heart? Now that's a strange thing to put at that point, isn't it? But I believe that if you love the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart and mind and soul, if you truly are committed to please him in everything, then God is going to incline you to want the things that he wants you to want. And your state of consciousness is extremely important in relation to finding and doing the will of God. What do you want to do? I often say to people that come asking for counsel in this matter of finding the will of God for their life, if you had a clean piece of paper with no lines on it and you could write down on that paper anything that you, the thing you really want to do, you don't need to have about permission to do it, it's right.

You don't need to worry about having the means and the funds and the resources to do it, they're provided for my illustration. What would you write down on that paper? In other words, according to your present state of consciousness, what do you really want to do with your life? What do you want to do? Because I think that if you love God, if your purpose is to please God, invariably I would say, and that of course implies exceptions because exceptions only prove the rule, invariably the Lord will have caused you to want the thing that he wants from you. If you're thoughtful, if you're approaching the scripture realistically, if you're actually aware of your abilities and what you can do and the limitations of your ability, what you can't do.

I've never wanted to be a singer. I love to hear people sing, but I've never wanted to be because I was told very early in my life by my own ears and by friends who had much keener ears than mine that I couldn't sing. And so it just seemed to be a fallacy for me to really want to turn out to be a caruso when I was never made to be a, you know, I was never made to be a canary.

I'm much more of the crow family than I am of the canary. So I have no intense desire to be a soloist. Our brother Stutzman has been standing near me during the song service and he's delighted about that decision on my part because I just know that I don't have that equipment.

But I'm not going to just go have a nervous breakdown because I can't sing. Maybe there's one or two other things that by his grace and help I might be able to do, so I'm just going to let the rest go. But I do believe that when God has wants you to do something, he inclines your heart.

Watch your state of consciousness very carefully and very closely. The next thing is, what do you have opportunity to do? What opportunities are presented to you? You ought to be sensitive to them, because very often the Spirit of God is guiding the pastor, guiding the elders of the church, guiding someone else, and they're coming to you and saying, would you teach this class? Well I've not taught a class. Well really I think you could.

Would you be willing to teach it? Well do you want to teach it? Certainly it's according to the will of God. Are you prepared to listen to what others might ask of you? And what others might suggest that you have talents to do? I think this is a pretty good evidence of how the Lord would have you follow him in respect to your service for him. Then of course there's something else.

As you hear of opportunity and you hear of need and you have information come to you, very frequently God will use that information and involve you in it. I suppose that information is always the raw material out of which guidance is made. No one really felt led of the Lord to go to the interior of New Guinea until they found out New Guinea had an interior and someone was there and there were people there.

Then they began to realize that the information laid the burden upon their heart. I remember years ago when I was a student at the University of Minnesota. There were a group of young men there at the university that had a tremendous burden for Tibet and Afghanistan and Nepal.

And these young men, with the information that had come to them of the need of those unevangelized areas, committed themselves to serve Christ there on the basis of the information. They responded. That burden found a lodgment in their heart and they did something about it.

It's interesting to know that Dr. Simpson learned about Tibet and he became tremendously burdened for it. In fact, record has it that on one occasion one of the secretaries at the headquarters in the tabernacle in New York went by Dr. Simpson's office and saw him. He didn't know the door was open.

He thought that it was closed securely and he'd have been embarrassed had he known it. But there he was clasping the globe to his heart with his finger resting on Tibet and the tears streaming down his cheeks as he cried out to God for that land. And the amazing thing, when the missionaries finally got to Tibet, they found that every one of them were of the same age and they had been born the year that Dr. Simpson started to pray for Tibet.

It took a generation. They didn't know that. They weren't aware of it.

But when the facts came out, they found that God had to bring into life a generation of men. Tom Moseley was one of them and others with him who responded to the Spirit of God in those days in that way, as Dr. Simpson had become concerned and become burdened. So it could very well be that God has brought you into a partnership with others that have labored and intercessory travail, so you should become sensitive to the leading of the Lord.

Then there's another factor in this matter of following Christ. After all, he isn't here visibly as he was with his disciples. How are you going to follow him today? Well, I've suggested several means, but there is one more.

I recall back in 1955, I had come into the Christian Missionary Alliance, was engaged in Bible conference ministry, and I had three opportunities for service that came to me within a matter of six or eight weeks. One of them was for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship Four Missions Fellowship. David Adeny had left to go to Hong Kong and Stacey Woods very kindly asked me if I'd consider the responsibility.

That was one. A second, Hal Street had just recently been named Director of Evangelical Literature Overseas, and he asked me if I'd become his associate and assistant in that new ministry. And I had one or two other things that came about the same time.

And I must confess that at that time I was a little fellow, a little bruised and injured, and my ego was greatly nourished and supported by the fact that at least three or four people wanted me. And so I kept them and I sort of juggled them back and forth, you know, oh Lord, it's a marvelous thing to go to somebody and say, you know, please pray with me. I have three opportunities and I just don't know which one to take.

And so you can milk a little more ego nourishment out of it. And I guess I'll have to be honest with you and say I probably did. Finally came a time when something had to happen.

I called R.R. Brown. I was on my way to California and I said, Dr. Brown, here's a preacher that needs a pastor. Can I stop by and see you? Well, he was going to be in the office.

Cost me \$35 extra to route by way of Omaha. I took the airport limousine into the hotel, walked a block down to the church, went into the study. And he came in in his characteristic way.

He said, well, what are you doing here? And I said, well, I came to have you help me decide which of these three things I'll do. And I outlined them to him. He said, well, I want to tell you right out.

I won't do it. Well, I said, thanks. And take me to lunch.

He said, I already eaten. That's where I came when you came in. Well, I said, pat me on the back and wish me God's speed.

Then do something. I come a long way to see you. He said, sit down.

He said, you know Colossians 3:17? I said, give me the first word. He said, you don't know it. You don't know the first word.

You don't know any of the rest of them. You can't. He said, now turn to it.

And I turned to it and I read Colossians 3:17. Let the peace of God rule in your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. Let the peace of God.

And then he told me he'd been out to see Curtis LeMay at the strategic air command base. And somebody out there had talked to him about guided missiles just coming in. And he said, you know, we used to have direct guidance on these things and it didn't work because they'd get out of kilter.

So he said, now we died. And all I know is what Dr. Brown told me. And he did it in five minutes.

So if you're a missile specialist, forgive me for presuming on your territory and sent me straight afterwards, but it's an illustration. That's all. I'm not trying to pretend to be a scientist because I'm not.

And he said, what they have now is negative feedback guidance. In other words, they sort of visualize a tunnel through the sky and they start the missile up the mouth of that tunnel. And as long as it stays in that tunnel, nothing happens.

It just goes. But when it gets to where the edge of the tunnel would be, it gets the negative feedback and it corrects. Goes too low, it corrects up.

Goes to the left, corrects in. And he said, then when it gets right near the target, then they pinpoint it. But on the way over, as long as it's in the tunnel, it's going all right.

This is the end of side one. Please stop the machine at this point and turn the cassette over.

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