

“If You Want To Be My Disciple” Delivered by E A Terry 10 08 17
Matthew 22: 34 – 40; Colossians 3: 1 – 17; Matthew 10:37 – 39; **Luke 14: 25 – 35 (Sermon)**

The first thing we notice in verse 25 is Jesus is speaking to large crowds of people who were following Jesus.

Jesus’ teaching on discipleship is not limited to the 12 disciples.

Jesus is not addressing the people who are opposing Him or people who were not interested in Him or in Jesus’ message.

These people were like me and you; people who were walking with Jesus that day because they were interested in what Jesus had to say.

They considered themselves to be followers of Jesus but in reality they were only casual followers, they were not committed followers.

They were willing and even anxious to follow Jesus provided the cost was not too high or the demands too great.

They were like many people today who do "Christian things" like go to church, pray, sing Christian songs, etc. but they are not really committed to Jesus Christ or to living like Jesus taught.

Jesus addresses this mistaken understanding of discipleship in verses 26 and 27.

Jesus plainly states that if you want to be His disciple you must be committed to Him above everything else.

Jesus must come before our loved ones, our possessions, our careers, our pleasure, and even our lives.

Everyone’s commitment to Jesus will be tested and sometimes, in a moment of weakness, Jesus will not come first in our choices, but genuine disciples have made a sincere commitment in their hearts and will not continue to put other things before Jesus.

The word "**disciple**" occurs 269 times in the New Testament therefore we need to make sure that we understand what it means to be Jesus’ disciple.

In the Book of Acts we are told that "**the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.**" (Acts 11:26)

This verse makes clear that the terms "**disciple**" and "**Christian**" are interchangeable.

Think of it this way.

I can refer to Lady as my wife or I can refer to her as my spouse.

In either case she is the same person.

I wanted this to be clear because I believe it stresses the seriousness of what Jesus was saying.

For example in verse 27 Jesus said; ***"Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."***

But when we say anybody who does not carry his cross and follow Jesus cannot be a Christian it gets our attention and we begin to realize the seriousness of being Jesus' disciple.

In verse 26 Jesus says total commitment applies to ***"anyone who comes to me. . ."***

In other words, Jesus is not speaking exclusively to a special group of Christians such as apostles, evangelists, missionaries, pastors, elders, or even mature believers.

Jesus expects total commitment from everyone who is His disciple.

Jesus goes on to say, ***"Anyone who comes to me and does not hate his father, mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters,-yes, even his own life cannot be my disciple."***

The word ***"hate"*** used here should not be taken literally but is rather used figuratively to express a point.

It is a hyperbole or an exaggeration.

Just like we are exaggerating when say, *"It was raining cats and dogs."*

We know that we should not take the word "hate" literally here because that would be contrary to God's character and hate is contrary to Jesus' command for us to love one another.

The point Jesus is making here is that we must love Him much more that we love our closest family relationships or even our own lives.

We must love Jesus more than everything else in our life.

Jesus is not speaking of our emotional feelings towards our family but rather Jesus is speaking of our level of commitment to Him.

Jesus is saying that our commitment to His way of life must be greater than any other commitment in our lives.

If we are going to be Jesus' disciple Jesus must be our top priority.

Therefore we all need to ask ourselves; *if following Jesus obediently disrupted my closest relationships, would I still follow Jesus?*

This is not just a hypothetical situation. In some cultures following Jesus can mean being kicked out of the family.

In our own country, many marriages have been dissolved because one spouse was a committed Christian and the other was not.

Jesus wants us to know up front what it means to be a disciple.

Jesus must come before even your closest relationships.

To be a disciple of Jesus you must be committed to Him above everyone else

We must not only love or be committed to Jesus more than to our closest family members, but we must also be committed to Jesus above "*even our own lives*" as Jesus says in verse 26.

This refers to our physical lives which we must be willing to surrender for Jesus' sake.

It also means Jesus must come before our personal goals, our interests, and our needs.

We must be committed to Jesus above our bank accounts, our public image, our pleasure, our jobs, etc.

If following Jesus means forfeiting these things, then we must be willing to do that.

Sadly in many countries today being a Christian means forfeiting everything.

To be a disciple of Jesus you must be committed to Him above everything else

Jesus uses a metaphor in verse 27 to reemphasize the point that He must come first.

Everyone present was familiar with what Jesus was referring to when he talked about carrying his cross.

The cross was a cruel form of punishment used by the Romans.

A condemned criminal was forced to "carry his cross" to the place of execution.

Everyone knew that a person carrying a cross was saying "goodbye" to their life and everything else.

There was no coming back.

Jesus uses this vivid illustration with the intent of showing us that following Him requires that same kind of saying "goodbye" to our own will, our own desires, and our old way of life because we are commitment to Him.

In verses 28 – 33 Jesus is expressing one simple but pertinent point.

Jesus makes it very clear He wants you to carefully consider the cost of being His disciple before you sign up to be His disciple.

A wise person would never start building a tower without knowing the cost to complete it.

Nor would a wise king start a war unless he was reasonably sure he could win the war.

Jesus is clearly telling us that He wants us to consider the cost and commitment that is necessary to be His disciple.

Jesus wants all of us to be His disciple but Jesus does not want a half-hearted commitment.

The question we need ask ourselves is **not** "*Am I able to follow Jesus completely?*"

*But rather "Am I **willing** to follow Jesus completely?"*

We are all human and sometimes we will fail in our commitment but the thing Jesus is confronting here is not our ability but our desire to follow Him with our whole heart.

For those of you who have never made a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ you need to understand what being a Christian really means before you make that commitment.

Jesus reminds those of us who have already publicly professed our faith in Jesus Christ Jesus that being a Christian means being totally committed to Him and totally committed to Jesus' way of life.

Our commitment to Jesus and Jesus' way of like is to come before everyone and everything.

Jesus wants everyone to be His disciple but Jesus does not want a half-hearted commitment from any of His disciples.

AMEN