

Discipleship is not a one-time decision, but a life-long journey.

27 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. 29 To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me. - Colossians 1:27-29 NIV

When we read Paul's letter to the Colossians we can sense the passion he has to share the "glorious riches of Christ in you". Paul says he contends for this with all the energy Christ works in him, so that everyone would be fully mature in Christ.

Reflect on your own journey of discipleship. What or who has been instrumental in maturing you in your faith? What is one area in your spiritual life that is substantially more mature now than when you first believed? What area do you desire to see develop even more?

Jesus announced the good news of the kingdom to everyone. He invites us to be in community and on mission with Him in His Kingdom. We may fear losing "the good things" in our lives to follow Jesus, but it is in following Him that we find joy and purpose and fulfillment. It is when we join in His mission that we can change the world.

WRAP-UP

Let's set aside the anemic version of Christianity that says, "all you need to do is say a prayer, and attend church once in a while" and take up the mantle of true discipleship. Following Jesus is worth everything because not following Him means we ultimately gain nothing.

MEMORY VERSE

34 Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. - Mark 8:34 NLT

Challenge-

Find inspiration this week by reading about the devotion of Jesus' followers who endured persecution and martyrdom. (Foxe's Book of Martyrs- Book by John Foxe) Or discover contemporary heroes of faith in ministries who support the persecuted church.

Disciples of Jesus The Gospel of Mark - Week 7

INTRODUCTION

In our study this week we find Jesus continuing to call his disciples to follow. In many ways their experience was unique. They were the first to commit their lives to Jesus. They faced challenges we will never know. But in some ways following Jesus is the same for everyone. It is a call to put God in authority over your life. To willingly give up things you may have trusted in or highly valued, but which are not what Jesus planned for you. And it still involves becoming a disciple, a commitment to follow Jesus for a lifetime.

Ice Breaker

Describe the process you went through when you left your parent's home and made a new home for yourself.

Key Passage

18 At once they left their nets and followed him. 19 When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. 20 Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him. - Mark 1:18-20 NIV

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Disciples

Jesus journeyed throughout the region and as He taught and traveled, He invited people to follow Him. Some were uneducated "blue collar" workers like the fishermen, and some were wealthy and educated like the tax collector. The invitation was similar for each, Jesus said "Follow me."

9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. - Matthew 9:9 NIV

43 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." - John 1:43 NIV

When the twelve were called, they left behind what they had known, their family, their friends and their jobs and they followed.

What do you think would motivate a fisherman to follow Jesus? Why would a tax collector be willing to walk away from his affluent lifestyle and follow? What was it that persuaded you to give your life to Christ?

Jesus is the universal answer to all our needs. Some of us may be saved from addiction and a destructive lifestyle, and others saved from perfectionism and striving to attain success. Whatever it is that made you recognize your need for a Savior uniquely qualifies you to witness to others in that position, even those who were raised in Christ-centered homes and followed Jesus faithfully from childhood. There are always others who will be encouraged by your story.

2. Disciple > Christian

Our Western Culture relies heavily on the term “Christian” to identify certain people. But that term is often misused. Today’s common definition of “Christian” may include such things as; how you vote, what activities you choose to participate in (or not participate in), or even where you were born (“I’m an American, of course I’m a Christian”). The Bible only uses the word Christian (Gr. christianos) three times. However, the term disciple (Gr. mathetes) is found 269 times. So how do they differ?

26 and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. - Acts 11:26 NIV

28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" - Acts 26:28 NIV

You may notice the disciples didn’t call themselves Christians, but it was others who identified them that way. In fact, it was first used as a derogatory term and not accepted by believers until well into the 2nd century. Jesus’ followers called themselves His disciples. To be a disciple meant you were a student or apprentice to the teacher. If you were a disciple of Jesus, then you dedicated yourself to becoming like Him in every aspect of your life.

Although the terms Christian and disciple should be synonymous, we rarely find people who identify themselves as Jesus’ disciples. (BTW-

Jesus wasn’t limited to 12 disciples). What do you think makes it difficult for people to accept becoming a disciple of Jesus rather than becoming a Christian? Do you believe you can be a Christian and not be a disciple of Jesus?

3. Obstacles to Discipleship

34 Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. - Mark 8:34 NLT

21 Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him. "There is still one thing you haven't done," he told him. "Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." - Mark 10:21 NLT

29 "Yes," Jesus replied, "and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or property, for my sake and for the Good News, 30 will receive now in return a hundred times as many houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and property--along with persecution. And in the world to come that person will have eternal life. - Mark 10:29-30 NLT

These are probably not the verses you would choose to use in order to persuade someone to follow Jesus. But the Bible is not shy in disclosing the cost of discipleship. When we sugar coat what it means to be disciples of Jesus, perhaps we fail to convey its immeasurable value.

What do you think it means for you to take up your cross? What are the trade-offs that Jesus mentions in the above passages for those who choose to follow Him?

35 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? - Mark 8:35-36 NIV

All but one of Jesus’ original disciples were martyred. It is estimated that today 1 in 7 Christians are persecuted worldwide. The persecuted church understands what it means to take up their cross much better than we do.

The cost of discipleship may be great, but the cost of non-discipleship is even greater. What does Mark 8:35-26 identify that we lose when we don’t choose Jesus?