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Discipleship



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg explores the meaning of being a disciple of Jesus. He emphasizes the importance of putting God's will above personal desires and the need for repentance and a change in mindset. Gregg also discusses the concept of lordship and the total surrender that discipleship requires. He believes that being a disciple is not limited to Christianity, and suggests that the book "Empire Risen Son, King's Men" could serve as a valuable curriculum for a discipleship class.

Transcript

Tonight we're going to be talking about the subject of discipleship. And I don't know what most people think the word discipleship means. It has been used in the last 40 or 50 years different ways.

Some churches have little groups they call discipleship groups. In the 70s there was a movement called the Discipleship Shepherding Movement, sometimes called the Discipleship Movement, which was very abusive and very fringe. Although it became very popular in many churches it was a problematic movement, very much related to people having to obey other people and things like that, which is not really what discipleship is about.

And yet, while the word has been heard a lot, the word discipleship is not actually in the Bible. What is in the Bible is the word disciple. And it's obvious that discipleship means being a disciple, just like membership means being a member.

Or partnership means being a partner. And discipleship refers to being a disciple. And the word disciple, though not found very often in the epistles, is found very often in the Gospels and the Book of Acts.

And it is the term that was used for every individual in those days who was identified as a follower of Jesus. Now, all people who are called Christians today probably would say they are followers of Jesus. Well, that's something we're going to examine.

And, you know, when you read the things that the Bible says about discipleship,

especially the things that Jesus said about it. You begin to wonder if are there any Christians today? Are there any disciples today? I remember when I was first curious about this subject back in the 70s and talking with another friend of mine my age. And and, you know, we ministered together sometimes.

I remember we were both talking about what Jesus said are the terms of discipleship. And we realized that most people who are identified as Christians did not appear to either know or had not signed up for or were not taking seriously. The things Jesus said about discipleship, and we wondered, you know, is discipleship like a second tier of Christian are people who just kind of believe and go to church, are they Christians? And then there's another tier above that, like maybe the super Christians, like the in God's army, maybe the special forces.

The Green Berets, you know, the people who actually go out and do radical, crazy things like missionaries. And I remember he and I were discussing this matter because we were both perplexed because. On one hand, both he and I wanted to be disciples and we weren't too concerned, we were both single guys at the time and and we're sold out guys and we were quite willing and eager.

To meet the terms of discipleship that we're finding in the scripture, it was in fact our obsession, but. But we were concerned because so many people we knew called Christians didn't seem to be described in the biblical descriptions of disciples. And we didn't want to be uncharitable and say, well.

Maybe there's like two steps, the first step is you become a Christian and then at a later time you take a deeper step to become a disciple. Well, I do believe that people who come to Christ do come in stages sometimes. I do think that people who first come to Christ come with some maybe a limited understanding of what they're really getting into.

Shame on whoever evangelize them. They should have been warned. But.

It's nonetheless true. People are told, well, if you want to go to heaven, just come forward while every head is bowed, every eye is closed. No one has to know.

You don't have to confess Christ before men. Of course, they're just fooling you because after they all raise their hand, they say, OK, we want you to come up here now in front of everybody. And if they can induce people to do that.

They say, OK, say this prayer and you're a Christian now. And so churches get filled up with people who've jumped through those particular hoops. And never have any doubts again that they're Christian.

And yet, when you talk about the terms of discipleship in the New Testament. They either are terrified or they make excuses or they didn't mean that. But.

Because they realize that that's not something they consciously signed up for. And so the first question we have to ask is, is a disciple. A different thing than just a Christian.

The answer to that question comes fairly easily if we're going to define Christian from the Bible. Now, of course, people define Christian all kinds of ways now, 2000 years after the time of Christ. But if.

If we want to be Christians, we should probably be Christians in terms of the way Jesus and the disciples and the Bible describes Christians. And the word Christian only appears three times in the Bible. I found that surprising when I first learned that.

First of all, the word Christianity isn't found even once in the Bible. But the word Christian is found three times. The second time is when Paul was before a group and he's preaching and Griffith says, almost you persuade me to become a Christian.

So the word Christian is used there, not even by a Christian, but by an unbeliever saying, I could almost become a Christian for what you say. And the third time it is used is in first Peter, where Peter says, don't any of you suffer from being criminals or bad guys? But if you suffer for being a Christian. Don't be ashamed.

Now, it's obvious that the way Peter uses it there in the way a group is that you get no definition of Christian, it's obviously a word that the people there are familiar with. It has some established definition, but we aren't told how they got that definition in those passages or what that definition even is. But the first time the word occurs of the three is in Acts 11, 26, and then you do get a definition of the word Christian.

In Acts 11, 26, it says the disciples. Were first called Christians. In Antioch.

Later, they were called that other places, too, but you see. Prior to Acts 11. The book of Acts have been talking about the believers and refers them as disciples.

They're always referred to as the disciples, the number of the disciples increased, you know, that these disciples did this, the disciples did that and. At a certain point, as those who are called disciples later were also called Christians. Which means that as far as the Bible is concerned, the word Christian, the word disciple are interchangeable terms.

Christian was just a new word given to the same group that were called previously disciples. Now, I'm sure many of you here, probably almost all of you here. Identify as Christian.

I know I did all my life from my childhood to this present time, but I would have to say that in my childhood, although I think I took Jesus very seriously and I believe I truly was a disciple. I was not disciplined. I was not taught what it means to be a disciple.

And although I really had made the commitment to be a follower of Jesus, I had no idea

what that meant or very little idea. At least what I had been told is you accept Jesus into your heart. And then what? Well, then you get baptized and then what? Well, then you're a Christian.

Yeah, but what do I do after that? Well, nothing in particular. Don't be bad. Jesus is coming someday.

If you hang on long enough when he comes back, you go to heaven. OK, so being a Christian just means I get a ticket to heaven and it doesn't have any other ramifications in all my life. Makes no demands, doesn't redefine anything about me.

Well, I did have this sense, I think most people who are in churches and Christians do have the sense that there's a sense in which we're not, even though we're saved and go to heaven and we're not saved by works, we're saved by grace through faith. Nonetheless, we really should try to obey Jesus or at least not not displease him too atrociously. And so I knew growing up there's some some element of taking God seriously, that's incumbent on me as a believer, but no one really ever disciplined me.

Now, Jesus told us what a disciple is in John, chapter eight. And verse thirty one, this is probably the clearest definition of a disciple, though the word disciple is used simply as a descriptive of those who follow Jesus. That's not that often you find a definition of a disciple.

Now, we found a definition of a Christian in Acts 11. 26, the definition of a Christian is a disciple. OK, well, what's the definition of a disciple? And the answer to that is in John, chapter eight and verse thirty one.

For Jesus said, if you continue in my words. You are my disciples indeed, or you're truly my disciples. Now, he included the word indeed or truly.

Because there are people who no doubt identify as disciples or identify as Christians, the question is, are they really? And this is a fairly important question to answer accurately about oneself. I can't say whether you are a Christian or you are a Christian, but I do have to answer for whether I am a Christian to be sure. Because Jesus said in the sermon on the Mount in Matthew, chapter seven.

He said, many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name? And I will say to them, says Jesus. Depart from me, you workers of iniquity, I never knew you. I must say, I've always all my life considered that the scariest verse in the Bible.

I mean, there's other verses about being on bad terms with God, but what makes this a scary verse is the people he says, I never knew you. You're not one of mine. You're not a disciple of mine.

I don't know you never did know you. Well, the thing that makes it scary is they thought they not only thought they were Christians, they thought they were acting in his name in dramatic ways. They were prophesying, casting out demons.

Doing many mighty works, these were clearly charismatic people. And I'm not saying anything negative about charismatic people because I'm technically charismatic myself, but I'm saying that these were these were not your lukewarm Episcopalians. No offense to any Episcopalians here, but.

There are a lot of Christians who would think of some of these, what we say, mainline churches from the Reformation and way back there that a lot of them have cooled a fair bit, not all, but many would think of maybe some of these dead Christians, maybe some of these liberal Christians, maybe it's some of these people who never, you know, they just have a profession, but there's nothing more. No, these are people who are prophesying in Jesus name. These are people who are casting out demons in Jesus name.

They certainly believe. That they are following Jesus and he says, but you weren't. Now, if that doesn't sound scary to you.

I don't know what you will, but at least if we say, well, if that kind of thing doesn't make people Christians, what in the world does? Well, the same passage where he said that he prefaced by saying this, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that does the will of my father in heaven, then said many will say to me, Lord, we cast out demons, we prophesied, we did my works, and I'll say I never knew you. So they were doing things they said in his name, but they weren't doing the will of his father. It's not those who say, Lord, Lord, it's not those who profess to be believers, but those who do the will of my father in heaven.

And I think, OK, well, give me a list of those things that are the will of God so I can do them. How many do I have to do? You know, do I just have to do more of those than of the other stuff I want to do or what? I mean, what Jesus is talking about is that his disciples, the true disciples are those, as we shall see. Who do the will of God habitually, who do the will of God as a self-defined way of life, that is that their attitude is father, not my will, but yours be done.

What is God's will? Well, your holiness is his will. Paul says in First Thessalonians five, this is the will of God, even your sanctification, which means being holy. But more than that, we know it's his will that we love our neighbor and even our enemy, our neighbor, who's our enemy.

We should love. That we should do good to those who persecute us and love those who hate us and so forth. Now, let's face it, it's kind of a demanding thing to do everything it pleases God.

And the Bible doesn't really indicate, as we read it all, that you have to be successful in every moment of every day, never doing anything wrong and only always every moment doing what pleases the Father. But it has to be that's what you are determined to do. You may fail in what you are determined to do.

You know, marriage vows are very lofty. You know, when a man says, I was going to love and cherish his wife and and, you know, be the model husband, she says the same thing about herself. I'm going to be the model wife.

I'm going to do all the things that I'm supposed to do. Presuming these people actually mean it when they take their vows, they literally are married. But if they mean it, it means that that's what they're intending to do and they're going to intend to do so until death do them part.

So when you're married, you've made a commitment to another person that you're going to live for their benefit, for their for their blessing, to bless them, to please them, to make their life easier, to make them glad that they're in the relationship. That's what you promise. Now, anyone here married or ever been married? OK, then you made those VOWS.

OK, anyone kept those vows every moment of every day? She has. No, she hasn't shaken her head. No.

Well, my wife has, but but she's unique. But honestly, if you take those vows and you mean it and that's your determination that defines what your commitment is, I'm going to live for this person the rest of my life. Now, I might stumble, fail.

You know, I'm weak and stupid. Sometimes I do things that really don't fit that pattern of what I committed myself to do. But that doesn't make me unmarried.

It just means I'm not perfect. But the fact that I made the vows means I cannot stop aiming at that as my goal. If somebody says I'm going to be a champion pole vaulter and I don't know what the world I don't know what the record is on pole vaulting.

I don't follow track and field, but I'll just I'll just show my ignorance. Let's say let's say the let's say the world record is 17 feet. It's probably higher, but I don't know.

And you say, OK, I'm going to beat that record. I'm going to be the world champion pole vaulter. That's my goal in life.

So you go out there in the field and you pole vault every day because you want to get to that place where you are the world champion. Now, you'll probably knock the pole down most of the time. I mean, if let's say only the world champion has ever not knocked it down at that height.

You're probably you're going to have to get over that pole, but you're going to knock it down until you get good enough to get over it. Now, if you want to be a champ, you don't lower the bar. You don't say, well, I guess I can't get over that bar.

So I think I'll lower my expectation. I'll just try to get over a 10 foot pole. That'll be a 10 bar.

Well, if you lower the bar, you'll probably get over it, but you won't be what you have desired and committed yourself to be. You may never get over it at 17 feet, but you're not going to stop trying if that's your life goal. You're not going to change the goalposts.

You're not going to lower the bar. You're going to say, that's what I've committed myself to overcome. I'm going to do that.

And I, I, I won't be surprised at my inability to do that perfectly. But I'm not going to lower the bar. I'm not going to decide I'm going to do less.

I'll, you know, if I knock the bar down and say, I blew it again, let's try that again. Put it up there again. Now, when someone does that, they're not perfect, but if they have set a goal, they don't give up the goal.

Once you give up on the goal, that's different. You give up on your goal to be a good husband or wife and say, well, I just, just too hard for me. I can't do this.

Well, then your marriage fails. If you are a disciple of Jesus, you are committed to obeying the words of Jesus. He said, if you continue in my words, you're my disciples.

Indeed, you're doing the will of God. That's your purpose. Your goal, you've, your life orientation is different than it was before you became a disciple.

And that's what the word repent means. It means you change your mind. You change your orientation.

You change the direction you're facing. Before you're a follower of Jesus, you, like every other planet person on the planet, are living for pretty much one thing. And that's yourself.

You might do nice things for other people, but only because you feel like it'll benefit you to do so. But you're living for yourself. Because you don't have anything higher to live for.

You might sacrifice for your nation. You might sacrifice for a worthy cause. You might sacrifice for someone you love, for your children.

But you're only doing that because you could not live with yourself if you didn't. You'd feel like a coward. You'd feel like a failure.

You're all, it's, the focus is all about me. I have to live to please myself. And do everything I can that I think will ultimately please me the most.

And that's the natural orientation of a baby. The moment they're born, they, they can't define it. They can't put it into words.

But that's all they care about. As anyone knows who's had babies, the baby doesn't care whether you get a good night's sleep. The baby doesn't care whether you're, you're unconvinced.

They know what, babies know what they want. And they'll, they'll make sure they get it. Or make you miserable.

And that's because that's human nature. Please me, please me, please me. And many people are still big babies doing the same thing until they're old people and they die.

But there's some people who interrupt that and have a radical change. And they reorient. It's not about pleasing me.

It's now about pleasing God. It doesn't matter if I'm pleased at all. Because the world doesn't rotate around me.

The universe doesn't even know I'm here. I'm not that important. If I spend my life trying to make everyone think I'm the one that has to be pleased.

And, and holding grudges against those who displease me. And, and at war and competition with people who want to please themselves. Shame on them.

They want to please themselves, but I want to please me. You know, she wants to sleep with the window open. I want to sleep with the window shut.

We can't both have our way. So she better give in because I have to have my way. Or if I give in and she gives her way, it's because I want something.

You know, I can't just be selfless because there's nothing but me to look after. I can use, manipulate people in situations and even seem benevolent and sacrificial. But ultimately, there's only two things you could be living for.

Ultimately, one is your own well-being, your own self. The other is God. And, and, and you do, you change it because you realize I'm not, frankly, all that important in the grand scheme of things.

The universe doesn't know I'm here. Even the world doesn't know I'm here. Most of the people in my town don't know I'm here.

And there's people who live right around the corner from me who don't know I'm here.

I'm just not that important to, to, in the grand scheme of things. And every other person is in the same boat I'm in.

They're not that important either. Not that humans aren't important. They're important because they're made capable of pleasing their creator.

But they're not important enough that anyone should reorient their whole world to put them at the center. But God is that important. And when a person comes to their senses, okay, all the time I've been having frustration and so forth, it's because I'm not getting my way.

What if I decided that getting my way isn't really what's important? What if I decided that God getting His way is what's important? That would make sense. I mean, if there's a God, and if He is the one who created the universe, and it's all made for Him and for His glory and for His pleasure that are created, the Bible says, well, then that's, that's why I'm messing up so much. I haven't been living for His pleasure and His glory.

And I'll tell you this, when you reorient and you say, not my will, but Thine be done. Not what I want, but what you want. That's what I'm living for now, God.

You won't perfectly do that anymore than a husband perfectly pleases his wife, though he swears to do so. If he's a good husband, he's determined to do so. He's determined to keep his vows.

And if a person is a disciple, they are determined to live no longer for self, but for Christ and to please Him. So this is, this is what it means that, you know, he that does the will of my Father means habitually. A person whose life is defined, not by doing their own will, but by doing God's will.

Not perfectly, but nonetheless, determinedly, persistently. Stubbornly. Okay.

Now, in the Great Commission in Matthew chapter 28 and verses 18 and following, Jesus said, All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Okay. What's that mean? Authority means the right to be the ruler.

The right to make the decisions. The right to be submitted to. The one who has the moral right to say, do this, and you should do it.

Now, sometimes people have power, but they don't have authority. There may be a bully who's big enough to make you give him your lunch money, but he has no authority to. You're not morally obligated to.

But if your parents tell you to do something when you're a child, you are morally obligated to. You do it not just because they're bigger than you and could beat you up, but you do it because you're the child and they're the parent. They have a standing of

authority.

A king in a nation or a governor or something. They have certain authority to govern. And Jesus said, Well, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.

So I have all the right to rule everything. And if that's true, then he has the right to rule me. And I don't have any of the authority to rule me because all authority is given to him.

And so no surprise after he says that he says, Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations. He says, You got to baptize them because that's how they start their walk as Christians, as disciples. But then he says, There's more to it than just that.

He didn't say go into all the world, make decisions for Christ. He said, Go into all the world and make disciples. Well, how do you do that? He said, Well, this way, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.

That's how you make disciples. And that shouldn't that's not strange because he had said, If you continue in what I say, then you're my disciples. Truly, as opposed to in name only.

A disciple, therefore, a true disciple, one to whom Jesus will not say, I never knew you. Depart from me. But one who's a real disciple that God recognizes such is one that has said, I'm going to continue in obedience to Jesus, the king, because all authority has been given to him.

And that means he's the Lord and master and owner and king. And I'm not. I'm the other thing in that relationship.

He's the master. I'm the slave. He's the king.

I'm the subject. He's the owner. I'm the owned.

I've been bought with a price. I don't know myself. Now, once a person has really seriously come to that frame of mind, they have changed their mind.

They've repented. The word repent means change your mind. They never thought that way before.

But when they start thinking that way, that's repentance. That's when you become a disciple. That's when you have said, I'm not going to continue in my own agendas, my own dreams.

Those were very nice to think about. But they aren't what matters. What matters is the will of the creator.

And therefore, if God's agenda is different than my agenda, if God's dreams for my life are different than my dreams for life. Well, there's no contest who gets their way. He's going to get his.

It's not me. It's him. It's not my will.

It's his will. That's what defines me as a disciple. And when I want to go and make disciples, the Bible says I first have to convert people to Christ.

But convert means they decide they're going to become disciples. They repent. He says you baptize them and then you teach them to observe everything I have commanded you.

Now, that doesn't mean you take him in the side room for 20 minutes and say, do everything Jesus said. See it in heaven. You know, no, the commission is to disciple people, which is the process of teaching them.

And it's in many cases, a lifelong process of being taught how to do what Jesus said, because it's not natural. It's natural when the Holy Spirit comes to you within you and changes you and gives you a new heart and a new spirit and you're born again. Then you have a new nature.

And then it is natural. But you still have the old flesh, too. And it's not natural for the flesh.

And so Paul says the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. And these two are against each other so that you don't always do what you want to do. Have you noticed you don't always do what you want to do? Well, if what you want to do is something good, that's a good sign.

The fact that you don't always do it is frustrating. But the fact that you don't like doing the wrong thing is an indicator of what direction your intentions are. You know, it says in 1 John, whoever is born of God does not commit sin.

And that scares some people because there's actually a few verses in John's first epistle that say, you know, if you're born of God, you don't commit sin. If you're a child of God, you don't commit sin. And every Christian who's honest with us says, but I do.

I do commit sin. Does that mean I'm not born of God? Does that mean I'm not a Christian? Now, when he says that a believer, a Christian, a disciple of Jesus does not sin, that sentence is very much like saying a vegetarian doesn't eat meat. Now, I know a girl I just found out who's a vegetarian, except with reference to bacon.

Other than that, she's a committed vegetarian. Now, I've known vegetarians who who define themselves as complete vegetarians, and they still have eaten bacon

occasionally. Some things are just, it's just asking too much.

But a vegetarian by definition is someone who doesn't eat meat. That's their identity. I won't call myself a vegetarian unless I decide not to eat meat.

That's my commitment. Will I ever eat meat again if I call myself a vegetarian? Maybe. But I'm determined not to because that's what it means to be a vegetarian, not eating meat.

Or as one of the old Puritan writers said, it's like saying a miser doesn't waste money. A miser clings to his money. He loves his money.

He doesn't waste it. But that doesn't mean he never can waste it. It doesn't mean that someone can't con him or fool him into a bad deal, and he later realizes, I wasted that money.

You know, sure, anyone out of foolishness or weakness might waste some money, even if their determination, I know I don't want to waste a penny of my money. To say a miser doesn't waste money means his whole determination and his whole desire is to not waste money. That if he finds that he has accidentally wasted money or been fooled into wasting money, he kicks himself and he says, I'm not going to let that happen again.

And if a vegetarian is a serious vegetarian and they find they succumb and eat some meat, well, they can either say, well, I'm not going to be a vegetarian anymore, or they can say, that's not what I want to do. That's not what I want to do. I'm a vegetarian.

That's not what vegetarians do. I'm going to not do that again. I'm going to be more careful next time that temptation is there.

That's exactly parallel to saying those who are born of God don't commit sin. It's not that they can't. It's not that they don't sometimes stumble.

James, who is an apostle, the brother of Jesus in the book of James, said, in many things, we all stumble. Stumbling is doing the wrong thing. We all do that.

Far too much. But if you're a Christian and you stumble or if you're a miser and you waste money or if you're a vegetarian and you eat meat, you say, that's not OK. I'm not going to live that way.

And so a disciple is not somebody who is perfect and never fails. A disciple is somebody whose determination is not my will but God's will. My agendas, my hopes and dreams, my stuff, everything I have, it's not mine but His.

When a disciple makes that decision, then, and sincerely, they are a disciple even if they're extremely imperfect. And most disciples are. But let me show you again what the standard is that Jesus gave it.

If you look at Luke, you know, I don't know if I've ever gone to a Sunday morning service anywhere where anyone preached on this passage. And if he did, he'd probably have the same experience Jesus had when he preached this way. Sometimes Jesus had multitudes following him.

He preached one sermon, like in John chapter 6. The next day he had 12. Where did the thousands go? He said to the disciples, do you want to go away too? People said, where are we going to go? You alone have the words of eternal life. And Jesus said, well, I chose you 12, but even one of you is a devil.

So, you know, I lost thousands and I've got 12 and even one of you is a flake. You know, even one of you is not the real deal. He had to be very disappointed when he said that, I'm sure.

But he didn't say, I'd better go back to all those thousands and retract what I said that offended them. And I will say this before we look at Luke 14. When the rich young ruler came to Jesus and said, good master, what must I do to be saved? Jesus said, well, after he made some other preliminary comments, he said, keep the commandments.

And the man said, which ones? And Jesus named some of the commandments. And the man said, well, I've actually already been doing that. I've been doing that all my life.

He was a devout Jew. He was keeping the Jewish law. And Jesus said, oh, well, if you want to be perfect.

Now, see, the man said, I've done this all my life. But then the man said, what do I still lack? The man knew that though he had been a devout Jew and kept the law, he was still lacking something. He knew that he didn't have assurance that he was all there where he needed to be.

And Jesus said, well, if you want to be perfect, sell what you have and give to the poor. And you'll have treasures and then come and follow me. Now, he didn't.

The man didn't. He wouldn't do it. And he went away sorrowful.

Now, I'm sure the disciples, this man who went away was rich and is a ruler and is young. He's one of those guys you really want on your deacon board or something. Rich is good enough.

Young and politically power, that's even better. Now, you got that kind of people in church, you make them elders or something just so they don't go away. At the very least, their tithes can cover an awful lot of programs.

And when the disciples saw Jesus run this guy off, they were probably thinking, what? You just let this big fish get away? He was going to be he wanted to be a follower. And

you give him this line, sell everything you haven't given to the poor. Come on.

And Jesus didn't think he made a mistake. When he saw the guy was unhappy and was leaving, it says Jesus was sorrowful. But he didn't go after him and say, you know, maybe I was a little too strict there.

You know, let's be reasonable. I'll be satisfied if you just pay your tithes for the time being. Ten percent, that's not that much.

And by the way, if you pay your tithe, I think you'll find that you can live more abundantly on the 90 percent that you keep than if you kept the 10 percent. All this kind of preaching that people would try to persuade people to tithe. Jesus didn't try to persuade anyone to tithe.

He never commanded anyone to tithe. The only people he commanded was to give it all. And it's a funny thing because Jesus just didn't seem to feel like, maybe I should soften this message a little bit.

I don't want to lose too many big fish like this. But he just he just is sorry. He said how hard it is.

He said out loud for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. Harder for that than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. In other words, he said, with men, it's impossible.

With God, nothing is impossible. Rich men can be saved, but it's pretty much about as easy as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle is. And that's not easy.

Now, having said that, I'm saying that Jesus didn't modify his message when he found it chased people away. Jesus was not looking for a big crowd. He's not desperate for friends.

He's God. God doesn't have to negotiate. You might say, well, if God doesn't negotiate, no one's going to follow him.

Well, some people will. Maybe most people won't. But he'd rather have a few good men and women than a bunch of people who are going to leave him as soon as he says something they don't like.

He'll say it right up front. If you're going to leave when I say something I don't like, this is the time to do it. I'm going to say something you don't like and see how that how you like that.

And you can leave if you want. Because if you're not all in, you're not really in. If you're not all in with me, you have not yet reckoned with who it is I am.

You're dealing with God here. And God's not just another guy. God is one that the whole universe is about.

If you want to be in sync with the universe, you know, the heavens declare the glory of God. The stars and the moon, they praise God. If you're not going to be in this movement with me, you're just not going to be in sync with the universe at all.

And frankly, go make your own universe if you want. I won't chase you down. Now, here's what Jesus said in Luke 14, in verse 26.

Well, verse 25 is important. It says, Now great multitudes went with him, and he turned and said to him, Now great multitudes were following Jesus. This is a different occasion than the time when he chased them off and there were 12 left.

Another time multitudes were following him. And he turned and said to them, verse 26, If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father, his mother, his wife, and his children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

For which of you intending to build a tower does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he is enough to finish it? Lest, after he has laid the foundation and is not able to finish it, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build and he was not able to finish. Or what king going to make war against another king does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with 10,000 to meet him who comes against him with 20,000? If not, while the other is still a great way off, he sends out a delegation to ask for conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Now, remember, the word disciple is synonymous with Christian in the Bible. Three times in this paragraph, she said, Unless you're willing to do such and such, then you can't be my disciple. In in Bible speak, that's cannot be a Christian.

The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch and no one else ever was. Only the disciples were the Christians in the Bible. Now, you might say, well, then I guess I guess I'm out.

I don't do those things. Oh, wait, before you go, I'll do what Jesus didn't do. Let me talk you down a little bit here.

Jesus used a lot of Hebrew idioms. His his audience would have been known, but which we might misunderstand. We said you have to hate your father and your mother and your wife and your children and your own life.

Or you can't be my disciple. No, there's three three statements. Blah, blah, blah.

If you don't, you can't be my disciple. You can't be my disciple. You can't be my disciple.

First is if you don't hate your father, mother, wife, children, your own life. You can't be my disciple. Second, if you don't take up your cross and follow, you can't be my disciple.

Third, if you don't forsake everything you have, you can't be my disciple. Not not may not. It's not like I won't let you.

It's that you just won't make it. If you're not this committed, it's not going to work for you. You're going to bail.

You're going to wimp out. You're going to let yourself down and let me down. Let me save you the trouble.

Don't waste your time. Here's what you got to be in for. OK.

The first thing we said, you have to hate your wife, children, your own life. The word hate in this context is a very common usage that the Bible uses, both in the Old and the New Testament. We don't use it this way in modern English, which is why people get concerned when they read this.

In the Bible, going all the way back to Genesis and even in other places in Jesus' teaching, hatred is often simply a comparative term where two things are being compared and one is preferred over the other. The language of Scripture often is you love the one and you hate the other. Jesus, in another place, in the Sermon on the Mount, said you can't serve two masters.

You'll love the one and hate the other. Well, really, have you ever held two jobs? Ever had two bosses? Did you have to hate one of them and love the other? No, but you had to give preference to one over the other. That's all it means.

He's not saying you really have to hate anybody. He's saying that when it comes to comparisons, if you've got two people making demands on you, you can't give them both equal allegiance. You've got to prefer one over the other.

You have to love the one, hate the other. We see this in Jacob's marriage with Rachel and Leah. He had kids by both these women, but it says he loved Rachel more than he loved Leah.

And the next line in Scripture is when God saw that Leah was hated. Well, she wasn't actually hated the way we use the word. The guy had seven kids with her, some kind of hatred.

No, no, he hated her in this. And with reference to Rachel, he preferred Rachel over Leah. And just the verse before it says God saw Leah was hated says he loved Rachel more than Leah.

That's what hated means. When God says, Jacob, I have loved, Esau, I have hated. What he's saying is that these were twin babies in the womb of Rebecca, and God preferred one over the other right from the beginning.

And so the older shall serve the younger. That was him showing preference over one. It doesn't mean he hated Esau in the sense that we use the word hatred.

It does mean, though, when love and hate are used in this kind of connection, it's a Hebraism. It's a way the Jews speak. It's the way the Bible speaks when it's not speaking the way we speak in modern English.

And it means if you've got to hate your mother, your father, your wife, and your children, your own life, it means, of course, in comparison to me. And he actually says it in a much less offensive way in Matthew 10 when he says, whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever loves wife or children more than me is not worthy of me.

Now, that's a little easier to take, but it's the same teaching. It's just that in Luke we have the Hebraism. You've got to hate your father, mother, wife, children.

Not really hate. You just can't love them as much as you love Jesus. You've got to choose him over them.

There was a man who came to Jesus and said, I'll follow you wherever you go, but first let me go say goodbye to those in my household. And Jesus said, no man, having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. He knew the man was going to go back and seek to get the approval of his household, probably wouldn't get it, to give up the family's dreams for him taking over the farm or whatever and running off after this peasant philosopher Jesus.

They wouldn't like it, and they knew this guy was going to first put their preferences first. Now, you're putting your hand to the plow, but you're looking back already. Forget it.

You're not fit for the kingdom, he said. You can't put family first. Now, above all other people on earth, you must put family first in most cases.

You know, when you're comparing the way you treat your family to the way you treat anybody else, I believe the Bible teaches your obligations to your family first. But when we're comparing your obligation to your family with your obligation to God, then God is first. Everything else is second.

Your family might be next in line and then everything else beyond that, but still the distance between your loyalty to God and your loyalty to anything or anyone else, even your most favorite people, has got to be like the difference between love and hate in a way. If you can't do that, you're not going to make it. You can't be my disciple.

And he said, if you don't take up your cross and follow me, you can't be my disciple. What's it mean to take up a cross? Now, we cannot, from the perspective of the 21st century, think of taking up a cross without remembering that Jesus died on a cross, that Jesus carried a cross. And so when Jesus said, take up your cross, you know, people think, well, maybe it means that you're supposed to imitate me and carry a cross like I'm going to.

But see, at this point in time, the disciples didn't know Jesus was going to die on a cross. They had seen lots of people die on crosses because Romans killed people that way a lot, literally thousands and thousands of outlaws were killed by Romans on crosses. It was the most gruesome, cruelest way to execute a prisoner that has been devised pretty much by ancient men.

And everyone had seen it because the Romans were dominating, and they got upset whenever a Jew looked cross-eyed at them and they'd crucify him. Jesus hadn't been crucified yet. The disciples at this point didn't even know that Jesus would be crucified.

That came as a surprise to them considerably later. When he said, take up your cross, he wasn't saying, first of all, remember I'm dying on the cross for you or carry a cross like I'm going to be carrying a cross. And he certainly didn't mean wear a little cross on a chain.

A lot of people bear their cross that way. And there's nothing wrong with it, by the way, but it's not what he meant. But they knew what he meant because in Galilee or in Judea at that time, everyone who was an adult had seen many people bearing their crosses.

Now, bearing the cross means carrying it on your shoulder. When the Romans executed someone or condemned them to die, they often would compel the condemned criminal to carry his own cross. Why should the soldiers have to carry it for him? They put it on his back and he had to carry it.

The Bible actually says that some of the gospels that Jesus, I think it was in John, it says he left after he was carrying his cross. But later on, we read that another man carried his cross. Apparently, Jesus wasn't able, he'd been beaten all night and stuff like that.

He was apparently out of strength and someone else had to carry it for him. But it was common for a criminal to be made to carry his cross to the place he was to be executed. And when Jesus said, you have to bear your cross, the only image the disciples would have as a reference point would be, well, I saw a guy the other day carrying his cross.

I've seen it many times in my life, people carrying their cross. The Romans driving them with a whip and he carried his cross to be crucified. I've seen that many times.

I've got to do that. Well, what does it mean? Now, notice he didn't say be crucified on a cross. Some Christians have been crucified on crosses.

And being willing to die that way or any other way is part of the package of being a true follower of Christ. But not all Christians die, you know, through persecution. Certainly not all die by crucifixion.

Jesus didn't say you have to be crucified. He says you have to bear your cross. He's not describing a disciple to someone who's hanging on a cross, but someone who's bearing his, carrying his cross to the place of execution.

Well, in what sense is there a parallel? Well, it's in this sense. The man who is carrying his cross, first of all, he's doing it willingly. I'm not saying it's his preference, but he'd rather do that than take the consequences.

You see, if the Romans say carry that cross, if he wanted to be infinitely, he'd say make me. What are you going to do, kill me if I don't? They're already going to kill him. He says I'm not going to give you the pleasure, you carry it yourself.

If he refused, he'd take a serious beating, but nothing compared to what he's going to get when he's crucified anyway. So, I mean, I'm sure there probably was the occasional guy who just thought beat me all you want, I'm not going to carry that thing. And if he said he's not going to, no one could make him carry it.

And so, in a sense, though no one wanted to carry a cross, there were some people who had resigned themselves to it, obviously. They said I'm not going to fight this. I'm going to die here in a few minutes anyway.

I've been condemned. My life is over. What the heck? Why take more beating than I've already gotten? I'll just carry it, the darn thing.

Now, therefore, a person who was carrying a cross was doing it willingly because they weren't rebelling against it. And the man that you saw carrying a cross was a man who had given up on all his dreams. He'd given up all his rights.

All that he had ever thought he would accomplish, that's swept away now. He's a man marching to his death. You know, a Christian or a non-Christian should all realize we're all marching toward death.

You're going to die. Everyone's going to die. Whether it's a long march or a short march, depends on how healthy you are, how old you already are, and so forth, but we're all marching toward our death.

But the person who's bearing a cross is accepting his fate and has given up on his old life. Whatever he thought he was going to be doing the next ten years, the day before he got arrested, that's not what he's planning on doing now. He's just planning to carry that cross up and die.

The person who's carrying a cross has resigned himself to no longer living for himself and his own dreams and his own agendas. All that he wanted to do, that's not part of his thinking now. He's given up on his life.

And that's, in a sense, what you have to do. You have to say, okay, it's not my life anymore. It's God's life.

I belong to God. I may have had all kinds of plans for myself before I gave myself to Christ, but now it's what He wants and not what I want. It's His mercy.

I'm willingly accepting the burden of giving up all that my life was and all that my plans were and just doing whatever being a disciple requires. And then that third thing he said, unless you forsake all that you have, you cannot be my disciple. Now, that sounds pretty severe, but you need to realize when the rich young ruler refused to follow Jesus' walked way, Peter actually said in Matthew 19, Lord, we have forsaken everything.

What shall we have? In other words, Peter recognized that he and the other disciples had, in fact, qualified under this condition. They had forsaken everything. And Jesus didn't deny it.

They were, in fact, the people who had forsaken everything. They were His disciples, truly. But what did it look like for them to forsake everything? Well, one thing, they'd left their jobs because Jesus called them to.

Not everyone who followed Jesus left their jobs. Lazarus and Mary and Martha, they were disciples too, but they didn't leave their home. They didn't leave their ordinary life because Jesus never called them to.

But if Jesus called them to, you're available. He's God. He's the Lord.

He's the one you follow. He's the King. And you're at His service, basically.

And everything you have is at His service. Peter, though he was a disciple and had forsaken everything, he still owned a fishing boat and fishing nets. We know because he used them after this.

He had a house. We read about Jesus and the disciples staying at Peter's house. He had a wife.

He had a mother-in-law, for crying out loud. You can't have a mother-in-law without having a wife. Not many people would prefer to have a mother-in-law without a wife, but you couldn't if you wanted to.

He had a family, probably children. He still had them after he forsook everything he had. But it was different.

These things were not his anymore. They were Jesus's. Did Jesus want to go across the lake? My boat's your boat.

Did Jesus want a meal? I'll go out and catch a fish. Do you need tax money? I'll catch a fish and get the money. All I've got is for you.

My house is your crash pad, Jesus, you and the disciples. It's all yours. I still own it.

I still maintain it. I still manage it, but it's not mine. Now, Peter was, and all disciples are, in the condition that a steward in the Bible was.

Now, the word steward, we don't use the word steward as often as they did back then. We use the word manager for the same idea. If you own a store, but you don't want to run the store, you hire a manager.

The manager does all the stuff that the owner would have to do if he didn't hire a manager to do it. The manager hires, fires, puts things on sale, deals with vendors, does whatever has to be done. The thing the owner would have to do if he didn't have a manager to do it.

The manager is the steward. He acts like he owns the place, because he's been authorized to act in these ways, but he doesn't own it. He's not there to make himself rich, he's there to make the owner rich.

It's the owner's business. Joseph was in this position with Potiphar. Joseph was an actual slave.

He was owned, he was bought with money, and was like a slave. He was a slave. And yet, because of his competence and his trustworthiness, Potiphar put him in charge of everything he had.

I think a little at a time, but eventually Joseph was in charge of everything. The Bible says Potiphar didn't even know what he had, except the food that was put in front of him at every meal. Everything else was in the hands of Joseph.

Joseph was probably wearing nice robes, living in a nice place, commanding other servants what to do, buying and selling for his master. He was the manager of the household. And the household was a wealthy household, so Joseph probably looked like a kind of a wealthy man.

But he wasn't a wealthy man, he didn't own a thing. Potiphar owned it all. If you met Joseph, you might see him riding a nice chariot down the road and wearing a fancy robe, and you might see him carrying bags of gold, which he's doing business with, and so on.

There's a wealthy man. Well, not exactly. He handles a lot of wealth.

He stewards a lot of wealth. But none of it is his. Everything he does is for the benefit of his master.

And that's what it means to forsake all that you have. It doesn't mean that you go liquidate it all. Now, if Jesus says, sell all you have and give to the poor, you better do that, because it's his stuff now.

But you won't feel the loss, because it wasn't yours anyway. It's easy to give other people's money away. Just ask anyone in Congress.

Give away money, as long as it's not mine. Give other people's money away. Well, that's what a steward does.

If the rich young ruler had become a disciple, and Jesus said, well, give it all away, the man would have said, okay, it's yours anyway, not mine. If you don't tell me to give it, I'll hold on to it, I'll manage it, I'll do what I can to promote your interest in it, until you say you want me to do something else with it. It's not mine, but I'll take responsibility for managing it for you.

That's what a manager does. That's what a steward is. That's what a disciple is.

When I come to Christ, I have to decide, is there anything of mine that I want to insist it's mine? Or am I willing to forsake everything I have and, as it were, sign over the title to Jesus? It doesn't mean that I won't be required to use it, to manage it, to spend it, to invest it, to maintain it. It's now my master's property, but if he puts me in charge of it, I'll steward it in the way that I think will please him, because it's his. Now, it might look to everyone like it's mine, because I'm living in the house, I'm driving the car, I'm going on these flights and so forth, I look like somebody who's got money, maybe, if I'm managing a lot of money, I might look like I own it.

But God and I know who owns it. And if I actually say, you know, I'd really like to get myself a little place on the French Riviera with some of this money, well, if I don't have reason to believe that's what God wants done with it, and I do that, I'm stealing from the owner, because I'm not the owner. If Joseph had decided to set himself up a little cabana in Belize or something, you know, he'd be stealing.

He looks like a rich man, but he doesn't own a thing. That's what a disciple is. Disciples forsake all he has.

Whatever for? Why is it worth that? Why would anyone do such a thing as that? Well, they do such a thing as that because it's worth it. But what makes it worth it? Well, is Jesus worth it or is he not? If you say, I'm not so sure, then you can't be a disciple. It's that easy.

You say, well, Jesus is definitely worth it. Well, then, it's a small price to pay, isn't it? I

want to read you a little something out of this book. If you've read the book, you're familiar with it.

But in my book about the kingdom of God and so forth, I have a chapter called It Comes at a Cost. And I want to read you something that I swiped from somebody else. That somebody else has got him, Juan Carlos Ortiz, who wrote a book back in the 70s called Disciple, which had a tremendous impact on me back in the 70s.

But he's got this little whimsical story about the pearl of great price. He's talking about the parable Jesus said, the kingdom of God is like a pearl of great price, which a merchant found, and for the joy of it, sold all that he had so he could purchase that pearl of great price. He didn't do so grudgingly.

He knew the pearl was worth more than all that he had, so he gladly traded off everything he had to have that pearl. And that pearl is the kingdom of God, which you obtain when you become a disciple of Jesus. But this is a little, I guess, description of that transaction by Juan Carlos Ortiz in his book, Disciple.

He said, when we find Jesus, it costs us everything. He has happiness, joy, peace, healing, security, eternity, everything. So we say, I want this pearl.

How much is it? Well, the seller says, it's very expensive. But how much, we ask? Well, a very large amount. Would you think I could buy it? Oh, of course, everyone can buy it.

But didn't you say it's very expensive? Yes. Well, how much is it? Everything you have, says the seller. We make up our minds.

All right, I'll buy it, we say. Well, what do you have? He wants to know. Let's write it down.

Well, I have \$10,000 in the bank. Good, \$10,000. What else? Well, that's all.

That's all I have. Nothing more? Well, I have a few dollars here in my pocket. How much? We start digging.

Well, let's see, 30, 40, 60, 80, 100. \$120, that's fine. What else do you have? Well, nothing, that's all.

Well, where do you live? He's still probing. In my house. Yes, I have a house.

The house too, then. He writes that down. You mean I have to live in my camper? You have a camper.

That too. What else? I'll have to sleep in my car. You have a car? You have two of them.

Both of them. Both of them cars. Both cars, they become mine.

What else? Well, you already have my money, my house, my camper, my cars. What else do you want? Are you alone in this world? No, I have a wife and two children. Oh, yes, your wife and children too.

What else? I have nothing left. I'm left alone now. Suddenly, the seller exclaims, Oh, I almost forgot, you yourself too.

Everything becomes mine. Wife, children, house, money, cars, and you too. Then he goes on.

Now listen, I will allow you to use all these things for the time being. But don't forget that they're mine, just as you are. And whenever I need any of them, you must give them up because I'm now the owner.

Now that's a whimsical little commentary on the Pearl of Great Price, but Jesus said nothing less. He said the kingdom is like a pearl worth more than anything you have. And if you know the value of a pearl like that, you happily trade everything you have to get it.

Now you might say, no, nothing is so valuable. I give up all the stuff. That guy gave up.

Well, you haven't seen that pearl yet then. If you know the value of the thing, and by the way, Jesus does. And Jesus has nothing to gain by giving you a bad deal.

You know, Jesus isn't needy. He's not a con artist. He's not trying to get your money like he needs it.

He can make planets out of gold and diamonds if he wanted with a word. What does he need your money for? This is more for you than for him. Unless you forsake him, you can't do this.

Unless everything is transferred to him, you're still hanging on to something that becomes an anchor, that prevents you from sailing, that prevents you from going. If there's still one thing that you're still saying, God can have everything except this one thing. That's the one thing the devil will grab a hold of and say, then let's hang on to that real tight.

Because then you won't follow God. You can't follow God halfway. Now, let's face it, the churches are full of people who call themselves Christians.

And, you know, I don't know if they call themselves full on, most of them. But it's clear that when Jesus said, you can't be my disciple unless you're sold out, that certainly is what he's saying. Unless you're all in, you can't have one foot in and one foot out.

Now, it means, of course, that you become a total follower of Jesus. And his word becomes your command, as it were. If you continue in my words, you said you're my

disciples indeed.

And we make disciples by teaching them to observe everything Jesus commanded. Which, of course, says the same thing. Now, I want to close by saying this.

The Bible says that Jesus is the Lord. And as many things have changed in our culture from biblical times, one of the things that has changed most is we don't have lords. And by the word Lord, the Bible doesn't mean like what the British talk about, lords and, you know, nobility and stuff like that.

A lord, in the Bible, is simply the word for somebody who owned slaves. And there were slaves in every country in the world from the beginning of time until about, what, a couple hundred years ago or less, when some Christian countries got a conscience about that and abolished slavery. Thank God.

Now, again, thank God, because slavery is a terrible institution, which should, you know, Christian societies should have gotten rid of much earlier. It took them a while to see it because everyone in the world had always taken for granted that slavery is something that exists. And it took a while to see, wait, wait, wait, that shouldn't be so.

And so it was the Christians, of course, in England and then in America first who decided, this is unconscionable. We need to get rid of that. And so you and I live, thankfully, in a more enlightened time where nobody believes in slavery anymore, except the people bringing people over the border, the southern border, who have sex slaves that they bring in.

There is still slavery. It's just not legal. There are still many countries that have legal slavery, but they're not Western countries, they're not Christian countries, they're Muslim countries, and, of course, tribal groups in faraway places.

But in Western civilization, slavery is not legal anywhere. And that means nobody in this room, nor your parents, and probably not your grandparents, ever met a lord, because a lord is someone who owns slaves. And for generations, there have never been a lord in this country.

And that means that when the early Christians said, Jesus is Lord, that meant something very specific that everyone understood, because everyone knew that at least half the Roman population were slaves, and a significant portion of the others were lords that owned the slaves. A lord was a slave owner. And we don't think that way.

When we hear that Jesus is Lord, we think Lord is like another name for Jesus. He's like the good Lord. You know, he's the Lord Jesus.

That's like one of his names. It's like Mr. Jesus or something. Actually, to tell you the truth, in some languages, the word Lord and Mr. are the same word.

Senior. Herr, in German. Herr Jesus means Lord Jesus.

Herr Schmidt means Mr. Schmidt. Señor is the same way in Spanish. It means Señor Jesus is the Lord Jesus.

Señor Rodriguez is Mr. Rodriguez. So, in some languages, the word Lord simply has become the same thing as Mr. And I think a lot of people, when they say the Lord Jesus, I think they just think that's just, you know, the way you address, you know, it's a polite way of talking to him, Mr. Jesus. But the word Lord actually has something much more specific.

The Bible says we've been bought with a price. We're not our own. Jesus purchased us with his blood.

He didn't come and die for fun. He came and died to pay a price for a commodity, which is his people. He came to redeem for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good works, it says in Titus 2, verse 14.

So, he bought us. The question is, do I want to be bought or not? A person who becomes a disciple says, I'm in. He paid for me.

I'm not going to deprive him of what he bought. I'm in. I belong to him.

He's my Lord. His wish is my command. Not just, you know, when I'm feeling inspired every moment every day.

My whole life is now under a new ownership. Now, when I was growing up in the church, people talked about accepting Jesus as Lord, which is technically not a biblical expression. You don't accept Jesus as Lord.

I mean, I guess you can in a way. The Bible doesn't use the word accept Jesus as Lord. And it certainly doesn't say make him Lord.

A lot of people say, I made Jesus the Lord of my life. No, you didn't. God did a long time ago.

God made him the Lord of everything. That included you. You just didn't know it until recently.

He's always been your Lord. The past 2,000 years, God made him Lord of everything. Gave him all authority on heaven and earth.

If you didn't know that until now, you'd just been living in ignorance. You'd just been living in rebellion against your owner. Well, you can do the rest of your life that way too if you want.

But when you do business with God in a way that is saving, that makes you a disciple of his, you are embracing his lordship. Now, I grew up in a church where people said, I accepted Jesus as my savior. You know, when I was like 12 years old at church camp.

But I never really accepted him as my lord until, you know, I was in college or something like that. That's a typical example. Lots of people talk about accepting Jesus as savior at one point and some other time as lord.

I got the impression growing up that at least if he's my savior, I'm saved. So that's all that's mandatory. I have to make sure I accept him as my savior.

This other negotiation of whether he's going to be my lord or not, I guess that's kind of maybe a secondary thing to be concerned with maybe. I mean, if he's already my savior, it doesn't really matter if I go to the lord part because I already have a savior. I'm saved.

And if all I want to do is be saved. And remember, if all I'm looking at is my way, all I care about is salvation. But I'm not converted yet.

If I'm still thinking, how do I please me and look out for me? I haven't turned around and said, how do I please and look out for God? So, but you see, many people say, well, he's not my lord yet. Because I have a savior. I'll consider lordship maybe later a day, maybe when I'm about ready to die or something.

Maybe when I'm too old to enjoy sex or something. Who knows? You know, I'll think of God as a lord maybe, seriously. No, that's not an option.

The way I was raised and many Christians raised, they've had the impression, you can have Jesus as your savior today and maybe later have him as your lord. No, there's not two Jesuses. There's not a Jesus who's the savior and another Jesus who's the lord.

And you can have this Jesus, the savior now. And later you can have Jesus as lord if you want. Now, the Bible says this is the message that God has given us eternal life.

This life is in his son. He that has the son has life. He that does not have the son does not have life.

Well, who's the son? Jesus. Who's had? The lord. The savior.

The king. He's one guy. There's not several Jesuses.

You either have him or you don't. If you have Jesus, you have a savior and a lord because he is both. If you don't have Jesus, you don't have a lord or a savior because he's both.

There's only one Jesus. You get the whole Jesus at one time or you don't have him. And I think people have sold this idea of Jesus as savior but not yet lord to try to avoid people doing what the rich young ruler did.

You know? Oh, they're going to walk away. Let's just give them the easy message. He'll save you.

All you have to do is believe. But lordship, you know, wait until you've been a Christian. You might kind of warm up to the idea of having a lord too.

Now, Paul said this about salvation. In Romans 9, 10. 10, 9. Excuse me.

Romans 10, 9. Paul said, if you confess with him out that Jesus is lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. So when you're saved is when Jesus is your savior, right? Because you're saved by him. When does that happen? When you confess he's your lord.

There's only one Jesus. You get a savior and a lord at the same time or you don't have either. When Jesus was born, the angels said to the shepherds, unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior who is Christ the lord.

He had all those titles from the day he was born. He never divided them up later in his life. When he called his disciples to follow him, they followed the savior and the lord.

And I liken this to marriage many times when I'm talking. I'm trying to get people to understand this. When two people are getting married and they're saying their vows, we talked about marriage earlier as sort of an analogy of this.

The Bible does. The Bible uses marriage as an analogy of salvation because both are a covenant. A marriage is a covenant that a man and a woman make together that binds them for life.

Our relationship with God is a covenant also. There's almost no other covenants we really have in modern times anymore. But marriage is a biblically endorsed analogy for salvation.

God is the husband. Israel was the wife. Christ is the bridegroom.

We are his bride. This is a biblical analogy. So how do you get into marriage? By entering into a covenant.

What's that look like? Well, you've been to a wedding, so you know what it looks like when people enter into a covenant. The preacher says to the man, will you, George, take this woman, Sarah, to be your lawfully wedded wife to have and to hold from this day forward? In sickness and health, for richer, for poorer, for better, for worse, and forsaking all others, cleave only unto her as long as you both shall live. Say I do.

Now, the husband then, or the groom, the would-be husband, who's not yet a husband, what if he says, well, wait, I was just listening to what you were just saying, Pastor. And honestly, I see a lot of benefit in living with this woman. I'm a terrible cook.

I need a good cook. She can cook for me. I'm kind of, frankly, sexually frustrated.

I don't mind having a bed partner. I certainly could use someone to clean my house. And I get lonely.

So how about if I take this woman to be my bed partner, my cook, my house cleaner, and my companion at this point? And after a while, I'll decide if I want to forsake all others and cleave only unto her and make this full-on commitment. Because, frankly, Pastor, that commitment sounds kind of binding. Honestly, it's sort of like being owned, isn't it? Exactly.

Exactly what it's like. When you enter into a covenant, you are saying, I'm owned. Paul said, a husband has no power over his own body.

His wife has it. A wife has no power over her own body. Her husband has it.

They own each other. That's what a covenant is. When God entered a covenant with Israel, he said, if you keep my covenant, you'll be my own special treasure.

I'll own you. And so if someone said, well, I'll take this woman in all the ways that will benefit me, but all the ways that are costly to me, is it okay if I negotiate that later on in the relationship? Unfortunately, there's a lot of women today who say, okay, so the guy gets the free milk and never buys the cow. But the truth is, in sane societies, if a bridegroom said that, the pastor would say, I'm sorry, I can't marry you.

I can't announce that you're a man and wife because you're not committed to this woman in the way that marriage defines commitment. And by the way, the girl, if she has any good sense would say, what? Listen, I don't got a problem cooking. I'm okay with that.

I'm good with that. I keep a good house, too. I don't mind sleeping with you.

But that comes with a bigger umbrella where you're all in for the rest of your life committed to me only. On those terms, I will do all those things for you. Without those terms, you're going home a single man.

And it's the same way when you enter a covenant with God. You don't say, oh, God, I would like you to answer my prayers, save me, forget my sins, heal my grandma, heal me when I'm sick, do all the good things that people say God does for people. But this idea of like committing all the way to you and forsaking everything else.

And can I negotiate that when I thought this through more? Sure. Come back when you're ready. You don't get any part of this without the whole thing.

There's only one Jesus. If you have Jesus, you've got a king. You're in his kingdom.

You've also got a savior. You've also got a whole lot of other wonderful things that he is. But you don't have less than what he is.

He's a king and Lord. And the disciple is the person who says, that's just fine with me because that's exactly what I'm looking for. That's exactly what I want.

And if it costs me everything, it's a bargain. And a person who doesn't think that way is not yet a disciple. And Jesus cannot be my disciple.

Some might say, but does that make salvation by works? No. If a man says, I accept this woman on all the terms of marriage, did that make marriage a matter of works? No, it made a matter of making a commitment. There's a lot of works that follow that.

But marriage isn't works. When I made vows to my wife, we expected that we'd do things for each other, of course, work and serve and so forth, both of us. But we were married before we did any of those things.

We were married by making the commitment. But because we were married, we did the things married people do. We lived as a man and wife.

Because you receive Christ by faith, you do the things that people do who have a Messiah, who have a Lord, who have a king. This is my last illustration, I guarantee. I was speaking for a large group of Campus Crusade people and Youth With a Mission people combined in a Korea meeting in Seoul, Korea many years ago.

And I was teaching about the Lordship of Christ. And after the meeting, I was riding back to the Youth With a Mission base where I was staying with one of the staff members in the backseat. And he was saying, you know, I found it really interesting what you were saying about, you know, being God's slave and Christ is your Lord.

And he says, he says, that's very interesting. I actually find it more, more enriching to think of Jesus as my friend. And I said, well, I understand that because Jesus actually did say in John 15, I no longer call you slaves, but friends.

So I see why you'd say that. But you need to read the verse before that. Jesus said, you're my friends if you do everything I command you.

So I won't call you a slave. I'll just call you a friend. And you can be that if you do everything I command you to do.

Be a good slave, you'll be a good friend. You see, that's the kind of friendship. I don't know how many friends you have who have made those terms of friendship for you.

There are actually people out there who probably do make those demands, and they don't stay friends with you very long. But if someone says, listen, you can be my friend. Just do everything I command you to do for the rest of your life.

Serve me like a slave. And then, you know, then you'll be my friend. Now, it is possible to be a slave and a friend.

Because Jesus was friends with his disciples. But they were also bought with a price. He was their king and their lord.

Abraham had a friend who was his slave, who went out and found Isaac a wife for him. Elisha was the slave of Elijah, and he served him. And they were friends, I think.

Moses and Joshua. There's a lot of slave friends in the Bible. It's possible for a person to be a slave and a friend.

When Jesus said, I don't call you slaves, but friends, he meant, I don't call you only slaves, but also friends. And you are my friends, if you do what I command you. So obedience to him is not one of the things that are kind of optional.

You get to be a friend on some kind of loosey-goosey terms. And then if you're really a good friend of his, you might even think about letting him rule your life. Yeah, well, if you're not ready for him to rule your life, you're not ready for Jesus yet.

Nobody in the Bible ever came to Christ on any terms other than full surrender. Because he's the king. And the way we look at it in the Bible is that if he's the king of everyone, and he is, because God has given all authority in heaven and earth, then everyone is either in submission to the king or in rebellion against the king.

There's no third way. You got a king, you're either submitted or rebelled. And the ones in rebellion are the ones that will not be happy about it for very much longer.

But it may make them happy for the moment. And they're welcome to make that choice. But a disciple is one who says, not my will, your will, not just today, not just tomorrow, at all times.

So that everything I have belongs to God. If God takes it, it might be something I really didn't want to get rid of. But it's not mine.

It's no loss to me. I gave it up before. I remember somebody who had wasted a lot of my time at one point and then just kind of bailed on me.

And so I realized how much time I'd spent investing in that person. And for God's sake, investing in them for their benefit. And then they just turned on me and went away.

I remember thinking, God, I wish they hadn't wasted all my time. I felt like God spoke and said, whose time? Where did you get any time? How do you own your time? You're a slave. That's my time.

And I had you using that time. If they wasted time, it wasn't yours. And the same thing.

If somebody steals from me, they're not stealing my stuff. I already stole it from myself and gave it to Jesus. It's all his.

Therefore, I have nothing to lose. This is why the Bible says we have peace. That passes understanding.

Because the things people don't have peace about, the things they worry about, their life, their possessions, their friends, whatever, their position. I'm giving that up right at the start. That's all God's now.

It's his worry, not mine. It's his problem, not my problem. It's his stuff, not mine.

It's such a wonderful, joyful way to be. But I'm not selling it because it's joyful. I'm saying that if it was miserable, it'd still be the only sensible thing.

If there's a king of the universe, nothing makes sense but to submit to him or rebel at your own risk. So, that's what discipleship is about. Now, the second book I have about discipleship is called Empire of the Risen Son, All the King's Men.

I was not excluding women. Obviously, all the king's men is a tale from a nursery rhyme, so I just lifted it. But it's obviously men and women who belong to the king are disciples.

And what I wrote is a book on it. Actually, the book, I think, is a good curriculum on discipleship. If I was running a discipleship class, I'd probably go through the chapters because it unpacks very thoroughly what it means to be a disciple.

And it's something I've given a lot of thought about over the past 52 years because it was 52 years ago that I decided to be a disciple, even before I knew that you had to be a disciple to be a Christian. I thought there were people who were Christians but not disciples. I wanted to be a disciple.

And then I later learned that what I wanted to be is what all Christians were required to be in the Bible. It doesn't mean you have to live poor unless God wants you to. You could be very rich, but it's God's stuff.

And it's your obligation when you spend it, invest it, do anything with it, say, is this what my master would do with this? Does this serve his purposes and his values? If so, it's quite all right. I don't think God is against some people having stuff and even living comfortably, but it's when you get attached to it that you're thinking of it as yours, not his. It's that attitude that prevents you from being able to be a disciple.