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Being a Disciple in the Kingdom of God



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In "Being a Disciple in the Kingdom of God," Steve Gregg emphasizes the importance of following Jesus as the appointed and anointed King. He describes being a disciple as a commitment that demands full loyalty and submission to Christ. This involves a transfer of ownership and stewardship of one's life to Jesus, as well as willingness to persevere in the face of persecution and suffer loss. Gregg encourages listeners to count the cost of discipleship and surrender everything to God, trusting in Him completely.

Transcript

Those who become citizens of the kingdom are the disciples of the king. Now, I didn't mention this this morning because I had too little time, but in the Old Testament we have a paradigm of the kingdom of God in the career of David. David in the New Testament is regarded as a type of Christ.

In fact, many of the things David said in his psalms are quoted in the New Testament as if it's Jesus himself saying them, as if we know that what David said is sort of like Jesus saying it because David's a picture and a type of Christ. I did mention that the term son of David was a title for the Messiah that the Jews recognized because God had given a promise to David that the Messiah would be a descendant of his. And not only a descendant, but sort of the, what we would call the antitype.

Now, many Christians don't know the word antitype. I don't know if it's a strange word. But most Christians, I hope, know the word type.

When we say something in the Old Testament is a type of Christ, it means that something in the Old Testament is a picture, a foreshadowing of Christ. The Passover is a type of Christ being slain for us, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5, 7. Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed. The tabernacle was a type of heavenly things.

In Romans 5, it says that Adam was a type of Christ in that each of them started a new history of humanity in themselves. When something in the Old Testament has a parallel or a similarity to something in Christ or the New Testament, we say that that Old Testament thing is a type. The word type comes from the Greek word tupos, which

means a pattern.

And when something is a type of something else, that something else is called the antitype. So if we're talking about a prophecy being predicted, then we're talking about its fulfillment. That's like a type and its antitype.

The antitype is the fulfillment of the type. I wish I could have gotten the point across without explaining all that terminology, but Christ's kingdom is the antitype of David's, which means that God gave a picture of Christ's kingdom in David's own, in many respects. And when David became king, it was a secret matter, because there was already a very hostile king, recognized by Israel, and sitting on the throne, Saul, who had become somewhat crazy and rebellious against God.

And an evil spirit was tormenting him. David was originally called in just to play music for him, but at a certain point, God had David anointed to be the king instead of Saul. But this was not something Saul was apprised of, nor the public.

Samuel, the prophet, secretly visited the home of David's father and viewed all of his sons and reviewed them, and God told him to anoint the youngest son, David. And in a private ceremony, David was anointed to be the king of Israel. And the spirit of God came upon him, and the spirit of God left Saul, and an evil spirit came on Saul.

So this was where Saul became the demon-possessed king, and David was the spirit-filled king. The only thing is that most people didn't know about David. This was private.

Secret. It had to be secret, because Saul would never have tolerated it. And David was a young boy, didn't have any real defense against an army of Saul, so he kept it a secret for a while.

But when David killed Goliath, the people began to praise David more than Saul. They were saying, you know, Saul has slain his thousands, but David has slain his tens of thousands. And Saul heard that and he said, wow, they're attributing to me only thousands, and to David tens of thousands.

What more can he have but the kingdom? And that's correct. God did have in mind for David to take the kingdom from Saul. But not instantly.

Saul began to persecute David, tried to kill him in his home, but David had escaped through a window with his wife's help and had fled into the wilderness. Now, there were some people who fled with David. The Bible says there were about 400 men who were in dissolution with Saul and his kingdom.

And so they joined David and made him their captain. And they traveled with him through the wilderness, living in caves and mountainous areas and so forth. And Saul pursued them with his armies.

So at that time, there were in a sense two kings of Israel, a legitimate one and an illegitimate one. Saul was no longer the legitimate king. God had rejected him.

And David was the legitimate king ever since his anointing, but few people knew him. Only about 400 people who left everything. They left their homes, apparently their jobs, apparently maybe even their families, and they went into the wilderness to be with David and to be his loyalists.

He was their king, though he had not been recognized publicly as king. Well, of course, Saul pursued David and his men around the desert until Saul was drawn away to go to another war against the Philistines, and they killed him. Well, they wounded him, and he fell on his own sword.

He killed himself. Saul did. And when Saul was dead, the people of Judah, David's own tribe, asked him to come be their king, which he did.

And about seven and a half years later, the rest of Israel asked him to be as well. Now, what's interesting about this outline of David's ministry is that it parallels very much that of the son of David, Jesus Christ. Jesus was privately anointed also to be king.

And that was when he came to John the Baptist, all the people having been baptized had apparently gone away. After being baptized by John, Jesus came to him, and John baptized him. And when he was baptized, the Holy Spirit came down in the form of a dove and landed on Jesus, and this was like the Spirit coming on David when he was anointed king.

And God's voice announced, in language very similar to Psalm 2, that Jesus was his beloved son, and that he had been begotten by God and appointed his king. And therefore, Jesus was now the king, God's appointed king. In a world where very few people knew it, and in a world where everyone was already serving another king, who had been ruling the world ever since Adam and Eve fell, Satan had gained control.

His kingdom dominated the world for 4,000 years. And then Jesus came and was anointed at his baptism. And then there were, as there are now, two kings and two kingdoms.

The kingdom of Saul was illegitimate because God had rejected him, and the kingdom of Satan is illegitimate. He has no real authority. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Christ, which means none is left over for Satan.

He has no authority. But he still operates illegitimately as long as he can persuade people to do so. As long as people are ignorant about Jesus being king, they will, by default, follow Satan and remain in Satan's kingdom.

Likewise, as long as people didn't know that David was God's king, by default they

continued to follow Saul as long as he could persuade them that he was still the king, though he was not. Now, of course, from the time David was anointed to the time that he became publicly announced as king was that period of time that corresponds to the time between Jesus' baptism and his second coming. In other words, the period we live in now.

We are like those 400 men who followed David. The world serves a different king and sees Jesus as a threat. It sees us as a threat because we stand for another king, one Jesus.

We stand in loyalty to him. And the world and their king are not happy about it. Now, for most of my lifetime, this part of the world, America, has been very tolerant of Christianity, although I don't know that we could ever say there was a time when most people in America were actually Christians.

This is a country that is built on tolerance of different religious ideas, including Christianity. So we haven't received too much persecution. That is changing.

We see it now more and more. People who are Christians are considered to be the strange ones, the hating ones, the ones who are resisting progress and maybe even dangerous. And therefore, we may begin to see some action, such as the disciples throughout history have done.

The disciples who followed Jesus in the first century did so. They did so in a world that wasn't so tolerant. Of Christ's hating claims.

And therefore, they were persecuted, martyred, chased around. The apostles were certainly chased around. Paul notably.

They were all martyred, except for John. And they tried to martyr him. It didn't work.

But the thing is that Christianity has always had its persecutors. And following Jesus always required a willingness to be persecuted. And that will be true until finally the counterfeit king, Satan, is removed.

Which he will be when Jesus comes back. And then Christ will be proclaimed universal king. Every knee will bow.

Every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. But the time came for David too, where everyone in Israel acknowledged him as king. But there was that period of inconvenience, to say the least, that his followers had to endure until that point came.

And we are living in a time like that. We're following an unpopular king. He is God's king.

He's the one God has anointed and appointed as king. And even enthroned in heaven. But that's invisible to the world.

So it's like the unseen kingdom. But we know it's real. And therefore, we follow him.

And it is truly real, even though it's invisible. Paul said we're not looking at the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen. Because the things that are seen are temples.

The things that are unseen are eternal. Now, I'd like to read a passage in Luke chapter 14. I have to say, I don't hear very many sermons about this passage.

But it's a very important passage. And it is about discipleship. Being a disciple of the king, of Jesus.

This begins in Luke 14, verse 25. It says, Now great multitudes went with Jesus, and he turned and said to them, Anyone who comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, 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 has enough to finish it. Lest, after he has laid the foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build and 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.

Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple. Now three of these verses in this section end with the same words.

Cannot be my disciple. Now it's not that Jesus is saying, I won't let you be my disciple unless you do this. You can't be with me, you can't travel with me, you can't obey me without incurring loss in the world.

You have to be willing to suffer loss. Unless you can do that, you can't be my disciple. It's like when you enlist in the Marines.

If you can't make it through boot camp, you just can't be a Marine. Sorry. There are many people who can do it.

Some can't or won't. And therefore, they cannot be part of that enterprise. Likewise, Jesus said, unless you hate your father, mother, wife, and children in your own life also, unless you take up your cross and follow me, unless you forsake all that you have, you can't be my disciple.

Again, he's not being harsh. He's just saying, this is what we're required to do. You just can't do it.

Those people who followed David could not have followed him if they preferred their family comforts at home more than they were loyal to David. If they were not willing to risk their lives and travel around with him, the armies were chasing them to kill them. If they had left everything to follow David, they couldn't be with David.

His kingdom required total loyalty. Now, by the way, because these men did, and their number grew, actually, even under those conditions. It was first 400 men, and later we read there were 600 men with David.

So we don't know how much it may have grown after that, but it was a growing kingdom, a growing movement. But by the time David was made king over all Israel, he had no problem knowing who he could trust to put in positions of authority. He had 30-something mighty men that had special privileges in the military.

He appointed people to cabinet positions who had been among those people who were with him. Because, you know, once you become king and everyone knows you're king, everyone's your friend. Everyone wants a job in the government, you know? But when people are only your friend when you're in power, they haven't really been vetted.

When they've been with you when your life is at risk, and theirs too with you, when they've risked their lives with you, then that's good vetting. When you come to power, you know who you can trust. And that's kind of what God's doing with us.

He made humans to reign with him. That's why he made Adam and Eve. He said, let's make man in our own images.

Let's give him dominion over the things that are made here. That's what people make for him, to reign with Christ, with God, over his creation. In the New Testament, it's very clear.

That's what God has in mind. Jesus said that the kingdom of God was like a man who called his servants and gave them some of his goods to take care of while he's away. And when he came back, those who had done well, stewarding his goods, were rewarded.

He said, the one who reigned over five cities, you reign over ten cities. The way they stewarded the little bit that he gave them at first, their faithfulness in that qualified them for ruling with him. Now, Jesus is going to rule over the world.

The Bible is very clear on that. Psalm 2, the Father says to Jesus in verse 8, Ask of me, and I'll give you the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession. That's Jesus being given the ends of the earth for his possession, the nations for his inheritance.

And Jesus said to his disciples, bless over me, they shall inherit the earth with him. In

Romans 8, it says that we're sons of God, we're heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ. What Christ is going to inherit, we are too.

He's inheriting the world, we're going to inherit the world with him, he said. In Revelation 5, 10, it happens of heaven saying, God has redeemed from every nation, kindred, and tongue, men to God, and they shall reign on the earth. God made man to reign on the earth, and Jesus, the son of man, to reign on the earth.

And those of us who are loyal to him when he comes, and is universally recognized, and the whole earth, the earth is full of the knowledge and glory of God like the waters cover the sea, the Bible says. When that time comes, those who are faithful disciples in this life, who have been faithful unto death, not necessarily martyred, although you might be martyred, but at least until you die, this life is the bedding process. People sometimes say, why did God put Adam and Eve in a garden where there's a snake, where the devil is there? And why did he put that tree there? That was on purpose.

Certainly God, if he wanted, could have put the snake on another planet from Adam and Eve, and could have simply not put in a tree of the knowledge of evil. That was on purpose. They were being vetted, they were being tested.

We are all tested, that's what the word temptation means in the Greek, it means testing. The snake is called the tester, or the tepter. He's administering the test to see if we're going to pass and graduate, and we promoted it.

God exposes us to the devil. The Bible says Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. In Matthew 4. Come on! The Spirit of God led Jesus to be tempted by the devil in the wilderness.

And all of us too. All of us will be tested. Why? Because we have to.

We have to qualify. Well, how do you do that? Well, be faithful unto death, and I'll give you the crown. On what? You'll ring, Jesus said to the church this morning in Revelation 2.10. So, the purpose of God is that Christ will rule on the earth, and that we will ring with him.

That's the purpose of God. What are we here for? We're here to be tested. We're here to pass.

And not everyone does pass. Obviously, there are people who fall away. There are people who, we were talking about recidivism, you know, when some of these ladies were talking about the prison ladies should get some of them relapsed.

Unfortunately, I don't understand it, but there are people who turned to Christ, and a few years later, they're not following Jesus anymore. They must have been the ones who Jesus said, you cannot be my disciple. They apparently were not presented with the true

cost of discipleship, and did not deal with that when they came to Christ.

They came on different terms. You see, Jesus said, they don't come after me, but have denied himself and taken his cross and following him. Deny yourself? What's that mean? Sleep on a bed of nails? Fast 30 days out of the year? What does it mean to deny yourself? It means to say no to self when it comes to who's in charge.

Until you're a Christian, no matter what else appears to be the case, you are the one making the decisions for your life. It is yourself that you're looking out for, and we live in a time where actually this is encouraged. I remember the first time decades ago when I saw one of the early issues of self-making.

I haven't seen those, but I'm going to say self. I thought, are you kidding? Is it that old now? I mean, it used to be that being self-centered, being self-interested, that those were considered to be bad things. But now we live in a society where you're encouraged to build your self-esteem, your self-worth, and you've got to look out for yourself.

You don't have to encourage people to do that. They do that by nature. It's just that that's our fallen nature, and it's something that people need to work at to stop doing.

It's our nature to say yes to self. You don't have to say no to self. You have to deny self.

You need to deny the privileges that you once gave to self and take self off the throne and allow Christ to be in that position. That's what the men who followed David around did. They didn't do what they would have preferred to do.

They recognized that he was the king that God had appointed, and they decided we're loyal. We're loyal to God's kingdom, and that's what we have to do. It's no longer I, but Christ, Paul said.

If I yet pleased myself, Paul said, I could not be a servant of Christ, Galatians 1.10. So, deny yourself. That's the first thing. And I think many times when we preach the gospel to people, we kind of let that part out.

In fact, without saying so, we've almost encouraged self. Because an awful lot of preaching of the gospel that I've heard growing up, and I've heard a lot, I was raised in churches, and I've been in a lot of churches, I went to a lot of evangelistic crusades. It seems like the gospel is presented as, do yourself a favor, accept Jesus.

After all, otherwise you're going to go to hell. That won't be good for you. You probably want to go to heaven, don't you? God, you need someone to help you.

You need someone to answer your prayers. You need a friend, like Jesus. And all of this is true.

But it's all directed to self-interest. You see, self-interest is our sinful nature. Jesus came

to save us from our sins.

He came to save us from self-interest, so we put his interests ahead of our own. And many times, we address sinners like we address people who we're trying to sell a product to. Minimize the cost and emphasize the benefits.

That's how products are sold. We're trying to sell Jesus like a product. You know, he doesn't ask you to give up much.

But look at the benefits. The benefits of being a Christian are out of this world. Well, actually, a lot of us are in this world.

But to sell Jesus as the best thing you can do for yourself is to somewhat fail to address the problem that they may be saved from. And that is that they've always manipulated everything for themselves. From the time you're a baby.

You're hungry, you cry. Disturb everyone until you get your way. Your diaper's full.

You're hungry. You own a bottle. You just cry until you get your way.

You don't care who you inconvenience. You know you feel inconvenienced until they serve you. As you get older, you learn how to manipulate things.

Your parents, your brothers, your sisters. Eventually, the opposite sex. Your teachers.

Whoever. Everything is there for you to manipulate for yourself. That's the fallen attitude.

And Jesus comes along and says, No, the first thing you need to do is deny yourself. So self is going to be slipped out of that picture. Not that you don't have a self.

Not that you aren't a person or something. But self simply has no privileges. You're not going to get any more privileges.

This is what conversion means. Conversion doesn't mean you say a sinner's prayer hoping to get a cheap ticket to heaven. Conversion means that you repent.

Of having served yourself. Of having done things for your own advantage. And say, everything I should have been doing should have been for God's advantage.

God owns me. Jesus died for me. He purchased me.

Everything I've done for myself, I've been robbing God. I should have been doing all this for Him instead. From now on, I'm going to do it right.

I'm going to follow Jesus. My self behaves. My self be crucified.

I'm crucified with Christ. And so, when people are not addressed at that most fundamental level, they often say a sinner's prayer or they do something and then later you find out they're not growing as Christians. They're not still Christians anymore.

I mean, it's crazy. What went wrong? I remember they were weeping and full of joy when they got saved. Remember Jesus said, some of the seed falls on soil.

It's shallow, underneath there's rock. And it says, it springs up real quickly, but because there's no root in it, it withers when the sun comes up. They said, that's the people who hear the word of God and they receive it with joy.

But shortly afterwards, when tribulations and persecutions come because of the word, they quit and fall away. Now, why would they do that? Because they were in it for themselves. If you're in it for yourself, you'll be in it as long as it's not hurting your style.

As long as it's not hurting you, not costing you money. Real conversion says, I'm willing to die. My self has no privileges.

I mean, God may make me happy. He may get me happy. He may do all those things, but if he doesn't, I'm still going to serve him.

You know, I had somebody ask me once. I was about 19 years old. I was really stunned to hear a preacher say, you know, if Jesus would appear to you and say, you know what? The church has had it wrong.

They just misunderstood the Bible. But there's really no heaven or hell. There's no life after this one.

Will you still serve me? I had to think about that for a moment because I never thought of it that way. If there's no heaven or hell, there's nothing after this life where I still serve Jesus. But it didn't take long to realize, well, of course.

I don't serve Jesus for me. I'm serving Jesus for him. I don't serve Jesus because he's worthy.

I don't serve Jesus because he hands out goodies. Even eternal goodies. I serve Jesus because he deserves it.

He's worthy. I love this story about the Moravian missionaries back in the 18th century. The Moravian movement in Germany on the state of Zinzendorf became the first Protestant missionary movement.

And a couple of members of their community heard about some slaves on an island in the west of Egypt that was owned by a very antagonistic anti-Christian man. And he wouldn't let any missionaries come to his island. And so a couple of these missionaries sold themselves into slavery with really not much of any hope of ever seeing their

families again.

They set off to this island to evangelize the slaves of this evil man. But who knows what he would do to them? Well, they didn't consider, I mean, they thought of it, but it wasn't their consideration. They went for Christ's sake.

And as their ship was leaving the shore, their families were dabbling around weeping as they saw them go off. And they probably would never see them again. One of the missionaries shouted out, May the land of the slain receive the reward of his suffering.

Very famous remark now. May the land of the slain receive the reward of his suffering. He didn't say, may these poor slaves finally get to heaven because, you know, because we love them and we love God and God loves them.

So God just wants them to go to heaven. Well, whatever he does wants them to go to heaven. But their motive was not that sinners would escape from what they deserved, but that Christ would receive what he deserves.

That he would receive the reward of his suffering. If there was no heaven or hell, there are both, heaven and hell. But if there was none, it should make absolutely no difference as to your choice to follow Jesus.

He made, he created you, he died for you, he deserves you. And he deserves 24-7, all of you. Not that you tag a little bit of religion onto your life like a postage stamp, which identifies you as a Christian.

No, what is a Christian? We just read what it takes to be a disciple. If you come to me, don't hate your father, mother, wife, children, and your own life. If you won't take up your cross, if you don't forsake all that you have, you cannot be my disciple.

When I first discovered these verses, when I was in my late teens, I suppose, I began to think, well, the people at my church, I don't know, a lot of them don't seem like this describes them. And I was indefinite that it should describe me, but I've never been perfect myself. But this was the standard I knew and was accepting.

But when I look at other Christians in my church, a lot of these people don't seem to fit this description. And I thought, but they're certainly saved, because they believe in Jesus. But why don't they fit this description? And for a while, I entertained the thought, maybe there's two kinds of Christians.

There's the kind that are just saved because they believe in Jesus. And then there's another echelon of Christians called the disciples. Sort of like the special forces in God's kingdom.

You know, really like the Green Berets. You know, they're the really sold-out people who

become missionaries and stuff like that. Because I was trying to harmonize my understanding that everybody who believed in Jesus was a Christian, but not very many, not a very large percentage, seem to fit the description that Jesus said you have to do if you're going to be a disciple.

And so I actually was curious about whether Christians and disciples were different categories, but then I discovered the only definition in the Bible of a Christian. The word Christian appears only three times in the Bible, surprisingly. But the first time it appears, it's defined for us.

It's in Acts chapter 11, verse 26, that says the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch. Before that, they were just called disciples. At Antioch, they began to have an additional name.

They were also called now Christians. And that's the only definition of Christian you'll find in the Bible. A disciple.

But we read when Jesus said about being a disciple. It makes you think that being a Christian means something more than what perhaps many modern church people think it means. Maybe what some preachers think it means.

Because I actually know quite a few preachers who don't seem to fit the description Jesus gave here to a disciple, frankly. I'm not their judge, I'm just saying I know people. And I see how they act and the choices they make, and so forth.

I'm not trying to be judgmental, but let's just let Jesus' words be the judge. Now, what about us? Do we hate our father, mother, wife, and children, and our own lives? Well, we have to understand what that means and what it doesn't mean. Obviously, Jesus won't permit us to hate anybody.

We're supposed to love our enemies. We're supposed to be good to those who persecute us and bless those who curse us. Certainly our wives and children and parents.

There are certainly instructions and obligations to love and take care of them. And to honor them. So what do you mean by that? Well, he said in that verse, you have to hate your own life also.

Do I have to just wake up and say, oh, I hate my life. I wish I didn't wake up. I wish I'd just died.

I just hate being me. I look in the mirror and just say, I hate myself. No, that's not what he means.

The word hate, in that kind of a context, means to place at a lower level of favor than something else. And one way I know that is by comparing the same statement of Jesus,

or almost the same statement of Jesus, in Matthew's Gospel. In Matthew chapter 10.

Because there, Jesus said, in Matthew 10, verse 37, he who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Now that's actually parallel to whoever does not hate his father or mother more than he hates him.

So hate simply means to love them less. To have less loyalty to them. To, if necessary, be willing to displease them.

Sacrifice the relationship with them if it comes to that. In order to be obedient and loyal to Christ. Now many Christians have to do that.

In fact, Jesus had to do that. In Mark chapter 3, it says that Jesus, at one point in his ministry, seemed like a radical fanatic. And his family, his mother and his brothers, heard about his activities.

He wasn't even stopping to eat or sleep. And you know the Jewish mother can't provide that. And it says that they set out to take him into custody because they thought, it says he's nuts.

He was beside himself, they said. So they came to take him, and when they found him, he was teaching in a house. And the crowd was so thick, they couldn't get near him.

So they sent a message up to the crowd. Your mother and your brother want to see you here. They're outside waiting for you.

And Jesus said, who are my mother and who are my brothers? He said, behold, my mother and my brothers, those who do the will of the Father, and they are my mother and my brothers. As far as we can tell, Jesus didn't even grant an audience to his mother and his brothers. Because they weren't doing the will of the Father at that time.

He was putting his Father's will ahead of his family's will. Many people, especially Jews and Muslims, when they turn to Christ, they're giving up their whole family. They're breaking a kind of heart.

Did you ever read the testimony of that brother, Qureshi? His first name is Uthman al-Din. He's a Muslim who got converted and wrote a book, Seeking Awe, Finding Christ. Tremendous testimony.

He's dead now. He died of cancer. But as a young man, he was a devout Muslim and an apologist defending Islam.

And he gradually and reluctantly became a Christian in conversations with a Christian friend. And he just broke the heart of his parents. And he really would.

This was something that he was counting on. When he was constantly becoming a Christian, he knew that his parents, whom he loved and who loved him, they would just be totally betrayed if he became a Christian. It was very difficult.

But he did it. And it's a very heartbreaking thing. Many of the people who followed Jesus were Jews.

They would be disowned by their parents for doing so. If you care about your parents or your children or your wife or your husband or anyone, your whole wish is more than God's will. It's not going to work.

It's just not going to work. You can't be a good disciple. You're going to have to be ready to go at the drop of a hat as soon as you know what the will of God is I mean, when Abraham was told by God, I want you to take your only son, take him up on Mount Vernon and sacrifice him to me.

It says, Abraham got up early the next morning and he packed his donkey, took the wood for the fire and all of that. And he didn't even wait until noon to see if God would do a change of mind. He got up early in the morning, no delay, took his son up there.

Of course, God did stop him from doing that because it was a test. And sometimes when we actually agree to do the will of God, and it's very costly, it may end up being a test too. Maybe he'll call it off, but you still have to be willing to do it.

He's your king. A king is not a president. And by the way, the president of the administration should be called a president, not a king.

But a king is sovereign. And so you cannot put the wishes of yourself, or family members, or friends, anywhere ahead of your willing obedience to Christ. Or else you simply can't be a disciple.

He said you have to take up your cross and follow me, or you can't be my disciple. What's that mean, take up your cross and follow me? I mean, we know that expression. And many people wear crosses around their neck, I guess they're taking up their cross around their neck.

But to the disciples, the cross did not speak to them about Jesus' crucifixion. They didn't know he was going to be crucified at this point. It came as a shock to them when it happened.

When he talked about taking up the cross, he was not talking about imitating him in carrying a cross. Again, because they had no frame of reference for that. They had a frame of reference though.

They'd seen lots of people carry crosses because that's a common way that the Romans

executed people who were convicted of capital crime. And these cross-carriers, these criminals, often were made to carry their cross to the place of execution. Ultimately it was a voluntary thing because no one could make you carry it.

I mean, they may be going to kill you in a few minutes on it, but they can't make you walk under it. They could drag you, they could beat you, but they couldn't make you walk. But most criminals were willing to carry their cross.

They had already decided that they accepted their penalty. Their old life was over. They were not protesting about their rights or their privileges.

They weren't holding out hopes for their dreams they'd always had. Their dreams were over. Their life was over.

To them, life was exceedingly short. It'd be maybe only an hour or so before they were dead and they knew it. They were living not for this world.

If they didn't know about God, they were in heaps of trouble. But their attitude toward this world was, Hey, the world's going to... the gods are going to spit on me, they're going to call me names as I'm carrying my cross. I'm a condemned man.

I've got no more rights. And the man who was carrying his cross had decided to say, And I accept that. No use fighting it.

It's true. And Jesus said, You've got to be like that. You've got to have that kind of attitude toward the world.

You're not trying to please anybody. You don't care if they're cursing you and persecuting you. You don't have your agenda still looming ahead of you, the thing you've always wanted to do all your life.

You can put all that away. You lay down your life. You just die in the sun.

If you can't do that, then you're not going to be able to be my disciple. And the last thing he said was, Unless you forsake all that you have, you cannot be my disciple. Now, like the other two things, that sounds pretty severe.

What does it mean to forsake all that you have? There are people who have done really crazy things, trying to obey Jesus because they read statements like this, and some others are known people actually cut off their hand, or plucked off their eye, because Jesus said, you know, better to do that than, you know, to be handed, you know, full hand. That's misunderstanding. Jesus is using hyperbole, but he's also saying something that cannot be ignored.

He didn't say this just to hear the sound of his own voice. This is important stuff. What does it mean to forsake all that you have? Well, it doesn't mean that you have a garage

sale tomorrow and sell everything you have and then stand there and think, now what am I going to do? I have some furniture to live in.

I've got a house to live in. You know, I just sold my car. If you forsake all that you have, I'm going to buy another one because I have to get it across town.

You know, that's nonsense. I've known people who have sold everything they had. You know, we used to stand there.

Then they've got nothing and they have to replace it all. It usually costs more than what they got at the garage sale. What does it mean? Well, Jesus, when he told the rich unworthy to sell what he had to give to the poor, the man went away sorrowing.

And Peter said, Lord, we have forsaken everything and followed you. What shall we have? And Jesus answered, you're going to have, you know, many fold more in the next life than this life. But the interesting thing is that Peter said, we have forsaken everything, and Jesus didn't challenge that.

He knew they had it. Look at Peter's life. He still had a house.

He still had a family. He still had a fishing business. He wasn't working it actively at the time.

He still had a boat and nets. All his tackle was still there because he later went out to fish some more. And he even used his house as a meeting center for Jesus and his disciples.

He used his boat as a transport for Jesus and his disciples. He still had them. But he had forsaken everything.

What's that mean? It means that what once was regarded to be his is now not regarded to be his anymore. It's a transfer of title. Jesus said the kingdom of God is like a merchant seeking goodly pearls and finding a pearl of great price.

He sold all that he had so that he could purchase that pearl. That's what the kingdom of God is like. You know what I mean? The kingdom of God? You have to be like a man who recognizes the value of the kingdom of God.

It's like a pearl of great price. You have to realize it's worth more than anything you've got. You need to be willing to part with everything you have in order to get it.

Because you never know what God may ask for. Many of us who have forsaken everything, we still have stuff. But we don't own it.

It's a transfer of title. It's a transfer of ownership to Christ. If he wants it, he can take it.

He can tell us to give it away. If he wants me to give it away, I'm not giving away

anything of mine. It's his.

I'm not my own. I've been robbed of a price. All my stuff is his too.

So that you can't lose anything because you've already given up everything, even your life. No one can take anything from you. Your house can be robbed.

It can be burned down. Your car can be totaled. But if you've surrendered everything to Christ, that's his loss, not yours.

That's his stuff. In my book, I have a couple of pages where I quote from another guy's book. It turns out, Juan Carlos Atizia, a wonderful disciple.

He's talking about the Pearl of Great Christ. And he told this whimsical little story about a man who's shopping in a marketplace. He sees this pearl, this wonderful pearl worth an immense fortune.

And he says, wow, that's a beautiful pearl. And the pearl seller says, oh yeah, there's nothing like it. And the man says, well, I assume it must be very expensive.

And the seller says, oh, it's extremely expensive. And the man says, well, I wish I could buy it. He said, oh, you could.

But I thought you said it's really expensive. He says, no, it is expensive. But you can buy it.

Anyone can buy it. And the man says, well, what's the price? How much is it? He says, well, every day you have. So he says, well, OK, I'll buy that pearl.

And the man says, good, what do you have? Let's write it down here. Well, I have \$300 in my wallet. OK, we'll write that down.

What else do you have? Well, I have 20 grand in the bank. OK, write that down too. What else? Well, that's all.

That's all I've got. Well, where do you live? Well, yeah, I have a house. Well, the house too, doesn't it? You mean I have to live in my RV? Oh, you have an RV.

I've got one there too. I've got to sleep in my car. You have a car? Yes, sure.

OK, both the cars. The man says, OK, I guess you've got everything. I get the pearl, right? The man says, one more thing.

Are you alone in this world? He says, no, I have a wife and three kids. Well, they become mine too. Oh, and one other thing I forgot.

You yourself also. You become mine as well. And so the man receives the pearl, but he

and all that he has are now the possession of the seller.

Then the seller says, you know, one more thing. I have a lot of houses, a lot of women and children to take care of. I have a lot of these things.

So I'm going to appoint you to take care of this house for me. And you drive these cars for me. You take care of this woman and these children for me.

But they're mine. And that's what stewardship is. When we forsake all that we have, it all becomes Christ's.

None of it is ours. He may say, oh, listen, use this for me. Peter, use this house.

I need my disciples. I need this place to sleep. Use this boat.

Don't take this across the lake. We need to do some preaching over there. And you still control it, but it's not yours.

And if you think it is yours, you can't be a disciple. This is the type of commitment that it takes to be a disciple. And a disciple is another word for an apocryphal Christian.

Now, there's two parts of this. I'm going to bring this to a close. But there's two parts of this passage we just read I'd like to look at.

He said, I have to turn the map. I need to go back to Luke. Luke 14.

Jesus said, which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost whether he has 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 was not able to finish it. Becoming a disciple is like setting out on a construction project. And it's going to cost something.

And if you are a contractor or just a person building your own house, you want to figure out how much it's going to cost before you get started. At least nearly. At least you need to find a good line of credit to finish the job.

Because unless you have an infinite amount of time to finish, which sometimes people do, they build a house over many years. But the truth is, if you're going to build, if you're going to be a contractor, you have to make sure you can finish the job and it's going to cost something. Not everything that it's going to cost is going to be spent in the first few days.

If you're going to lay the foundation, then you're going to start bringing it up. And you're going to put in plumbing and electrical. And you're going to be sheetrocking, drying it in, putting a roof and things like that on.

And yet, if you only get started and you've run out of money, and you can't go any further, that unfinished structure stands as a monument to your poor planning, to your presumption. And it becomes a thing to mock. Well, there's so-and-so's folly over there.

I went to... I speak in Las Vegas sometimes. And during that time when there's a big slope in construction, a few years back, I was driving through Las Vegas and they have all these fancy buildings. But they had about a third of the buildings were unfinished and have remained unfinished.

They're towers. They're going to be huge, glorious hotels and casinos. And they were finished up to a certain point, but then they were framed and you could just see bare girders and things like that.

And it's like about a third of the buildings downtown was these unfinished buildings. And no one was working on them. They'd just run out of money.

And it was such a bold task to build one of these fantastic buildings. And yet, when you run out of money, it just becomes an embarrassment. Now, this is what it's like when people tell their friends, I'm going to be a follower of Jesus now.

I'm living a new life. I'm not going to party with you like I used to. Sorry, I can't do that anymore.

And your friends think, oh, what do you think, you're better than us? Oh, no, I don't think I'm better than you. I'm just a follower of Jesus. And I say, we'll see.

And then when persecution comes, hardship, sacrifices, you really haven't counted on it. And you say, well, you know, maybe I bit off more than I can chew here. I'm going to go back to the world.

Then the people mock. And they say, see, you said Jesus was all that. If he was all that, why are you back here with us? And it brings a reproach on Christ.

It's not just an embarrassment to the failure of the person who ceases to be a follower of Christ. It's a shame on Christ because you told people he was worth it. And now you're saying, I guess he isn't really.

When you begin to follow Christ, you better finish or you'll bring reproach on Christ. That's why the Bible says that the state of a man who falls away is worse than his original state before he's converted. Before you're converted, your life isn't bringing reproach on Christ particularly.

But once you've named the name of Christ and then you've failed to follow him, it brings a reproach on his name. That's worse. Now, Jesus said that's why you need to count the cost first.

Before you start with it, before you become my disciple. There was a man who came to Jesus in another chapter, Luke chapter 9. He said, I'll follow you wherever you go. And Jesus said, well, birds of the air have nests and foxes of the earth have holes, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his hand.

By implication, you follow me, you'll be sleeping under the stars sometimes, maybe in the rain. You still want to go? We don't really know what happened to that man. He may have followed him under those terms or he might not, but all we know is that Jesus brought him up short.

You're pretty eager to follow me. Let me know. Let me just make sure you can count the cost.

He said to another man, follow me. And the man said, well, let me first go bury my father. And Jesus said, let the dead bury the dead.

You come and preach the gospel to the kingdom. You can't even carry out the social customs if Christ is calling you to go another direction. The normal etiquette to your family.

And another man said, I'll follow you, but let me first go say goodbye to my ones at home. And Jesus said, anyone who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is unfit for the kingdom of God. To be in the kingdom of God, you've got to be all in.

You don't get one foot in. You're all in or you're all out. And if you're not all in and you try to get in without any, hold me back and say, I'm not going to let God make decisions in this area.

I'm not going to put this relationship under the Lordship of Christ. I'm not going to give up this possession or this dream. Well, then feel free to hold on to it without Christ.

He said, you're not worthy of me. You can't be my disciple. A king has every right to demand full loyalty and full submission of his subjects.

It's certainly more than worth it. It's more than worth it. But even if I got nothing out of it, it'd still be the right thing to do.

The truth is, some people say, well, you're wasting your life as a Christian. Because, you know, what if you die and you find out there's no God and there's no nothing? Well, one thing I could say is, well, is there a better way to live than the way I live as a Christian? Ask those people who are in prison. Is the way of life they live, is that better than the way I live? Ask my neighbors.

Ask the poor that I'm supporting. Ask my wife who I'm faithful to. You know, is it not better? Living as a Christian than some other way? What other way would you

recommend that's better? If there was no God, all of this is still a better way to live.

But there is a God. And he deserves for me to live for him. Which involves living this way.

And I had to figure on that when I first took my first step on the road of discipleship. Am I willing to take this road to its end, even if it's a hard road? Even if it's a narrow road? Even if it's a bitter end? The answer for all successful Christians is yes. And the other thing that he said here, and we'll finish with this, but he did include this in verse 31.

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? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for conditions of peace. Now I've heard this passage interpreted two opposite ways. It does talk about a person, a king who has 10,000 soldiers, but he's been invaded or attacked by a king who has 20,000.

Okay, he's outnumbered. Does he want to fight that battle or does he want to surrender? Now some people make it out to me, I've always taken it the other way than this, but some make it out to me. You are like the king who has 10,000 and you're resisting God and he wants to take you over.

And he's got 20,000. He's got you outnumbered. He's got you outclassed.

You go fight against him. Do you want to fight against that? Do you want to fight against God? Or do you want to go and surrender like you should? Now that's one way this is taken. I think it makes sense.

But I'm always taking it another way. I'm here saying, listen, if you join my kingdom, you're joining an army that has 10,000. The enemy out there, he's got a lot more than that.

You follow me, you're entering a battle where you're way outnumbered. It seems like, in the world. The devil has more followers than Jesus.

Although, as Elisha said to his servant, those who are for us are more than those who are against us. And the servant Isaac saw the angels of God surrounding the Syrian army. But to our parents, it looks like you're being asked to join into a war.

On the side that is outnumbered. Two to one or more. Do you really want to fight that battle? What's the other option? Surrender.

That's the conditions of peace that your invading opponent is going to ask for. You want to go out and find conditions of peace? Well, he wants to take you over. What do you suppose he's going to require? Surrender.

Do you want to surrender to the devil or fight him? Do you want to follow Jesus and invite

Saul's armies to pursue you and maybe catch him and kill him? Or do you just want to surrender to Saul? You're going to be on the wrong side. The side of the demon king. Well, that's a choice that has to be made.

The point is, it's going to cost. It may not cost us in this country the same as it costs many others in terms of what we actually end up losing or shelling out in exchange for a kingdom. But we've got to be willing for it to cost as much as it costs the disciples themselves.

It's not our fault if no one wants to kill us. We have to live such a life that in some lands people would have killed before. And, you know, Paul said, all who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

You say, well, I don't suffer any persecution. Well, put two and two together then. All who live godly in Christ Jesus will.

But not all will have the same amount. Some live in lands like this where there isn't that much. However, if you're not willing to be a martyr, if you're not willing to die, if you're not willing to lose everything, if you haven't surrendered everything to God, you can't be a disciple even in this kind of a place.

And there are indicators that it's about to get worse for us here. And the person who's already forsaken all he has, he says, well, you know, I've got nothing to lose. I've already given it all up.

I've already surrendered it. No one can take anything from me but I don't because I don't own it. God can defend his own stuff.

And therefore I've got nothing to lose. You want to kill me? Well, my life isn't mine anyway. My problems are not my own.

That's one of the really good things about being a disciple is there are problems in my life as a disciple even as a Christian. But they're not my problems. I don't own me.

I don't own my problems. God owns all that. If you have slaves, their problem is your problem.

You're responsible. And God owns me. So, I mean, it's a wonderful thing to say, you know, the life of Father Jesus is not a trouble-free life.

It's not always an easy life but it's his problem, not mine. The Bible says, casting all your cares on him because he cares for you. I'll close with this little story that I heard.

There were a couple of guys, friends, Bill and John, who hung out a lot together. And Bill was a worrier. He just worried all the time.

Anything that looked like it could be a problem, he worried about it. And John went out of town for a while and he came back and we saw Bill wasn't worried about anything. He was happy.

There was a spring in his step. There were conversations. No negativity came up from Bill.

And John said, I don't understand. I mean, you don't seem like yourself. You used to worry about everything.

And Bill said, oh, I found a solution. I saw an ad in the paper for a guy who was worried for me. And I just pay him and he just worries for me so I don't have to worry.

And John said, that's an amazing story. He's never heard of that. How much does he charge? He said, well, \$10,000 a week.

And John said, well, how in the world are you going to pay that much money? I said, that's his worry. And that's what Jesus said. Cast all your worries on him because he worries for you.

Only for free. Well, not exactly for free. It costs everything.

But to be free from worry because I belong to Jesus. I'm involved with Christ. I don't have anything to worry about.

All my problems, all my worries, they're his worries, not mine. And, of course, all my choices, all my dreams, all my agendas, those too have to be his. Because I've been born again.

I'm a new creature in a new kingdom. And I'm another king. So this is what being a disciple means, among other things.

But it certainly is all the way behind what it's all about today. Now I'm going to ask Chris to come up and do whatever he's going to do at the end of this day here. Thank you for sitting and being here all day.

Be with you.