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The Call to Discipleship



Genuinely Following Jesus - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg delivered a talk on the call to discipleship, defining it as the Christian's unique vocation. Gregg highlighted the concept of surrender and lordship, sharing that following Jesus is an upward path that includes suffering and casualties like in warfare. He also emphasized the importance of being part of Christ's body and living a Christ-centered life that positively influences others, bringing them closer to God's kingdom. Ultimately, Gregg emphasized the hope and transformation that comes from answering the call to discipleship.

Transcript

Our lecture tonight is called The Call to Discipleship. And I'd like you to understand what we mean by a call. You need to understand that discipleship is a calling, or what might be called a vocation.

It's not a hobby. You don't follow Jesus in your spare time. It's not a religious tag on that you add to your life and the rest of your life remains about as it was before.

It's a holy calling, as we shall see. We'll see many times in the scripture this term call, or calling, or called is used to refer to those who are in fact disciples. I put the word vocation in here because we're familiar with that word, although we might think of vocation primarily as simply a reference to what you do for a living.

But actually the word vocation comes from the Latin word vocare, which itself comes from the Latin word vox, which means voice. And vocation means being called. It's got the same root as the word vocal.

It's a calling, a vocalizing. God calls people to be disciples. We'll soon see that I think he calls all people to be disciples, though not all respond to that call.

The definition of a vocation in Webster's dictionary is a summons or strong inclination to a particular state or course of action, especially a divine call to the religious life or possibly to the priesthood in terms of in Roman Catholic parlance. A vocation would be a call to the priesthood. We are called, however, to be disciples.

Secondarily, vocation means the work in which a person is employed. And that might be the way that we have come to see it more popularly used today. But that's really secondary meaning.

A vocation is your calling. And hopefully every Christian, no matter what it is they do for a living, are doing what they consider to be their calling, their vocation. Your living should be a vocation because only then does what you do for a living really have the kind of purpose and the kind of significance that God wants your life to have.

Not all people are called to be full time ministers. In fact, I believe a very small percentage of the body of Christ are really called to preach or to be leaders in the church. It doesn't take that many.

And in the early church, for example, there were 3000 converts the first day, but only 12 leaders. And when the number got bigger, they added seven more of a different type of leaders. But the point is, a very small percentage of the Christians were actually called into a religious vocation, that is, into a calling of being preachers or church leaders.

But all Christians are called to be disciples because discipleship is simply being a Christian. And that means that whatever you do, if you're not in Christian ministry per se, you should be doing whatever you do because it is your calling, because it is the expression of your following Jesus, that you have followed Jesus into the line of work that you're in. If you get married or stay single, you should see that as a calling as well.

In fact, Paul used that expression in 1 Corinthians 7 when he talks about the question of whether people are better off being married or single. He said, let everyone remain in the calling with which he was called. That is to say, these states of life, whether it's employment, whether it's marriage, whatever it may be, the Christian can see that as a calling from God.

Now, it may be that you, before you were a Christian, did the same kind of work that you do for a living after you're a Christian. Before and after your conversion, it may be that your employment does not significantly change. But if you stay in the same employment after you've become a follower of Jesus, you should be staying there because you see that as the place that God has called you to represent Him.

And if you can't see your employment that way, maybe you should start looking for the place that God has called you to represent Him because you have to understand your presence in this world is as a representative of Jesus Christ who He has called out of darkness. In fact, the word church, ekklesia, literally means those who are called out. The word ekklesia in the Greek was actually used in the Greek Old Testament to refer to Israel.

God had called them out of Egypt to be a holy people separate to Himself in the world, a

kingdom of priests. They were called of God to be His special people. In the New Testament, the Christians adopted that Greek word, ekklesia, which is translated church in the Bible.

And that was how they understood the body of Christ, the community of Christians. We were the called out ones. We have a calling from God and that's how we have to understand it.

And that calling is a call to discipleship. In Matthew 4, 21 and 22, we read, Now, this is significant, not simply because these men became acquainted with Jesus and became believers on this occasion, but actually they had done that earlier. They had become acquainted with Jesus and become believers in Him considerably earlier.

Most scholars would say perhaps even as much as a year earlier than this. We read about that in the Gospel of John, chapter 1. Just taking a sampling of verses to get the storyline. The next day, John the Baptist stood with two of his disciples and looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

He first found his own brother, Simon, and said to him, Now, Andrew and Peter, the brothers, these are the ones we read about a moment ago in Matthew, chapter 4, where it says that Jesus saw them fishing and He called them and they followed Him. Yet, this occurrence in John, chapter 1, was perhaps as much as a year earlier. They met Him.

Clearly, they believed in Him. Andrew told Peter, We found the Messiah. And they even followed Him for that day.

That is, they followed Jesus to His lodging that day, but they did not apparently become permanent followers of His. They did not receive, as near as we can tell, a call to discipleship from Him on this occasion. But they did later, as we saw in Matthew 4. Jesus saw the sons of Zebedee and, of course, Peter and Andrew as well, and He called them and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed Him.

So, we have two different stages of these men's relationship with Jesus. First, they simply know who He is. They know what He is about, somewhat.

They know He is the Messiah. They believe that. But it does not change much about their lives.

They are no doubt happy to know that the Messiah has come, but then they go back to their ordinary life and nothing changes. Until, considerably later, Jesus walks by on the job site at the Sea of Galilee, where they are doing their fishing and cleaning their nets. And He says, Follow Me.

And He called them, the Bible says. And there they received a call to discipleship. And I

really think sometimes that our churches are often primarily filled with people who have the first kind of relationship with Jesus.

They believe He is the Messiah. That is their doctrine. They are familiar with His name.

They are familiar with Him in some ways. But they have never really responded to a call to discipleship. And really, at what point is a person what the Bible calls a Christian? Well, when they become a disciple.

The disciples were called Christians. And therefore, we can say that the church is commonly made up of people of both kinds. Now, this is not a haves and have-nots or elitist kind of a thing.

It is rather people at different stages on the path to knowing God. Some people come in and where they are at is they know the information about Jesus. But knowing Jesus is not the same thing as knowing about Jesus.

And when a person comes to know Him because they become His follower and they spend time with Him and they receive the kind of teaching from Him that disciples receive, that is when they have stepped over the line into what the New Testament would call then a Christian. And so, a person has to realize that being a disciple is something that God Himself calls people to. In Romans 1, Paul talks about his special calling to be an apostle.

He says, Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God. Now, not everybody is called to be an apostle. But he then goes on, five verses later, and says, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ.

We are not called to be apostles, not all of us. Probably none of us are. But we are called nonetheless.

The Christian community, Paul refers to as the called, the called ones. The ones that he has called out of darkness into His marvelous light. The ones that he has called out of Egypt, spiritually speaking, to travel with Him and follow that cloud through the wilderness to the promised land.

Like Israel was called out, the Ecclesia. So, we are also the called, according to Paul, in Romans 1, 6. Also, a more familiar verse, Romans 8, 28. All of us know this verse, but the part I'd like to draw attention to is the part that we kind of mumble at the end, because we really want to emphasize the first lines.

The first lines are, And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God. Sometimes we even stop the quote there. And if we finish it off, like I say, we do it under our breath, because the rest is unimportant.

What we want to remind ourselves of is that everything works together for good. For those who love God, but Paul goes on, To those who are the called, according to His purpose. Those who have been called to discipleship, who have been called to be His people, who are following that call.

They are fulfilling His purpose. All things work together for good to those who are the called. And, of course, Paul means that to simply mean all true Christians, because the word disciples is used of all true Christians throughout the book of Acts.

In 2 Timothy 1.9, Paul says, God has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. Now, He has saved us and called us with a holy calling. What does holy mean? The word holy means set apart for God.

If you think of holy as a way of living, you're only right in a secondary sense. The Bible does speak of holy living. Peter talks about that.

We'll talk about that later on tonight. But the word holy itself simply means set apart for God. It's not primarily a word that describes behavior.

That's a secondary meaning of it. The primary meaning is something that's set apart for God. And some things can be holy that don't behave at all.

The tabernacle was a holy building. The furniture of the tabernacle was holy also. The altar was holy.

Every animal that touched the altar was holy. Even the priests were holy, even when they weren't very good. The priests were always holy, but they were sometimes scoundrels because they didn't act holy, but they were.

Being holy means you've been set apart for God. God has taken that person, the priest, and said, You're mine now. You've got no other purpose in this life than the purpose I'm assigning to you.

You're separated from ordinary callings. You're separated from other people who aren't called and holy. And Paul says our calling is a holy calling.

We've been called into a separated relationship with God from the rest of the world. And again, he mentions called according to his own purpose and grace, just as in Romans 8, 28, he said we're called according to his purpose. In Matthew 22, 14, Jesus familiarly said, For many are called, but few are chosen.

There's a larger number of people called than there are chosen. Now, who's chosen? Well, it's clear in the rest of the New Testament that all who are really, you know, in line to receive an eternal inheritance with Christ, they are chosen in him. All true Christians

are chosen.

They're part of the chosen people. But the ones who are chosen are smaller in number than those who are called. Because everybody's called.

The call to discipleship goes out to everybody who ever hears the gospel. The gospel itself is a call to discipleship, as we shall see in a few moments. And therefore, not everybody who hears the call responds, but those who do, they become part of the chosen ones.

And we even have those words joined together with another word in Revelation 17, 14, when it talks about apparently Jesus coming back. And it says, they that are with him, Christ at his coming, are called and chosen. Now remember, many are called, few are chosen.

These people are both called and chosen. And in addition to that, they are faithful. That is, they've stuck it out.

They've persevered. They haven't backed down under tests. They've passed the tests.

At the coming of Christ, those who will come in victory with him and will reign with him are those who were called to discipleship, who did respond to the call and were thus chosen, and who persevered and are therefore also regarded as faithful because they have kept the charge. Now, I'm going to give you a seven-point description of what the call to discipleship involves. This is like a seven-point message.

Now, in the old days when I was growing up, sermons were supposed to be three points. But then they were supposed to be 20 minutes long, too. A pastor was supposed to give a three-point sermon and get done in 20 minutes.

I have an hour, so I can give seven points, and you just have to adjust to the modern changes that have happened in the church life since I was a kid. No one sat for hours and listened to Bible studies back then. So, the first point is the call to discipleship is a call to surrender.

And I mentioned that the gospel itself is a call to discipleship. Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 2.14, "...to which he called you by our gospel." That is, by the gospel message coming, God called people to himself. If you responded properly to the gospel, then you received the call.

You became a disciple. Why do I say that this supports the idea that discipleship is a call to surrender? Because the gospel itself is a call to surrender. In the context of a kingdom, actually in the context of two kingdoms.

And there's the kingdom of darkness, and there's Christ's kingdom. And the Bible

indicates that Satan is the ruler of this world, and therefore was our ruler when we were a part of this world as well. But Christ has invaded this world, and established a kingdom of his own under his own sovereignty, under his own authority.

And he has called us to defect from the kingdom of darkness into his kingdom. And that's what Paul tells us in Colossians 1.13 that has happened. In Colossians 1.13, Paul says that, we have been translated out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son.

But you have to understand that when we were in the kingdom of darkness, before we came to Christ, we not only didn't have salvation, we were enemies of God. We were active participants in the darkness. We were loyalists to our own sinfulness and to our own selfishness, which is what the kingdom of darkness is all about.

The kingdom of darkness is energized by people's self-will, and by their desire to satisfy their own lusts and so forth. That's where we were all at before we became disciples. He called us out of that darkness into the kingdom of his Son.

And what does that mean? It means that we lay down our arms. We were fighting it off. We were fighting God because we were on the enemy's side.

And we've laid down our arms. That's surrender. Whenever the gospel was preached in the book of Acts, the message was, well, not as we sometimes are familiar with the gospel being preached.

Sometimes, when I was growing up, when I heard the gospel preached, as I thought, it was something like this, Accept Jesus into your heart, and you won't go to hell. You'll go to heaven. And that's really what I wanted to get people to do.

Accept Jesus into your heart. Accept Jesus into your heart. It sounded very painless.

It sounded very inexpensive. In fact, if anyone had suggested it was expensive, one would be accused of putting a price tag on the grace of God. Certainly an abominable thing to do.

In fact, in the church I grew up in, it was very important to make sure that God doesn't require anything of you at all except a simple mental transaction of believing that Jesus died for your sins and rose again and accepting him into your heart. Now, when I got older and read the Bible more carefully myself, I was surprised to learn that there's no reference in the Bible to accepting Jesus into your heart. The term's not used in the Bible.

The gospel, when it was preached in the book of Acts, made no reference to the promise of heaven or to the threat of hell. Now, I do believe the Bible teaches there's a heaven and a hell. But what's interesting is in the gospel sermons that were preached to the

unbelievers in the book of Acts, you won't find any of them that mention heaven or hell.

Heaven and hell are only mentioned by Jesus talking to his disciples, those who are already his people, and also by Paul and others who are, again, addressing Christians. When people are Christians, then God lets them in on a little secret. There's a heaven and a hell.

When he's addressing non-Christians, he doesn't even mention it. Well, what does he mention then? If you're not going to threaten people with hell or bribe them with heaven, how in the world are you going to get any response from them? Well, it's even worse than that. Because the response he wants is total surrender.

If you read the book of Acts and the sermons that the apostles preached, the message they gave was not anything about save your sorry skin from hell. It was about God has exalted Jesus and given him a place above all other authorities and powers, and has made him Lord and Christ, and he commands all men everywhere to repent and follow him. In other words, stop resisting and surrender to his authority.

He is the king, and you're on the wrong side of this war. You need to surrender to him as your king. That's what the gospel message was.

And when Paul said that God called us by the gospel, he means by the gospel that Paul preached, and the gospel that Peter preached, and the gospel that is preached throughout the book of Acts when we read of them preaching. You see, we don't read in the epistles of their preaching, because the epistles are written to Christians, and the epistles usually contain corrective teaching and so forth. They're thinking wrongly.

They're behaving wrongly as Christians. But in the book of Acts, and only in the book of Acts, do we find the apostles actually preaching to unbelievers. And the message they give is there's another king, one Jesus.

There is a kingdom that is at odds with you, and you are at odds with it. And for Christ's sake, you need to come over to his side. Now, in other words, the gospel is Christ-centered.

It was not man-centered. It wasn't, you need to get saved so you don't go to hell. You need to get saved so you don't miss out on your best life now.

You need to get saved so that you can have health and security and prosperity. None of that was in the preaching of the gospel in the Bible. It was all about, it's not about what you have coming to you.

It's what God should have coming to him. The gospel is always God-centered. And as you read it, it's always God has appointed Jesus to be the Lord.

He calls everyone to repent and follow him. That's the message. And there was never anything quite so vague as a term like, accept Jesus into your heart.

Because what in the world does that mean? Most people, I grew up thinking that means you say a little prayer and say, Jesus, please come into my heart. No one in the Bible ever did that or ever recommended that. What they recommended is that you repent of your rebellion against the kingdom of God, against the king that God has appointed, and you surrender and lay down your arms, and you become a compatriot with the saints on the side of God's kingdom.

That's what the gospel was. And it is a call to surrender to the lordship of a new king instead of making war against him. 1 Thessalonians 2.12, Paul said that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into his own kingdom.

You see, the call is into a kingdom, out of another kingdom. And these two kingdoms are hostile to each other. So if you're in the wrong kingdom, you're at war with the right one.

And God calls us into his kingdom out of the other one. And changing over loyalties means you surrender to the superior authority of Christ, and he becomes your acknowledged lord and your king. That's the call of the gospel.

It's the call to discipleship. It's a call to surrender to Christ. Secondly, the call to discipleship is a call to follow.

Once you've surrendered to Christ, he now calls upon you to follow him. We talked about that last time, about what it means to follow Christ, how it means to follow a teacher, like people might be followers of Socrates, or they were followers of John the Baptist, or followers of the Pharisees. There were disciples of all these people.

To follow someone like that means you make him your teacher, you sit under his training, you accept his teaching, you take him as your example, you obey his commands, and you gradually become more like him. That's what becoming a follower means, in the terms of discipleship. You're a disciple of John the Baptist, a disciple of Moses, a disciple of Elijah, as Elisha was, or, in our case, a disciple of Jesus Christ.

We're called to follow Jesus, which includes following his example, his teaching, his commands, and so forth. And so we see Jesus saying that in Matthew 16, 24, Then Jesus said to his disciples, If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me. Now, denying yourself and taking up your cross is the surrender part we talked about.

It's a call to surrender. You lay down your life, you lay down your weapons, you take on, you accept the judgment of God against your old way, and it's like accepting crucifixion and denying yourself. And then, of course, following Jesus.

Ephesians 4, 1, Paul says, I beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called. You were called to walk a certain way, and that walking is behind Jesus, following Jesus. Your life is not static.

Your life is a progress in some direction or another. And you're walking. The Bible often uses the word walk as a metaphor for living.

Many times we're told to walk in the spirit, to walk in love, to walk in humility, to walk worthy of the calling, walk, walk, walk. It's all about how you're living. It's like walking.

Why? Because living is like walking. You don't stay in the same place. You don't stay the same.

You're progressing somewhere, one step at a time, and the idea here is we're progressing in the direction Jesus is going. That's the only way to walk worthy of the discipleship call. You walk worthy of the calling by following Jesus as example, and following Jesus as your Lord.

In Philippians 3, 13-14, Paul said, Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended, but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. The call of God. It's an upward call.

The direction we're called is upward. As you follow Jesus, you become more heavenly. You become more fit for heaven because you become more like Jesus.

The following Jesus is an upward path, and so following Jesus is what the call to discipleship entails. Thirdly, the call to discipleship is a call to holiness. Now, I mentioned already earlier something about the meaning of holiness.

Holiness means that one has been set apart for God, and being set apart for God is an objective reality. When you have said, Okay, Lord, I will be your disciple. He says, Good, I'll put you over in this category now.

There's a line right down here down the middle. Remember when Jesus said in one place, He said, Whoever is not for me is against me. Then in another place, He said, Whoever is not against us is for us.

It almost sounds like, Well, how can both those things be true? Well, they're both true because there's a line right down the middle. On one side of that line is everyone who's for him. On the other side is everyone who's against him.

Like I said, there's the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of God under Christ, and they are hostile to each other. If you're in the group that are for him, then you're not against him. If you're in the group that's against him, you're not for him, and so forth.

Now, when you become a disciple, God takes you out of the kingdom of darkness, and He plants you in the kingdom of God. You've crossed that line, and there's no legitimate going back. You can't just say, Well, I'm going to try this out for a little while.

No, once you get on the other side of the line, you have been set apart for God. You know, there's a law in the Old Testament that said, Whatever touches the altar is holy. What that means is that the altar itself in the tabernacle was a place of worship where sacrifices were offered, animals usually, and a person who wanted to worship God could pick a lamb out of his flock and bring that lamb to the tabernacle, and when they put that lamb into the hands of the priest, and the priest put that lamb on the altar, that lamb was holy at that point.

What it means is that lamb was set apart, couldn't be used for anything else. Once it was on the altar, it had to be sacrificed. There was no other legitimate thing that lamb could be used for.

Now, if you brought that lamb to Jerusalem, let's say, once the temple was there, and you got there and said, Oops, this is the wrong lamb. I really wanted to bring a different lamb. Well, you could do that.

You could take the lamb back and replace it if it hadn't been put on the altar yet. But once the altar had been touched by that lamb, once it was on the altar, it belonged to God, and you couldn't exchange it for another one. You couldn't do anything else with it because it was set apart for one thing, and that was to be sacrificed.

And Paul indicates that that's exactly how we're to understand our lives. Remember Romans says, I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that you what? Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. Holy means set apart for God.

You present your own body to God as a living sacrifice, that is, as on an altar, as it were. Your life is on the altar. When you become a disciple of Jesus, you transition from being an ordinary lamb to being a sacrificial lamb, like Jesus himself.

You now belong to God, and nothing else can legitimately be done with your life, except for it to become a sweet aroma to God in all that you do for the rest of your life. Once you've touched the altar, you're holy. There's no going back from there.

Now people do go back from there, and just because it was not permitted to take a lamb off the altar and use it for something else than a sacrifice, that doesn't mean that someone with a strong enough army couldn't grab a lamb off the altar and take it and use it for sacrilegious purposes. It can be done, but it mustn't be done. And likewise, Paul says, you present yourself to God as a holy sacrifice.

He's not saying there's no possibility of you going back again. He's saying there's no

legitimate opportunity to go back. If you go back, it's a sacrilege.

You're stealing from God, something that has been put into His hands to be His. You are holy. You're set apart.

We are not like lambs that were actually killed on the altar. We are to present ourselves as living sacrifices to God so that the lamb that was offered to God actually died on the altar, but we're on the altar, and we don't die. We will eventually, and we might even die for Christ, but we live.

We live on the altar. We're a living sacrifice. Our life is set apart for God, and everything we do is to be done unto Him.

That's why Paul said elsewhere, whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God. In 1 Corinthians 10, I think it's verse 30 or 31. So, this is a call to holiness.

If you have come to Christ and said, I surrender. I'm your follower. You have to understand you're also now holy.

You're on the altar. And it's been often said that the problem with the living sacrifice that was not a problem with the animal sacrifice is that a living sacrifice always has a tendency to crawl off of the altar. A dead sacrifice doesn't do that.

They actually tie the animal down to the horns of the altar so it wouldn't get off because when they killed it, sometimes it would still have its thrashings about and so forth. It might fall off the altar. We're not tied there.

And because we are alive, there is a possibility that we would make the error, the sacrilegious error of removing ourselves from the altar. It's not okay. But some have done it.

And so we might, even though we've come to Christ, think of ourselves as still having options other than the will of God for our lives. That, you know, we'll let God have Sunday mornings. We'll let God have 10% of the money we make.

We'll let God, you know, have our old habits of maybe porn and drug addiction and alcoholism and so forth. We'll get rid of those things. But after all, we found those inconvenient ourselves.

I mean, it's kind of good to be rid of those. But as far as everything, as far as God deciding whether or not I marry, whether or not I have children, whether or not I get this job or that job, whether or not I go on the mission field, you know, whatever I do, I'm going to let God make those decisions. Well, that's really what it's about.

You're holy unto the Lord. You're set apart for Him so that Peter says in 1 Peter 1, 15, but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct. Now, here we see you

are holy, but He says you must, therefore, you must, God is holy and we are set apart.

We're saints. The word saint means holy ones. He says, therefore, you need to be holy in your behavior.

And what that means is the choices you make and the way you behave should reflect the fact that you see yourself as belonging now to God, that your behavior is also set apart for God, not just that you are objectively set apart for God and now you belong to God and that's just all there is to it, but as you live out the rest of your life, your behavior is lived out as offered to God as well. It's a call to holiness. So, in 1 Thessalonians 4, 7, Paul said, God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.

So, we are called not to be unclean, we're called to be holy and set apart for God. Now, fourthly, the call to discipleship is a call to fellowship, says Paul in 1 Corinthians 1, 9. Paul says, God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Now, called into the fellowship of Jesus, the fellowship of Jesus, what does fellowship mean? I'm sure you've heard, many of you have heard before, the Greek words, one of the few Greek words most Christians have heard, koinonia.

The other one is agape. People have heard two Greek words if they've heard any and they're Christians. You hear about agape, everyone knows what that means, it means love.

The other Greek word that's probably the most commonly known among Christians is koinonia. K-O-I-N-O-N-I-A koinonia. That word is translated fellowship.

It's also translated in the Bible as communion. Sometimes it's translated as a sharing. Because what it speaks of is a commonality of experience, a sharing in something together.

And what, of course, we ultimately share in is the life of Christ. We are in fellowship with Christ himself and thus with everybody else who's in fellowship with him. We need to understand how Paul understood being a Christian.

When you become a disciple of Jesus, you become inserted into the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit gives you a place in his body and a function. That's what the gifts of the Spirit are.

They're the function that the Holy Spirit gives you to perform for the body of Christ. You are now part of Christ himself. You are of his flesh and of his bones, Paul said in Ephesians 5. It's not just an illustration.

It's really kind of a reality that we are the cells and the members of his body. Christ, when he was on earth, operated through a single human body. Jesus of Nazareth, he is the Christ.

And every part of the body of Christ was contained in one man. But when he died, remember what he said to his disciples, it's good for you, it's convenient that I go away. Because if I don't go away, the Holy Spirit will not come.

Now, why is that better? Because Jesus, when he was the entire body of Christ himself, he did it perfectly, he did it well, but he could only be in one place at a time. But when he ascended into heaven and sent his spirit down on his followers, they became his body. He became the head of a corporate body.

And every person who is a disciple of his becomes a part of that body. Now, as part of the body, you truly are part of Christ himself. Paul says in Ephesians 4, do not lie one to another, for we are members of Christ.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12, he said, for as the human body, the ordinary, your body, my body, as any human body, is one body that has many members, yet the many members, being many, are one body. He said, so also is Christ. We might have thought he'd say, so also is the body of Christ, but he said, no, so is Christ.

Like a human body that has many members, but it's one body, that's what Christ is. And he means, we're the members of the body. Christ is the head, we're the other parts, the other limbs and organs of the body.

So that just as my kidneys and my liver and my stomach and my lungs are part of me, they are me, not by themselves, but along with all the other members and the head combined, every member is me. So with Christ, if he is your head, which is another way of saying he's your Lord, which is true if you're a disciple. If you're a disciple, he becomes your king and your Lord, your head.

Well then, by the analogy that Paul uses, you're a member of his body. And as such, you share in the life of Christ. You share in the spirit of God with all Christians and with Christ himself.

You're in a fellowship, a sharing existence with Christ and with all who are in Christ. Now what does it mean to be in fellowship with Christ? Paul says, we were called into the fellowship of his son. Well, there's a lot of privileges involved in that.

For example, there is the sharing of his secrets with his friends. I don't have a slide for this, but I can give you some verses on this. We know that in John chapter 15, around verses 14, 15, thereabouts, Jesus said, from now on, I don't call you my servants, but I call you my friends.

He says, because a servant doesn't know what his master does, doesn't know what his master is up to. But he says, all things the Father has shown me, I've communicated to you. In other words, you're in fellowship with me now.

You're not just a servant in my household. You're one of my confidants. You're one of my close circle.

You're part of me. You're a friend of mine, and therefore you can know what others are not allowed to know. Whatever the Father shows me, I'll tell you.

I have told you, he says. This is also reflected in Mark chapter 4, in verse 34, I believe it is, where it says that Jesus, when he preached to the multitudes, always used parables. Now, I might clarify something in case it's not already clear.

When I was being raised in Sunday school, the impression I got from the teachers, I'm not sure if they intended to give this impression, but I certainly got the impression that they were saying that Jesus used parables to illustrate and make the truth clearer. You know, spiritual truths were made more clear by the use of earthly illustrations. Parables.

Now, I certainly believe that a good teacher will use illustrations as often as he can find an apt one, because spiritual truths are hard to understand without bringing it down where we can get our hands around it, our minds wrapped around it, and earthly illustrations can be helpful. But when I got older and read the Bible itself, and the disciples said, Jesus, why do you speak in parables? He didn't give that answer. He didn't say, well, I speak in parables so that these people can understand better.

His answer was, because it is given to you, and the you is the disciples who came and asked him, Lord, why do you speak to the multitudes in parables? He said to the disciples, it is given to you to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but it is not given to them. In other words, I'm not letting them know what I'm letting you know. I'm hiding it from them.

I'm concealing it in these stories I'm telling to them. Now, what's the good of that? What's the use of telling stories at all if it's just going to conceal the truth? You see, Jesus would go out and there'd be all these people who had heard about him. Most of them just wanted to see miracles, but they knew they had to sit through a teaching, sort of like the people who go to a rescue mission.

They have to sit through a sermon before they get the meal. So, these guys, they realized they had to listen to Jesus teach, and then maybe there'd be a show, you know, miracles and healings and things like that. But they weren't necessarily interested in being disciples.

They weren't really interested in laying down their lives and following him around. So, he would teach them, but he'd teach them things like this. A sower went out to sow and he threw seeds over here, and there were different kinds of ground, and some of the ground produced a good crop, and some didn't produce a good crop for various reasons.

End of story. Want another one? Well, a man sowed good seed in his field, and his

enemy threw tares or weeds in the field, and they grew up together, and in the harvest they were separated. End of story.

Want another one? Well, wait a minute. What do these ones mean first? I mean, everybody knew that seeds grow and things like that, and so far, as Jesus only told them that, he didn't tell them what everyone didn't already know. He said a woman put a little bit of leaven into three measures of dough, and the whole lump of dough arose.

Want another story? Well, wait a minute. What's this one about? You know, we know what they're about somewhat, because it's given to us to know, and the Gospels help us out with this. Sometimes they explain it, but the point is, Jesus said, I speak to the multitudes in parables because I'm not letting them in on my secrets.

Well, if you're not going to let them in on your secrets, why talk to them at all? Because in that crowd were potential disciples, and as Jesus said, well, the kingdom of God is like a king who made a marriage for his son. People who are listening say, well, that's a nice fairy tale about kings and marriages and weddings, like a princess fairy tale. But, although it wasn't very fairy tale-like because the king went out and he burned up a city of people who didn't come to his invitation.

But the point is, people would say, well, okay, I'm not getting it. I'm not getting what this is about, but he's talking about the kingdom of God, and I'm interested in that, and I'm not going to let this go. And if somebody in the crowd said, I need to know, I'm not going to be satisfied just to walk home, scratch my head and say, why did he talk to us about farming and cooking and things like that? He threw the bait out.

No one knew what it meant, but there were some there who had ears to hear. Remember when Jesus told his parables, he said, anyone who has ears to hear, let him hear. There were some in the crowd who had ears to hear because they had a hunger for the kingdom of God, and they would come to him afterwards and say, we want to know what you're talking about here.

They would say, teach us. They would become disciples. They'd sit under him.

So it says in Mark, I believe it's 434, it says, without a parable, he never spoke to the multitudes, but when they were alone, he expounded, he explained all things privately to his disciples. Why? Because the crowds were not to be entitled to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but the disciples were. He said, to you it is given to know, to them it isn't given.

That's why he's speaking parables. You're my confidants. I don't, the master doesn't tell his servants what he's up to, but he'll tell his friends.

It says in the book of Psalms, in Psalm 25, it says, the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. People who qualify, God has secrets that he doesn't like to keep to himself, but

he's not going to cast his pearls before swine, or give what is holy to dogs. He will save that for those who fear him, who become his true followers, those who are his disciples.

To them it is given, and that is one of the great privileges of being a disciple, is because we are called into the fellowship with Jesus, and in that fellowship, he shares with us what his father has given him, what he shares, his secrets, he shares his life, and so also we who share with him and this share with each other, and so there's one body of the disciples. The word *koinonia* suggests oneness. There's a shared oneness that all have in Christ, and so the call to discipleship is a call to that oneness with the whole body of Christ.

Now, oneness with the body of Christ should not be confused with maybe what we would think of as church membership, though it may overlap. We shouldn't think that by joining a church we have thereby experienced the oneness of the body of Christ, because, see, the body of Christ in any given town isn't all in one church, and not everyone who's in any given church is necessarily a true member of the body of Christ. The membership of the body of Christ overlaps the membership of the visible churches in town, but it overlaps all of them.

No matter what church you go to in this town, you're going to find some people there who are, and some people who are not, part of the body of Christ, because being part of the body of Christ means being a disciple of Jesus. He is your head, and if He's your head, then you're His body. And if He's your head, that means He's guiding you.

He's leading you. You're following Him. He's your Lord.

He's your King. That's what the head does. He provides leadership, and the body obeys.

So, disciples are called into the body of Christ. That's into the fellowship of Christ. And they share a oneness with all others.

Now, the call to discipleship might sometimes be a call to loneliness, because it is sometimes the case. Jesus Himself often was not well understood, even by His own disciples. And many times Jesus indicated that His disciples should be prepared to be excluded from, oh, the religious establishment.

He said, they're going to throw you out of the synagogues, or even from their own families. He said, don't think I came to bring peace. I came to bring division.

Parents and children and so forth are going to be divided over me. There is part of being a disciple that involves a certain loneliness. And discipleship is something that's not just a group activity.

It's something that is an individual response to the call of Christ. But once you have responded, you'll find that you're not really alone in the world. You might find that not

everyone you would like to be with is going to be following Christ with you.

And you may find yourself lonely and missing some of the people you'd rather be with. But you will find that there are others like you. Elijah the prophet once thought that by being loyal to God, he had isolated himself from everybody.

Remember what he said? He said, Lord, they've killed Your prophets and they're after my life. They want to take my life too. I alone am left.

I'm the only one who's not worshipping Baal. I'm the only one who's been faithful to You of all the prophets. And God says, well, I actually have 7,000 others that you don't know about who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

You may think you're alone sometimes because in a religious environment, you might actually kind of be the only one you know about. Though, interestingly enough, even if you don't know about others in the church you attend, there probably are others there. It may take something special to bring them out of the woodwork.

But in every congregation that names the name of Christ, there's some true followers of Christ there. And you're part of that group. You're one with them.

You're in the fellowship of Christ. Fifthly, the call to discipleship is a call to warfare. This has been suggested by reference to the kingdom.

You're called into the kingdom. You're called to surrender to King Jesus. And now, once you've surrendered to Him, He gives you weapons and says, okay, now that you're on my side, you're going to be promoting my purposes against the interests of the side you used to be on.

This is a warfare because Jesus has invaded what was once regarded by the enemy as His territory. The enemy for 4,000 years after the fall of Adam and Eve seemed to be relatively unchallenged in His domination of the world. Remember what it says in 1 John, it says the whole world lies in the lap of the wicked one.

Well, that was more true in the days of John than it is now. Because in the days of John, there was a very, very tiny minority in the world who were true followers of Jesus. The number of followers of Jesus has increased into millions, if not hundreds of millions since then.

But there still are those who are lying in the lap of the wicked one, and He wants them to stay there. The wicked one wants them to stay there. He doesn't want to lose them.

And yet, Christ enlists us into His army. Disciples are not just called to be learners, but to be participants in the invasion. Christ has invaded the enemy's world, as it were.

I mean, the world was always God's by actual title. Remember Psalm 24 says, the earth

is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. It all belongs to God.

But in terms of loyalties, the whole world lies in the lap of the wicked one. People would prefer to serve Satan for some reason. He's a little easier to serve at times, but people are short-sighted.

People typically go for the, you know, short-term gratification rather than the delayed gratification. Jesus calls people who are smarter than that, who know that following God in the long run is going to be a wiser choice. And so we come over to His side, and the devil is hostile toward us.

And we're trying to bring others over onto God's side too. So this is a confrontation. A confrontation between the interests of one king and another.

It's a warfare. And therefore, the Bible always makes it very clear that Christians are engaged in a battle. And that's what a disciple is.

When you're called to discipleship, you're called to be a soldier. You're called to warfare. In 1 Timothy 6.12, Paul said, Fight the good fight of faith.

Lay hold on eternal life to which you were also called. You were called to lay hold on eternal life as a result of fighting a good fight of faith. If you fight the good fight of faith, you will win and you'll lay hold on eternal life.

This fight and this acquisition of life is what God has called you to. That's what the call to discipleship is, to fight this fight, to wage a good warfare. In 2 Timothy 2, verses 3 and 4, Paul said to Timothy, You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

No one engaged in warfare entangles himself in the affairs of this life that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. The call to discipleship is an enlistment into soldiery. Paul says, You are enlisted and you need to endure hardship the way a soldier endures hardship.

Now you'll find many teachers on television, Bible, allegedly Bible preachers, who'll say, well, you know, Christians are children of the king. We shouldn't be deprived of anything. We should be driving the big cars.

We should be living in the big houses. And they put their money where their mouth is. They wear expensive suits, drive expensive cars, have expensive houses.

They say, this is a testimony to the world that our father, the king, is good to his children. If you're driving an old beat-up Volkswagen, they say, that's going to be a bad testimony because the world's going to think that your father is not a very generous father to his children. So we need to live it up.

We need to be prosperous. We need to have the best things in the world because we're the children of a king. The fact is, though, while it is true we are children of the king, so is Jesus.

Jesus was the most exemplary child of the king there ever was. But Jesus didn't live like a king on earth. And he doesn't call us to live like kings on earth.

The king is at war. And it so happens that his children are the soldiers in the trenches. The time will come when the war is over, when the king has put down all his enemies and subdued them.

And the last enemy will be destroyed. And then the war will be over. The children can retire to the palace and live like kings then.

In the meantime, living like a king is not what Christians are called to do. The call to discipleship is a call to be in the trenches. So Paul says to Timothy, you must endure hardship as a good soldier because you've been enlisted by God into a warfare.

Jesus was talking about discipleship in Luke chapter 14. That's the chapter where three times he said, if you don't do such and such, you cannot be my disciple. And in the midst of that discussion, he gave this illustration.

Luke 14, 31 through 33, he said, 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 conditions of peace, so likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple. So when he says, so likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple, likewise, like what? Like the king he's just described. What's this king's circumstance? Well, the king has a domain.

In the days of the Old Testament, there were these city-states, like the various cities in Canaan were each like a city-state with its own little petty king. Now, consider yourself a king over a small kingdom, and you've got 10,000 soldiers. But now you hear that a hostile invader is coming in your direction.

And your spies have done a quick head count, and they say, you know, he's got twice as many soldiers as we have. We've got 10. He's got 20,000.

Now, king, what are you going to do? Well, like you said, you sit down before engaging the enemy. You sit down first and consider whether you're able with 10,000 to meet the one who comes against you with 20,000. You might say, well no, of course he can't do that.

But you never know. Maybe he can, especially if the invaders are UN troops. The invaders may be incompetent.

It may be that a guy with 10,000 can beat an invading army with 20,000 depending on the skill level and the level of commitment and so forth of the soldiers. But the king has to decide, is he willing to put out everything to fight this guy, or would it be better just to send out a messenger and say, listen, let's make peace with you? Well, what does making peace with the enemy mean? It means surrendering to the enemy. Now, Jesus seems to be saying that I'm calling you to be my disciple, but this is a call to war.

You're like a person, a king, who's going to have an enemy that outnumbered you. You follow me, and there's going to be more people against you than there are for you. The devil has more followers than Jesus does in the world.

Do you want to enter that fight? Do you want to go there? Do you want to make the enemy mad at you by engaging him in warfare? That's what you're going to do if you become a disciple of Jesus. Well, you've got a different option. When you've been called to follow Jesus, if you don't want to fight a battle where you're outnumbered, you can always surrender to the enemy, but it's not a pretty thing because once you surrender to the devil, he'll take you.

And you are called into a warfare where you and your compatriots are smaller in number than the adherents to the other side. But we have been guaranteed that if we are faithful to God, one can chase a thousand, and two can chase ten thousand. You see, it's not numbers that matter.

Remember when Elisha, the prophet, was in the city of Dothan, and the Syrian army encamped around Dothan to capture him. That's what they wanted to do. The king of Syria wanted to capture Elisha and probably not do nice things to him.

And so Elisha's servant was out on the wall early in the morning, saw the Syrian troops surrounding the city of Dothan, and he said, Oh, Elisha, we're in trouble. Look at this. They've got us outnumbered.

They're surrounding us. And Elisha says, Don't be afraid because more are they who are for us than they who are against us. Now, that didn't look like it was the case.

But Elisha then prayed, said, God, open his eyes. And his servant's eyes were open, and the Bible says he saw that the hillside around the Syrian armies were surrounded by chariots of fire, which I think were intended, I understand, to be angelic armies. Elisha knew they were there, but the servant didn't, so Elisha asked God to open the guy's spiritual eyes.

Now, our spiritual eyes may not be open to see the hosts of heaven that are on our side, but when you make the decision to be a disciple of Jesus, you're making a decision to make the enemy mad at you. And it looks to the natural eye like you're going to be in a small minority. And in a sense, you are, if we're talking about human population.

But greater are those who are with us than those who are against us because God has legions and legions of angels available. Remember when Jesus was arrested and Peter wanted to help him out with his sword, although the disciples were apparently outnumbered in that situation, Jesus said, Don't you know I could call twelve legions of angels and they'd deliver me. There's no shortage of resources on God's side, but that's a matter of faith on our part because we can't see it.

Faith is the evidence of things not seen. We can't see those angels. We can't see the power of God that's on the side of the believer.

But what we see is a world that's getting increasingly hostile to Christ. Even in our country, maybe mostly in our country, actually, because in some parts of the world, Christianity is just exploding and going wild. In Africa, in South America, in Asia, there's countries that are fast becoming Christian nations out of paganism.

America is fast becoming a pagan nation out of former Christian orientation. So we're actually living in a place where it looks more dangerous to be an uncompromising follower of Jesus than maybe 40, 50 years ago when some of us became Christians. It's getting worse, not better.

But that's just what we signed up for. If you became a true Christian at any point in your life, you signed up for war. You're enlisted.

And you can't be a disciple unless you're willing to make the same kind of commitment to that war as a person makes when they go into the army. They give up all their freedom. I mean, the army gives you some furloughs and things like that, but basically, the army decides when you get a furlough.

The army decides when you're going to sleep and when you're going to be awake and what you're going to do, where you're going to live. Those things, you give up all of that to become a soldier. And so Jesus said, unless you're willing to give up all that you have, you can't be a disciple because it's going to take a full commitment to fight this war and win it.

Sixth, the call to discipleship is a call to suffering, which may be a corollary of it being a call to warfare because there are casualties of war. And even when one is not a casualty, one often has to put up with hardship, as Paul said to Timothy, endure hardship. And that hardship can mean persecution and many other kinds of things, perhaps poverty even, depending on what Christ calls you to do.

There's all kinds of different sufferings that it may be involving. In 1 Peter 2, Peter said that Christ suffered for us so that you would follow in His steps. That is in suffering.

He set an example by suffering so that you'd follow that example. To this you were called, Peter said. And that's something people ought to be told right at the outset when

they are called to be a disciple.

We should tell them this is going to hurt. Surgery often did before there was anesthesia. If a person had some kind of need for surgery in the days before there was anesthesia, they just gave them a pint of vodka and tied them down and then went at them with a knife or a saw.

It was necessary to get rid of a gangrene foot or something like that. It was good for you, but it was painful. We have a cancer in us.

That's why we have to suffer. Because God is a surgeon and when we become His disciples, He goes to work at curing us of that cancer which is sin in us. And the sufferings we go through are meant to be potentially therapeutic.

There would be no suffering if there's no sin. That's not saying that all suffering is the direct result of somebody's sin. But I dare say that all of my suffering, God would not see any need for me to have it if I didn't already have this infection of sin that needed to be cured.

And God is committed to our cure and therefore He allows suffering. And Jesus suffered not because He had a sin sickness, but He did it so, among other things, we could follow His steps, it says. Also in 1 Peter 3.90 says that we should not return evil for evil.

That is when people do us wrong, instead of retaliating, we should not return evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, we should bless them. Knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. You were called to be reviled and not reviled back.

You were called to suffer evil from others and not return evil to them. That's what you were called to. That's the calling of discipleship, to suffer wrongfully for doing what's right.

In Acts 14 verses 21 and 22, we read that the apostles returned on their way home from their first missionary journey to the churches that they had founded on their way outward on that journey. And they came to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith and saying, we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God. We must enter the kingdom of God through many tribulations.

It's a rough road there. But the disciple is the one who has chosen that road. He's the one who has chosen the difficult path, the narrow path that is not easy.

The wide road is easy and leads to destruction, Jesus said. And many go that way. But the road that leads to life is difficult, Jesus said.

And we go through many tribulations, many of which are, of course, due to people's hostility toward those who follow Christ. And that's what is probably implied here, that these particular churches suffered hostility from the Jews and the pagans that didn't like the preaching of the apostles. And therefore, they persecuted the believers.

But Paul said to the disciples, he strengthened their hearts, saying, we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God. Does that sound strengthening to you? You know, the average Christian today, if you say, you know, you've got to suffer, they'd say, hey, you're discouraging me. The Bible says that encouraged them.

Why? Because they were suffering. And it was encouraging to know that the suffering they're on means they're on the right path, they're entering the kingdom of God. You go through the path of tribulation to get into the kingdom.

Therefore, since you are in tribulation, it's good to know that this is the right path, you're going the right direction. It looks like a bad strip of road, but it's going in the right direction, and it's the right road to be on. Now, see, we don't suffer much.

And therefore, if you tell American Christians, you're called to suffer through great tribulation to get into the kingdom of God. We dread what we're not experiencing yet. But this is actually supposed to be encouraging because you are going to suffer.

Even if you're not a Christian, you're going to suffer. People suffer. I don't think Christians die of cancer more than non-Christians do.

I don't think Christians experience poverty more than non-Christians do. I don't think Christians suffer in hurricanes more than non-Christians do. People suffer regardless whether they're Christian or not.

The difference is for the Christian, their tribulations are bringing them further along in this transformation that God's trying to do in them so that they're fit for the kingdom of God. The call to discipleship is a call to suffering. And finally, the call to discipleship is a call to glory.

Now, glory doesn't mean heaven. The Bible doesn't really use the term that way, but it uses the term a lot in the New Testament as the thing that Christians are called to ultimately is to glory. In 2 Thessalonians 2.14, Paul said, "...to which he called you by our gospel for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." God called us.

The call of discipleship is the call to glory, to the obtaining of the glory. What's that mean? How do you obtain the glory of Jesus? That's what's at the end of this road. The road includes tribulation and suffering, but when you get to the very end, what you have is the glory of Jesus Christ.

What does that mean? Well, we can actually figure that out if we look at enough

scriptures on it. In 1 Peter 5.10, Peter says, "...but may the God of all grace, who called us to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you." After you've suffered, these benefits will accrue. You will be perfected, established, strengthened, and settled because God has called you to share in his eternal glory, Peter says.

Ephesians 1.18, Paul prays that the eyes of your understanding would be enlightened that you may know what is the hope of his calling and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. The hope of his calling is related to the riches of his glory. What is the Christian's hope? The Christian's hope is the riches of the glory of God.

We haven't yet talked about what that is, but I just want to establish how often this is stated in the scripture. A similar phrase is found in Colossians 1.27 where Paul says, "...to them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Christ in you is the hope of glory. Keep that in your mind as we look at some other important scriptures related to it.

In Romans 5.2, Paul said, "...through Christ also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." The hope of glory. Our hope is the riches of his glory, the hope of the Christian, is the glory of God. In Titus 2.13, it says, "...looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." The hope of the Christian is the appearing of the glory of Jesus.

But what is that? Is that referring to the second coming? Is that referring to heaven? What is that talking about? The appearing of the glory of Jesus. Well, I do believe it is associated with the second coming of Christ, but I believe it is associated with it in a way that we might not think about if we are not thinking entirely scripturally. Because in Romans 8.18, Paul said, "...for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Now, notice how often suffering and glory are found together in these passages.

Quite a few of them mention the suffering and the glory together. But notice he says, "...the sufferings of this present time, which we know are the means by which we enter the kingdom of God through tribulation, are not worthy to be compared in terms of their intensity or magnitude with the glory which shall be revealed." Which is, of course, what? That's our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior. Titus 2.13 said, well, where is this glory going to appear? It's going to be revealed in us.

Well, what is it then? What is the glory of God that's going to be revealed in us? In Galatians 4.19, Paul said to Galatian Christians, "...my little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you." Remember, Paul said in Colossians, Christ in you is the hope of glory. And the glory is going to be revealed in us. What does that mean? Well, Paul says, Christ is being formed in you.

The glory of God is Christ. In Hebrews 1.3, it says that Jesus is the express image of God's person and the bright shining of His glory. Christ is the radiance of the glory of God.

And that Christ-likeness is going to be brought forth in us if we continue. This is what we're called to. It's a call to glory.

What is glory? Glory is being like Jesus, having His nature imparted to us. In 2 Peter 1, it says we have become partakers of the divine nature. And Jesus is the seed that's planted in us and is growing, and He's being formed in us.

Paul says, "...I labor in birth again with you until Christ is formed in you." That's the glory that should be revealed in us. So that in 2 Corinthians 3.18, Paul says, "...but we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord." He means of Jesus. We're gazing at the glory of Jesus right now, but as in a mirror, meaning it's hazy.

Remember when Paul said elsewhere in 1 Corinthians 13, we see through a glass darkly. He means seeing something in a mirror is a hazy thing because they didn't have glass mirrors back then. They just had polished brass.

That's the best they had for a mirror. And they get kind of a hazy picture in it, but it was the best they had. Well, seeing as in a mirror means kind of blurry, not real clear, but we are nonetheless beholding the glory of the Lord, and what is the result? We are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

So as we are following Jesus, keeping our eyes on Jesus, beholding Him, we are being transformed inwardly. He is being formed in us. Jesus is being reproduced in us.

The Word is becoming flesh in us as it did in Him, but not the same because Jesus is God and we aren't, but we are members of His body. We are part of Him, and His character, and His excellence, and His nature is given to us. We are partakers of the divine nature, Peter said, and therefore Christ in us is this glory that is our hope, the hope of glory, as He is formed in us, as we are changed from glory to glory into that same image by the working of the Spirit of God.

1 John 3, 2 says, Beloved, now we are the children of God. It has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him. Notice it doesn't say when He is revealed, we will go to heaven.

The focus that John wants us to look at is what will happen in us, what will happen to us at the coming of Jesus. We will be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. We are beholding now as in a glass, it's vague, but even so, we are being changed from glory to glory into that image, but then we'll see Him as He is, then we'll be like Him, we'll be transformed completely to be like Him.

And that's what Jesus said was the destiny of the disciples. In Luke 6, 40, Jesus said, A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained, that is when the discipleship has reached its goal, that person will be like his teacher. We are called to glory.

And what is glory? Glory is like Jesus. Glory is being like Him, is being transformed so that His character, His personhood is reproduced in us, is formed in us so that we look more and more like Him. Not outwardly, but in terms of who we really are in our character, in our spiritual life.

That's the glory that is to be revealed in us. It says in Proverbs, The path of the righteous is like the light of the dawn that grows brighter and brighter until the full day. When Jesus comes, that's the full day.

The sun comes over the horizon, everyone sees Jesus. But until then, the path of the righteous gets brighter and brighter like the dawning light until the full day. And so, as you walk with Jesus, you become more and more like Him.

Eventually, people will see Him, but in the meantime, they should see Him in you. Eventually, they'll see Him with... every eye will see Him when He returns. But in the meantime, they've got to see Him in us.

So, the call to discipleship is a call to surrender. It is a call to follow. It's a call to holiness.

It's a call to fellowship with Christ. It's a call to warfare and to suffering. And ultimately, it's a call to glory, to being like Jesus.

And that's why we are disciples. That is our hope, that God will be glorified in us by our being like Him. Jesus said, And this is my Father glorified, that you bring forth much fruit, so shall you be my disciples.