

OpenTheo

Becoming a Disciple of Christ



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In his discourse, Steve Gregg explores the conditions of discipleship as outlined by Jesus in Luke chapter 14. He emphasizes that becoming a true disciple of Christ entails total devotion and sacrifice, prioritizing the love for Jesus above all else. Gregg draws parallels between Christian discipleship and the story of David in the Old Testament, stressing the importance of recognizing Jesus as the true King and leader. He cautions that following Jesus requires counting the cost and being willing to endure opposition and persecution. Ultimately, becoming a disciple of Christ requires complete commitment and surrender to Jesus.

Transcript

I'd like for you to turn in your Bibles, if you would, to the 14th chapter of Luke. I'm going to read a somewhat lengthy passage at the end of this chapter, and the reason I'm going to read the entire thing is because it's one cohesive thought and you need the beginning and the end of it together in order to, and the middle part too, in order to get the whole scope of what is being said here. In Luke chapter 14 and verse 25 is where I want to begin.

It says, Now great multitudes went with Jesus, and he turned and said to them, If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you intending to build a tower does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it? Lest after he has laid the foundation and is not able to finish, all who see 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 conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple. Now, some of the verses in this passage have traditionally been referred to as belonging to a category of statements in the Gospels, which sometimes are called the

hard sayings of Jesus.

There are three verses in particular of those that we read that all end with the same phrase. That phrase is cannot be my disciple. Not may not, but cannot.

It's an impossibility. It's an impossibility to be a disciple of Jesus without meeting the conditions that he states in verse 26. If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters.

Yes. And his own life also. He cannot be my disciple.

Verse 27, whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. And verse thirty three. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Now, I suppose it's not any mystery why these are sometimes called hard sayings of Jesus forsaking all that you have, hating your wife and your children and your own life. Carrying a cross, these things are not exactly what we relish. These are not the things that, in fact, many people feel they cannot even do these things.

How could Jesus require such a terrible thing? And. I think what has come down to us as sort of an instinct from reading passages like this is that being a disciple must mean. Being exceptionally committed to Jesus more than the average Christian, I know that I was raised without any real teaching about what it means to be a disciple.

I would read the Bible when I was younger and I'd read passages like this. I think this must be referring to those people who go to Africa as missionaries or something. I mean, they leave everything behind and they go in for Jesus and there must be some special crown, some special reward for people who do that kind of thing.

Even those who die as martyrs, you know, they hate their own life. That must be that must be what he's talking about. This discipleship is something like an extreme, exceptional calling that some Christians have.

I remember even after I was in the ministry for some years talking to another man who had been in the ministry for some years, a partner of mine. And we discussed this very thing, although we didn't come to a satisfactory answer among ourselves. I remember saying to him or him saying to me, I remember because we both were discussing it.

You know, is it possible to be a Christian and not be a disciple? And just very quickly, I'd like to turn you to a passage that may answer that question for us. In Acts, chapter 11. And verse 26, although we're going to get back to Luke 14 and some other passages.

In Acts, chapter 11 and verse 26, it says, and when he had found him, that is, when Barnabas found Saul. He brought him back to Antioch, so it was that for a whole year

they assembled with the church and taught a great many people and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. So the Bible does give a synonym for disciples here.

The synonym for a disciple is a Christian. The disciples were first called Christians. You never find anyone else in the Bible ever being called a Christian except a disciple of Jesus.

In fact, Christian sort of means disciple of Jesus. The suffix I-A-N at the end of the name of Christ means belonging to Christ or of Christ, just like Herodian means of Herod or something like that. Mohammedan is a belonging to Mohammed.

But the thing here is that the word Christian, which is, by the way, only very rarely used in the Bible, only three times does the word Christian appear in the Bible. And only once is it ever defined for us. And that's here.

The other two times are when Paul is talking to Agrippa and he says, Agrippa says to Paul, almost thou persuades me to become a Christian. Well, obviously that verse doesn't give us any new definitions of the word Christian. It just uses the word.

Likewise, the other only other time in scriptures in First Peter chapter four, when it says, if any of you suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf. In other words, you may suffer for being a Christian, but the passage doesn't tell us what a Christian is. Only one passage in the Bible tells us what a Christian is, a disciple.

The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch, which, whether we like that or not, seems to compel us to the conclusion that what the Bible refers to as a Christian and the only thing that the Bible refers to as a Christian is a disciple of Jesus. Only the disciples are called Christians in the Bible. Now, that throws us back into a hard spot, because you said if you don't hate your father, mother, wife and children and your own life for my sake, you can't be a disciple.

You can read. You can't be a Christian. If you don't take up your cross, you can't be a disciple.

You can read. You can't be a Christian. If you're using biblical definitions of the words and if you don't forsake all that you have, you can't be my disciple.

You can't be a Christian. Now, how does that work? That does sound like a very hard thing, doesn't it? Now, Jesus somehow realized that this wasn't going to be the easiest thing for people to grasp. And he gave two illustrations about this.

He said, this is a little bit like engaging in a construction project. It's a building. He says, anyone who really sets about to build a tower, he will, if he's intelligent, first sit down and calculate whether he has enough funds to do the whole job or at least has a line of

credit adequate to finish the job.

Because if he can't finance the project, he won't finish the project. And then if he has begun it, he's laid the foundation, begun to build it, he says, yet he can't finish the project. Then the thing simply stands as an unfinished work, a monument to his poor planning and becomes an object of mockery.

People mock and say he began, but he couldn't finish. There's certainly been many people who have great flourish and fanfare have said, I've become a Christian. I'm forsaking my life of sin and womanizing and carousing and all the sinful things I've done.

I'm going to follow Jesus now. And of course, all the Christians rejoice, but all their old friends don't rejoice. In fact, in many cases, their old friends simply watch with curiosity.

Say, well, how long will this last? And only too often those old friends suspicions are vindicated because there are those who say, I will follow Jesus now. But within a few weeks or months, they are back with their friends doing the things they used to do. And it's not so much that individual who becomes a mockery.

It's the Christ that they claimed they were following becomes a mockery to the unbeliever, because this person has said this Jesus is real. I'm giving up all of that which is less real and less meaningful and going for that which really matters and what's really real. And when you come back to the world, you're saying, you know, it wasn't that real.

It wasn't really that good. It wasn't really that meaningful. And it is Jesus who is reproached by this.

There's a mockery of it. And Jesus is saying, hey, you better count the cost before you start. Better not to start at all than to start and give up.

Now, anyone who's considering being a disciple ought to first count the cost, he says. And he gives another illustration. He says like a king who has perhaps 10,000 troops that he can put on the field.

But he is now being attacked by a king who has 20,000. And that king has to sit down with his military counselors and so forth and decide, can we do this? Can we defend the city? We have 10,000, the enemy has 20,000. Now, you might say the answer is obviously no, but Jesus doesn't assume the answer is no.

He has to sit down and decide whether with 10,000, he's able to beat the person who comes with 20,000. There's a possibility. Maybe the 20,000 are incompetent soldiers.

Maybe it's a UN group, you know, and you just have to decide. I've got 10,000. He's got 20,000.

What are we going to do? Shall we try this? Can we pull it off? But the fact is the 10,000

may be able to beat 20,000 if the 10,000 give it everything they've got. But they're going to have to put out twice the effort as the guy who's got the 20,000. Now, Jesus said you need to be like that king, considering whether you're going to join battle.

If you follow Jesus, you will be going against the tide of the prince of this world and his minions. You will find that there is opposition of many kinds that are brought. And those who are in opposition actually outnumber those who want to follow Jesus.

Now, seen in the spiritual realm, it's different than that, because more are they that are with us than they that are against us, says the scripture. That's referring to angels and demons and so forth. And that's what, of course, Elijah said to his servant or Elisha said to his servant.

And he saw the chariots of fire around the Syrians and so forth. When it comes to when you count the troops that are on our side to include the angels, we're in the majority. But the angels aren't always visible.

And sometimes they don't even seem to be doing what we'd like them to be doing in a situation where we're confronting the enemy. And it looks like it's just us, this little ragtag minority following Jesus against this big world of hostile people. And we need to decide, do I want to go into this battle or not? Do I want to really become a disciple of Jesus when this kind of opposition is coming against us? I mean, it would have been easier a generation ago in this country than now, because even the people who weren't Christians thought they were.

And if they even knew they weren't Christians, they still respected Christianity. They knew that Christianity was better than what they were doing. They just didn't want to do it.

But nowadays we live in a time where people don't assume that Christianity is better. Some people think Christianity is really lame, really stupid, really wicked, even, you know, counterproductive to the progress of society. And when you join Jesus, you're going to be walking against a stiff wind in your face and you're going to have to swim upstream.

Do you want to do this? Now, Jesus said that the king with the 10,000 contemplating a battle against the king who had the 20,000, he had to decide whether he could do this, whether he would do this, whether he really wanted to start a fight with this guy. Or he said otherwise, he has to send out an embassy. The King James says, I think, an embassy to seek conditions of peace with the invading army.

Now, Jesus is saying, this is really your two options. You can join me and go into battle where it's just a little group against the world. You'll be outnumbered in terms of human participants.

But the only other option is to go out and make peace with the enemy. And, you know, an enemy that's coming with 20,000 soldiers against the king who only has 10. There's only one condition of peace that that guy wants, and that is full surrender, absolute surrender to the enemy.

And Jesus, you can go that way if you want. That's your choice. You can surrender.

You can just be absorbed into the enemy's kingdom and be a part of that and go to its destiny as well. Or if you're going to go with me, you better realize you're fighting a battle and it's going to take all you've got and maybe even a little more. Fortunately, there is more available than what you've got because God will be with you.

But you still have to decide, is that the choice I want to make? Now, when the gospel is preached to sinners, this is often not communicated to them. You know that when when you heard the gospel the first time, whether it was from an evangelist or reading a tract or or whatever it was that that you first heard the gospel, was this presented to you? Now, Jesus is an honest guy, right? I mean, he's never lied. And Jesus wanted everyone to be saved as near as I can tell.

And therefore, he would not make it any harder than it had to be. When the rich young ruler came to him, the rich young ruler would have been a fine specimen to have in the church. The man was a religious leader in the Jewish faith.

We'd be proud as punch if we had a rabbi saved. Come to our congregation, we'd be boasting about him all the time. Look, here's a rabbi.

He used to run the synagogue. Now he's here in our church. He's a follower of Jesus.

Well, this guy was, you know, a leader in the synagogue. He was rich. Pastors like rich members of the church.

The more of those the church has, the better as far as most modern pastors feel. The man was moral. It wasn't like it was getting Bill Gates in the church where you got a lot of money, but, you know, no Christian character.

This man had kept all the law from his childhood. And he came running to Jesus and said, what thing do I have to do to have eternal life? And Jesus dialogued with him, as we know. Finally, Jesus said to him, well, you have one thing remaining.

You lack one thing. If you'd be perfect. Sell everything you have and give it to the poor and come and follow me.

And we know that the man wouldn't do it. The man left sorrowful because he had great possession. That's an interesting reason to be sorrowful, isn't it? The world promises that if you have great possessions, that's the road to happiness.

The Bible says this man went away sorrowing because he had great possessions. Great possessions are no guarantee of happiness, especially if you have any conscience. Now, here's the deal.

This man came that close to being in the church. And when Jesus finally got the last condition, well, there's one other thing you need. And that's this.

Sell it all and give it away. Go out, follow me. The man said, sorry, that's that's the one thing I won't do, Jesus.

And he walked away. And we might expect Jesus to go after him and say, no, wait a minute here. Hold on a minute.

Listen here, this can be negotiated. Why don't we start out with 10 percent? Right. You're already giving 10 percent to the synagogue.

How about if you just start giving 10 percent to my church? We can work on this total commitment thing as you grow and as you mature in the Lord. Jesus didn't accept him on his terms. You don't come to Jesus on your terms.

You come on his terms or not at all. It's his way or the highway. And you either come as a total surrender to Jesus Christ or you haven't come.

And Jesus did not reduce. Did not water down the terms of discipleship at all, although he he wanted that rich man to be saved more than that man wanted to be saved himself. If Jesus could have made it easier, you know, he would have.

Jesus never makes it harder than it has to be, and therefore we need to wake up to the fact that being a disciple of Jesus isn't something you try on for size, see how it feels and then say, well, maybe I'll keep in this for a little while, you know, it's pretty good. I'll wear this for a while. See how it suits me for a few months.

Now, you don't come to him that way. If you come to that way, you haven't come to him. It's a total surrender.

Now, it might sound like I'm saying becoming a Christian is a really, really hard thing to do. Actually, it isn't. Jesus said my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

But how can he say that? And at the same time, say this. How can this be called an easy yoke or a light burden? Well, he did say it, and therefore both statements must be true. How is it so? It is so.

Well, let me let me show you how it is. So in Matthew, chapter 10, we have a very similar passage to that which we read in Luke, chapter 14. Shorter, but it has very distinct similarities.

In Matthew 10, verses 37 and 38, Jesus said, he who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. He who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.

Now, you'll notice several of the same thoughts here. And just like the other passage, there's three times that the same phrase ends the sentence. In Luke 14, it was, cannot be my disciple.

If you don't hate father, mother, wife and children, you cannot be my disciple. If you don't take up your cross, can't be my disciple. If you don't forsake all that you have, cannot be my disciple.

Here, the phrase that ends each of these similar statements is, is not worthy of me. So, I mean, it must be synonymous. Can't be a disciple is not worthy of me.

You can't really make the grade. You won't make the final cut. You just won't be there when the chips are down, if you aren't committed to this degree.

Now, notice, though, whereas in Luke, it says you have to hate your father, mother, wife and children. It's put a little more clearly, I believe. And this is really his meaning in Luke as well.

But here it says whoever loves father or mother more than me, whoever loves son or daughter more than me. And that's really what it means in the other passage, where it says you have to hate your father, mother, wife and children in your own life. It doesn't mean that I mean, Jesus in his teaching doesn't allow us literally to hate anybody, much less those to whom we have obligation, like our parents or our children.

But what he is saying there, he's using a Jewish idiom in the other place in Luke 14. That means you can't love them so much as you love me. But once you get that angle, it tells you why this isn't as hard a passage as it sounded at first.

It's a matter of loving him. Now, if you love him, sacrifices are not hard to make. Many, well, everybody who gets married promises to do something very similar to what Jesus is asking here.

Forsake all others, stick with me, even if you're going to be, you may be rich or may be poor, you may be in health or in sickness. It may be better or it may be worse. But the wife, the bride, I should say, in the bridegroom, they pledge and they feel they're making no sacrifice at all in making this pledge.

Some of them probably don't even listen to the words they're speaking and wouldn't mean it if they did. But we know very well that there are honest people who make this kind of a vow to each other at the marriage altar and they mean it. And they don't think they're being asked to do some great thing, do they? If you're married, you said words

like that.

I take you to be my wife. I promise, I swear to forsake all others, cleave only to you in sickness and health, for richer, for poorer and for better, for worse. Well, no one who said those vows, whoever loved the person they were marrying, felt like they were really making a big mistake.

And yet the very same commitment was required of them that Jesus requires. But the reason it's easy to do that, to take your vows at wedding, is because of love, because you love the person. You don't think it's a hard saying.

You may have to forsake all these other women I could have had from this day on. I can't court any of these others. Well, that's not hard to do.

That's not hard to make that decision. If you're in love with the person that you are marrying. Love makes it makes what would otherwise be really hard, really not very hard.

And to love Jesus more than you love anything else in the world, to forsake all other ambitions, all other pursuits, as he put it, to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. If it's not going to be first, it's not going to be on the list at all. In fact, it's not only going to be first, it's first in the sense as the primary overarching thing.

Everything that you seek, if you become a disciple, this is your commitment. I will seek one thing only, and that is the will of my master. Does that mean I can't go out and get a job? Of course you can get a job.

It may be the will of your master for you to have a job. Will you have to quit your job? That depends on if it's the will of your master. Will I have a home? Hard to say.

Depends on the will of your master. What will my standard of living be? Well, that, too, depends on the will of your master. All depends on one thing, and that is the will of your master, because when you become a disciple, you have only one commitment left.

All the others become subservient to that one, and that is, does it please the king? Does it please the king? You know, we have in the Old Testament a very striking type or foreshadowing of what it means to be a follower of Christ in the story of David. David is often in Scripture recognized as a type of Christ or as one whose life has many areas or events that foreshadow things in the life of Christ and the significance of Christ. Actually, the Messiah in Jewish prophecy, the prophets who came after David's time always indicated the Messiah would be like David.

He'd be descended from David. He'd be a shepherd king of Israel. In fact, there are a few prophets like Ezekiel and Jeremiah that go so far as to name the Messiah David.

They speak of him and they say, and David, my prince, shall reign over them. And it's not about David, King David, the son of Jesse, it's talking about the Messiah in the passage. You find that, for example, in Ezekiel 34 and Ezekiel 37, those two chapters refer to the Messiah himself as David.

I mean, because the prophets didn't know the real name of the Messiah, hadn't been revealed yet. But he was, David is a type of the Messiah. Much of what can be said of David can be said of the Messiah.

And this was intentional in scripture. In fact, many of the Psalms where David spoke about seemingly about himself, the New Testament writers quote as if it was Jesus talking about himself. You ever notice that? Psalm 22, the most famous Psalm to evangelicals, where they pierced my hands and my feet and all this stuff, you know, dogs have come past me around.

That is a psalm that David wrote as if about himself. But Christians have always recognized that in some sense it may have been about David himself, but in a greater sense, it was about the Messiah. David is a type of the Messiah can say these things.

In Psalm 40, David says apparently about himself, Lo, I come in the volume of the book it is written of me to do thy will, O God. Well, the writer of Hebrews quotes that and Hebrews chapter 10 says that's Jesus talking. And there are many songs like that, that David appears to be talking about himself.

But Christians recognize that David was speaking as a type of Christ and the words really apply to Christ. So David in the Old Testament is a wonderful, wonderful instance to contemplate and to recognize the ways in which his life intentionally foreshadow that of Christ. And that is true of his kingship and of those that followed him.

There's there's parallels there to Christian discipleship. And I'd like to show you three passages in the book of First Samuel that I find instructive in First Samuel, chapter 16. This is even before David slew Goliath.

If the chapters are arranged in their chronological order, which is not certain, but assuming they are, then this is just before the confrontation with Goliath. David at this point is quite a young lad and he has not really distinguished himself militarily in Israel, but he is a musician. And Saul, who at this time has been rejected by God for his multiple transgressions against the authority of God and his prophets.

Saul is afflicted periodically with demons, an evil spirit from time to time comes and torments him. Saul's counselors and who are concerned about his well-being have contemplated how this situation might be remedied. And they someone suggests, why don't we get a skillful musician to come? And when this fit comes on, Saul, this musician can play and soothe him and the evil spirit may go away.

And so someone had heard about this Bethlehemite David, the son of Jesse, and they called him to play. And sure enough, he his music had what it takes and it drove the evil spirit away. And it says in verse 21 of First Samuel, 16, verse 21.

So David came to Saul and stood before him and he that is Saul loved him that is David greatly and he became his armor bearer. Then Saul sent to Jesse saying, please let David stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight. So it was whenever the spirit from God, that is the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand.

So Saul would then become refreshed and well and the evil spirit would depart from him. Now, here we read that Saul loved David. All right.

Let's turn a couple of chapters over. Actually, we don't have to turn very many chapters over to see a change in this situation. But before we talk about Saul's change of mind.

Look at chapter 18. And it says in First Samuel, chapter 18, verse one. Now, when he had finished speaking to Saul, that is when David had spoken to Saul, that is after the death of Goliath now, the soul of Jonathan, Saul's son, was knit to the soul of David and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

So here we have two men of whom it is said they love David. Saul loved David and Jonathan, his son, loved David. Let's turn over to chapter 22.

As I'm sure many of you know, Saul's love for David turned to jealousy and hatred and began to persecute David. So David had to flee from Jerusalem or not Jerusalem, but from the capital city. Jerusalem was not yet that city.

But in First Samuel 22. Verses one and two, it says that David therefore departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. So when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him and everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt and everyone who was discontented moved to Idaho.

At least everyone I knew in Oregon who fits that description did. But on this occasion, they didn't. Idaho was not yet discovered.

So they went to David and it says, so he became captain over them. And there were about 400 men with him eventually, as you read the story on there, eventually 600. So the number grew.

Initially, there were 400 men who fit this description. Those who were in distress, those who were in debt, those were discontented. They went out and they went with David as he fled from Saul.

Now, it does not say of these men that they love David, but sometimes actions speak

louder than words. Let's consider what it means to love David, because David is a type of Christ and those who acknowledge David and loved him in many respects have their parallels in people who today say they love Jesus. Saul was the first of whom we read he loved David.

Well, we know that that was short lived, but why did he love David anyway? Because Saul was tormented. He had spiritual torments. He had a guilty conscience.

He had spiritual affliction upon him. And David soothed him. David could play the music that made the bad feelings go away and made the evil spirit depart.

There are many people who love Jesus just at those times, too. They ignore him most of the time. They have no use for him, but there are times when they're afraid, there are times when they're worried, there are times when there's nothing else to turn to.

There's times when there's affliction of conscience, affliction of soul. At those times, the name of Jesus is a sweet sound. It's the name that charms our fears.

And there are people who, because on many occasions they have turned to Jesus and found just even in the mention of his name, the calling out of his name, they found peace that they feel positively toward Jesus. They love Jesus. They're sentimentally attached to him.

I cannot tell you the number of people I have talked to. It would be at least half a dozen, if not more people over the years who have never known each other, who have all testified to an experience that I myself have never had. And that is that as they laid in bed, they felt the presence of evil spirits coming down and pressing upon their chest, pressing them against the bed so they could barely breathe.

And sometimes they have testified that they felt as if hands were around the throat, strangling them. Now, some of you probably would not. You probably either heard stories like that or have had experience like that.

My impression from all the people who told me this kind of story over the years and 30 years in ministry gives me the impression that this is not all that rare. It's a strange kind of demonic attack that comes upon some people at some times. But everyone who's ever testified to this has said, but when I finally managed to choke out the word Jesus, then this thing went away, you know.

And some of these people weren't living for Jesus. Some of these people had no commitment to Jesus at all, but they just they just they knew that they should call on Jesus. I mean, who else can you call on at a time like that? And they called out the name Jesus and relief comes.

And when they remember that, they think very fondly of Jesus. Saul felt very fondly of

David. There was one little problem, though.

Saul was fond of David as long as David's ministry kept Saul happy. It did not occur to Saul at that point that David might be a rival for his throne. But we know because Samuel, the prophet, had earlier gone to the house of Jesse and anointed David to be the next king because David had been sought as a man after God's own heart.

And Saul had been rejected from being king. We know what Saul did not know at this point, and that was that Saul would someday lose his throne and David would take it. Now, this is not David's doing.

David, David was appointed to this by someone above himself, by God. David was not jealous for the throne, nor was he eager to take it in any inordinate way. But it was simply his destiny that he would take that throne.

And as soon as Saul began to suspect this. Saul was jealous against David. And sought to kill him, started hurling javelins at him while he was playing his music.

I want to do that to some musicians I've heard too, but for different reasons, I suppose. But he eventually pursued David into the wilderness and took the armies of Israel out to try to destroy David, to try to prevent David from fulfilling this destiny because Saul was jealous over his throne. Now, there are these people who, if you say the name Jesus, they don't have negative things.

They have warm feelings. They like Jesus. They've had some good experiences.

I remember when I was a child waking up from bad dreams occasionally in the middle of the night and, you know, just really kind of terrified in the dark room and turn on the little New Testament there. I'd open it up, read a few chapters from usually it seems to me it was one of Paul's epistles rather than the Gospels. But the point is, I felt better as a child.

I probably didn't even know what the words meant. And it wasn't as if the truth made me free. It was more like, I don't know, psychologically, knowing I'd read something from the Bible made me feel better.

My own children, when they were young, used to like to sleep with a Bible under their pillow. It made them feel more secure. Well, since that time, they've come to know what it means to be a Christian.

And really, a Bible is not a good luck charm. And the name of Jesus isn't a good luck charm, but some people use it as such. They know that there's some amazing power in that name, and they will use it from time to time when it suits them.

When it suits their purposes. But let them be confronted with the claims of Christ, that

He, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him. That God has made Him both Lord and Christ, and that every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

That means boss. That means owner. That means king.

And that means if I'm to confess that He is Lord, then whether I say so or not, that means I'm the slave. A Lord owns slaves. If He's my Lord, I guess that makes me a slave.

A lot of people don't want to be a slave for some reason. And because of that, many people, their affection for Jesus goes only that far. As soon as they realize that Christ really has a claim on every area of their life, and He insists that they forsake all others, and cleave only to Him, they want Him no more.

There's many young men who profess love to girls whom they have no intention of marrying. They feel good around a pretty girl who seems to find them attractive. They feel masculine.

They feel important. Their egos are stroked by having on their arm a young woman who is regarded as desirable. But let that woman say, now listen, you can't go out with me unless we're getting married.

I'm not going to be one of many here. I'm not just going to be an ornament for you to enhance your ego. It's either forsake all others and cleave only to me, or else we're not going to be seeing each other.

Now, that wouldn't be unreasonable for a girl to do. That's not unreasonable for God to do. That's how He is.

The boy may love the girl in a sense. He has a sentimental or emotional or even possibly even a sexual love for her. But if he doesn't want to commit totally and be bound to her and serve her the rest of his life, it's not a marriage.

It's not happening. Okay. Now, when we turn to Jonathan, we find a little deeper kind of commitment to David there, I think.

Because Jonathan had as much to lose by David's enthronement as Saul did. Because David himself was of Jonathan's generation and David was a young man. Saul might well die anyway before David would ever take the throne.

But Jonathan was the man who was the oldest son of the king and would it was the chief prince and would be the one who would take the throne. It was really Jonathan more than Saul that David's destiny threatened. Because Saul already had been king for many years.

If he died that day or lost the throne that day and David became king, Saul would suffer

nothing personally. But his son, Jonathan, would lose the throne to this rival. The difference between Jonathan and Saul, though, is a great one, because Jonathan knew this.

And Jonathan loved David anyway. And we read that David, Jonathan actually took his own sword and his belt and his ring and his cloak and gave it to David. And later on, we find Jonathan actually saying to David, I know that God has chosen you to be the king.

And it did not it did not interfere with his affection for David as it did with Saul. Jonathan was willing to acknowledge that David was king. He recognized the choice that God had made.

And he said, if this is God's anointed, then I will give my allegiance to him. And it did not. There was no jealousy there on Jonathan's part.

There's no defensiveness. Jonathan was willing to lay down his sword, lay down his armor, lay down his destiny. And that was a lot to lay down in a very wealthy Middle Eastern kingdom at that time.

And so we see the love that it says Jonathan loved David as his own soul. That love means something different there than it did when it says Saul loved David. Love doesn't always mean exactly the same thing.

And so we would we'd have much more positive things to say about Jonathan's love for David, much more like what most Christians would probably feel needs to be the kind of love that constitutes a Christian commitment or a discipleship commitment. Be willing to lay down your rights, be willing to lay down your destiny and so forth. And that's what Jonathan was willing to do.

However, and I believe David, I believe Jonathan was certainly saved, but Jonathan made a very peculiar choice when David actually fled from Saul. The last person he met with before he left town was Jonathan. And Jonathan again affirmed David and said, I know that someday you're going to be the king.

My God's going to take out my dad. I'm not going to rain. You're going to rain, but I'll rain with you.

He said, I'll I'll I'll stand with you. And. David fled into the wilderness to live a life of peril and a life of poverty for a while, destitution, living in caves and dens in the earth, wearing sheepskins and goatskins and so forth.

And, you know, his life always being he's always one step away from death, as he said, Jonathan didn't go with him. Jonathan went back to the palace and lived out the rest of his years with his father. Now, that is strange to us, given the kind of commitment and love that Jonathan had.

For David. I'm sure that in Jonathan's own mind, he did not consider it a defection to David's enemy. In all likelihood, Jonathan saw himself as the one who could really affect a change in his father or at least spy on David's behalf.

There was at least once when Jonathan carried a message out to David to warn him about the dangers father had communicated at the dinner table once and so forth. And probably Jonathan felt I can do more good for David here in the palace than I could do out there in the desert with him. And.

I'm sure that Jonathan's motives were pure. I mean, I don't know his motives, but I'll give him the benefit of the doubt. However, as things turned out, it would appear that Jonathan made the wrong decision in the sight of God.

Because we know that while God did eventually vindicate David and David did become king, it did not happen as Jonathan had predicted that Jonathan would stand by him. Jonathan was dead. Jonathan ended up fighting in battle and dying in battle with his father against the Philistines.

And he never came to the throne and he never did David a lick of good. In the palace. And one wonders whether.

Jonathan may have. Rationalized a little bit in staying in the palace, I mean, a palace is more comfortable place than a desert cave. There are Christians who, upon contemplating taking a hard road of discipleship and self-denial.

They think, well, wait a minute, but who's who's going to reach out to the rich for Jesus? Who's going to be a witness to our, you know, our affluent culture and so forth? There's got to be rich Christians for that. Well, I'm not saying there can't be rich Christians for that. There are rich Christians.

I know some rich Christians, and I would say that some of them I know are not one bit compromised. But there are some who reason that, you know, I'm already here in a comfortable place. Why can't I just serve Jesus here? I don't need to reconsider now that I'm committed to Jesus.

Do I need to really reconsider my whole vocation? Do I have to reconsider my whole calling, my whole lifestyle just because I'm now committed to Jesus? Jonathan should have. He would have lived longer and he would have entered into the kingdom along with David, but he did not. I don't wish to fault Jonathan.

He's one of my heroes in the Old Testament. But even heroes make mistakes. Even David made mistakes in the Bible.

But the fact is, it would appear that Jonathan's love for David had its limits as well. I love you, David. I give up my potential throne to you, but I'm not going to live in a cave.

I just wasn't raised that way. And so, Jonathan, his commitment to David ended at that point. Not his heart commitment.

And I do believe that Jonathan is certainly saved, and I doubt that Saul was. But he did not participate in the kingdom with David, because though he loved him up to a very remarkable point, he did not go all the way with David. And then we have this third group.

We don't see any protestations that they love David. They weren't talking about it, but they were doing something about it. They had their reasons, too.

They had their some selfish reasons. They were discontented. But who's ever going to follow Jesus unless they're discontented with their life of sin in the world? I mean, of course, you know, there's always something that we can see that we have to gain by following Jesus.

But the fact is, if they were discontented, they could have run off to some other country. Instead, they threw in their lot with Saul's enemy, who was under pursuit by the Israelite armies. That wasn't the safest place they could have gone.

They went there because they recognized in David a leader that God had anointed. And they knew that he was the true king. And it says they made him their captain.

And these men, we do not know how long, whether it was months or years, that David was pursued by Saul before Saul was killed and David was eventually elevated to the throne. But for some period of time and very dangerous times, too, with the armies hot on their heels, these men went with David and their lives were in their hands. Their lives were at risk.

In fact, these men were so dedicated to David that once David just said, reminiscing about his childhood, about the well in Bethlehem, he says, man, what I wouldn't give to be able to drink from that well in Bethlehem again. Which was probably not really a statement thinking that that water is better than other water, that he literally wanted water from that well. Just thinking about, I sure miss the good old days, you know, before the king was chasing me.

When I was a nobody, I was living in Bethlehem, I used to draw water from that well all the time. Boy, would I like to be there again. But two of his guys or three heard him say that and without permission, they ran off to Bethlehem.

They broke through a garrison of the Philistines, killed the guards, got the water and brought back the water to David. I mean, this is the kind of love for David they had. They took their lives into their hands just to satisfy what they perceived to be a wish.

As far as they were concerned, his wish was their command. They wanted David to be

happy. They weren't looking for their own safety.

They weren't looking for their own comfort, their own security. They were looking to please David. And in this, they are the only ones in the story of David who really resemble what Jesus referred to as his disciples.

But these men did not think it as hard as it might seem. I'm sure they thought it hard. I'm sure it was hard at times, but they didn't have to be there.

Those 400 men could have defected any time, gone back to Saul. In fact, could have gotten in good graces. Probably say, hey, I'll tell you where David hangs out.

Sort of like Judas did with Jesus. There were these 400 men could have done that, but they didn't. I'm sure they found it hard, but not as hard as not being with David.

Not as hard as knowing that they were on the wrong side if they defected. There are some things that matter more to people than comfort. And popularity and being on the winning team.

And that is being on God's team, being on God's side. See, David was anointed as king long before this. David was anointed in a secret ceremony at his father's house.

Apparently, years later, Saul was killed in battle and David became the king. Those who followed him in the wilderness became his officers in government. They became the leaders of his army, the leaders of his palace.

They became his chief advisors. These men who followed him in the time of danger were the ones who reigned with him when he came to power. Now, it should not be hard to see the parallels to Jesus because Jesus has been anointed as king also.

It says that in all the sermons in the book of Acts, they say this Jesus, God is anointed to be the Christ. That means the king of Israel. He's the anointed king, but the world still follows Saul.

And following King Jesus often involves forsaking all that you have in order to be loyal to him, in order to be able to please him, in order to be close to him. And so it is that love of Christ, that love for Christ that makes a person capable of being a disciple and meeting the terms of discipleship without that seeming like a hard saying. Now, in closing, I should probably clarify, because whenever people look at that passage in Luke 14, there are some really kind of difficult things there.

And so in some ways, it's a little like the passage about plucking out your eye and cutting off your hand. People have been known to take this more literally than probably was intended. I do not believe that Jesus was not being literal in the sense that he didn't really mean what he said.

He definitely was. But he did use figures of speech when he talked about hating father, mother, wife and children. This is a Hebraism.

It doesn't mean to really hate them. I mentioned that earlier. Taking up a cross is not something you literally do because there aren't that many crosses around for us all to take one.

But it does mean that you accept the way of the cross. It means you accept the way that Jesus went. The rejection of the world.

A man who was carrying a cross had already been rejected and condemned by the world. It means accepting that rejection, if necessary, going out with him as the men of David went out into the wilderness. Bearing a cross means something like what the writer of Hebrews means.

In Hebrews chapter 13, where he reads this, he writes this, I should say. In Hebrews chapter 13, beginning of verse 11, it says, for the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin are burned outside the camp. Now, those bodies were considered unclean.

They were taken outside the camp. Parts of them were sacrificed on the altar, but the other parts were unclean. They were rejected.

They were taken outside the camp and burned out there as unclean things. It says, therefore, Jesus also that he might sanctify the people with his own blood suffered outside the gate. That is, he was treated as if an unclean thing by his own people.

Therefore, let us go forth to him outside the camp bearing his reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. Those who follow David in the wilderness had no continuing stake in Saul's city, but they were seeking one to come under David, under King David.

And that eventually was Jerusalem. David conquered Jerusalem and made that his capital. In our case, it's the heavenly Jerusalem.

But the point is, we need to realize that this is not our home and to seek our own estate, our own kingdom, our own prosperity, our own comfort in this city is to choose the wrong side. This is not a continuing city. We seek one that is to come.

Therefore, we should go with him outside the camp, which in this context means being treated as contemptuous, as rejected, as ostracized by family and friends and so forth, if necessary. That's what it means to bear a cross. Now, there is that other line that he said in verse thirty three of Luke 14.

Whoever does not forsake all that he has, he cannot be my disciple. This does not, as I

understand it, mean that you must sell everything you possess, have a yard sale and then stand around owning nothing. Forsaking all that you have.

Is comparable to what Peter and the disciples did, because when the rich young ruler went away sorrowful and Jesus said, it's hard for a rich man to inherit the kingdom of God. Peter said, Lord, we have forsaken everything, meaning himself. And he says, we have forsaken everything.

What shall we have? Well, apparently Peter is an example of what Jesus meant by forsaken everything, because Jesus didn't say, Peter, you give yourself too much credit. You haven't forsaken everything. Now, Jesus took it at face value that Peter, in fact, had done the very thing that he expects all disciples to.

He had forsaken everything. But Peter had a house. He had a wife, it may have been he had children, he was often there, he didn't run off and divorce them.

He and Jesus and the disciples stayed in his house most of the time. He had a boat. He started fishing equipment.

We read of him going out fishing later on after he'd followed Jesus. He we read that he left his boat in his nets when he followed Jesus, but he still had them, apparently put them in mini storage or in the garage so that he could use them for God. And that's really what he did.

His boat became Jesus transport across the Sea of Galilee on many occasions. His house became the lodging for Jesus and the disciples on many occasions. He was an example, the scripture says, of one who had forsaken everything.

Yet he still had a house. He had transport. He had tools of his trade, although his trade changed and he didn't need to fish for a living anymore.

He still had those things around for a while anyway. And so forsaking all that you have doesn't necessarily mean you liquidate your assets. But it certainly means this, that you liquidate your title.

To all things. And including your own life, you become a servant, you become a slave and a slave owns nothing. But your master may yet entrust you with the stewardship of many things, but they are not yours.

They belong to him and they should be used for him if you use them for other purposes. In other words, if you take off on your own agenda with the things that God has entrusted you, you are an unfaithful steward and there will be a reckoning for it. But forsaken all that you have.

Some people mistakenly think they need to really sell everything they have, because if

you own anything, you're not obeying this command. Not quite. I've seen people do that very literal thing.

Many times because I was part of the Jesus movement and that was not too uncommon. I lived much of my early ministry without owning much of anything myself. But I've seen people sell all they had to be committed and then they had nothing and they had to go out and buy some more.

They had to buy pots and pans and dishes and silverware and furniture and had to get a place to live and some way to get around. They end up spending more replacing the things than they've gotten in their yard sale. So it's a poor stewardship.

Now, we need to be a little more responsible than that. We need to realize that in coming to Christ, we actually turn over the title to everything we have, including our own family to him. And then it remains for him to guide us as these things are to be dispensed or dispensed with as he sees fit.

The main thing is that becoming a Christian means that you've had a transition of who's your king. Jesus is the king and all that you have now is. Is his and all that you have desired, your ambitions for life, your choice to be married or not to be married, you know, your standard of living, everything you have ever thought was your choice is now his choice and you'll be out of love for him, not out of legalism, not begrudgingly, but out of loving him more than these things.

You gladly do these things. There is one parable in Matthew 13, 44, about the kingdom of God being like a treasure in a field. And he said, he said, the person who found this treasure in the field went out and and for the joy of it sold everything he had to obtain that field and that treasure.

The man who sold everything he had to obtain that treasure wasn't grudging about it. He did it for the joy of it. If you love Jesus and if you value his kingdom, as we are told to do and as definitely as appropriate.

Then it will be no great burden to keep what some people call the hard things of Jesus. They are not hard. If you love him as one should.

And this is the challenge to us because there are those of whom it is said they've left their first love and there are those of whom it says they are lukewarm. And so we need to search our hearts and say, have I cooled? Am I am I really a disciple? And I can't be unless these conditions of which Jesus spoke are true in my own case.