



Practical Christian Living

Discipleship: The Life of Self Sacrifice

Icebreaker: *If you could spend time with anyone from history who would it be?*

Jesus taught a lot about what it means to be a disciple. Some of his teachings were direct and to the point. We find these kind of teachings in verses like **Mark 8:34-36**.

What three things did Jesus say are necessary if we are going to be his disciple?

- Denial of self, take up a cross, follow Him

What does it mean to deny yourself?

- You put God first and put yourself last.

What does it mean to take up a cross?

- It means we are willing to endure hardship for Jesus Christ—not necessarily a literal cross but instead all the things that come with bearing a cross—pain, shame, difficulty.

Which of those three is easiest for you and which is hardest? Why?

Why is it only possible to do those three things in that order?

- You cannot follow him until you are willing to take up a cross
- You cannot take up a cross until you are willing to sacrifice your own desires to His will.

Other of Jesus teachings on discipleship were a little more subtle. In **Matthew 19:16-22** Jesus meets a rich young man who has good intentions but is not yet ready to follow Jesus.

What three things did Jesus tell this man to do?

- Sell everything, give to the poor, and follow Him

Which of the three steps above (denial of self, taking up a cross, and following Jesus) was hardest for this man?

- He was not willing to deny himself of his possessions and that short-circuited his discipleship process and made him unable to really follow Jesus.

Jesus knew people's hearts. Jesus pointed right at this young man's biggest weakness, his biggest roadblock and demanded it be removed. Whatever he struggled with the most is what Jesus pointed out and asked that it no longer take first place in his life.

If you were to ask Jesus what you lacked to better be his disciple, what would he point out has to go?

What is keeping you from getting that done?

There is an important verse in Romans 12 that sheds more light on self sacrifice and being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Romans 12:1-2

Discipleship is a Continuous Process

When people sacrificed an animal it was killed and burned. It was a one-time act per animal and had to be repeated over and over again. *How is being a “living sacrifice” different?*

- It is continuous
- That is what discipleship is all about. It is not done in chunks or only here and there or on Sunday and Wednesday. It is continuous.

He is not through with us yet. This process is one where we are shaped over and over again and like Paul said in verse 1, it requires God’s mercy.

Discipleship is Holy and Pleasing

He says to offer your body as a “living sacrifice.” *What two words does he use to describe such a sacrifice?*

- Holy and pleasing

In the Old Testament the phrase “pleasing aroma” happens 39 times and is always used regarding the smell that goes up to God from someone’s animal sacrifice. Paul is saying when we offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, God is pleased by the aroma that is lifted up to him by such a continuous and holy offering.

What do you think God is most pleased with in your life?

Discipleship is Total

Sacrifices involved the whole animal. It was all given. That is how our lives are to be to God—wholly given to God. Self-sacrifice involves taking our whole life and willingly laying it on God’s altar to be holy and pleasing in his site. If we hold back and keep things for ourselves (not denying ourselves and not taking up a cross) we will not be able to follow Jesus.

What areas of your life are not wholly given over to God?

Activity

1—Hand everyone two note cards and a pencil or pen.

2—Have them write on one card the areas of their life God is pleased with and on the other card areas of their life that still need to be sacrificed to God’s control.

3—Pray for the group thanking God for the first card and asking God to take control of the things on the second card.

4—Have group members dispose of the cards (You can do this different ways depending on your resources—if you have a fire place or a fire pit outside you could burn them up fitting with Romans 12:1-2 or you could just tear them up and have them put them in a trash can.

Feel free to modify this any way you like.