

Lesson 3: The Cost of Discipleship

Intro

In the last lesson we learned that God has a plan for our lives. A plan that is bigger and better than anything we could come up with on our own. And yet discipleship does have its price. Jesus during His time on earth made that extremely clear to those who followed Him. His words and deeds left a deep impression on people. Many felt drawn to Him and wanted to follow Him, but many did so for selfish reasons. They wanted healing, a position, or to experience adventure. But Jesus showed them the naked truth and the consequences of being His disciple. These words are still applicable today because we also face a decision: to become a disciple of Jesus or remain as we are. As Jesus made the cost of discipleship clear to the people then, He makes it clear to us now.



Mark 10:17-22

Read the story of the rich young ruler and answer the following questions!

1. What motivated the rich young ruler to come to Jesus?

2. How did Jesus receive the rich young ruler? (Verse 21)

3. What was keeping him from following Jesus?

4. On the surface, it seems that money was what the young man did not want to give up. But what was the real issue at hand?

Read the following quote from Ellen White and search for further answers to these questions!

Quote #1

“Christ read the ruler’s heart. Only one thing he lacked, but that was a vital principle. He needed the love of God in the soul. This lack, unless supplied, would prove fatal to him; his whole nature would become corrupted. By indulgence, selfishness would strengthen. That he might receive the love of God, his supreme love of self must be surrendered.

Christ gave this man a test. He called upon him to choose between the heavenly

treasure and worldly greatness. The heavenly treasure was assured him if he would follow Christ. But self must yield; his will must be given into Christ's control. The very holiness of God was offered to the young ruler. He had the privilege of becoming a son of God, and a coheir with Christ to the heavenly treasure. But he must take up the cross, and follow the Savior in the path of self-denial." (*Desire of Ages*, pg. 519-520)

Everyone has to decide!

Jesus has not called all of us to sell everything we have and give our money to the poor. And yet we must make the same decision that he laid before the rich young ruler: to give Jesus our whole heart or to love the things of this world. Of course salvation is free for everyone; we cannot earn it through any work of our own. But there is a price to pay. We cannot be disciples of Jesus if we are not willing to pay the cost.



Luke 14:25-33

In the following verses, Jesus is speaking to the multitude about the cost of discipleship. He calls them to weigh the cost and to make a sober decision if they really want to follow Him. Three times Jesus says, "You cannot be my disciple". When can someone not be a disciple of Jesus?

Verse 26: _____

Verse 27: _____

Verse 33: _____

Nothing is more important than Jesus!



These comments sound quite drastic. When He speaks about hating our family, Jesus is exaggerating a little bit to make His point. Jesus loves our family. The point is that **nothing** should be more important than Jesus: no person (verse 26), no goals (verse 27), and no belongings (verse 33).

A disciple of Jesus is told to weigh the cost of following Him and to decide if he/she will put Jesus as the number one priority in his/her life. Think about it for a moment: Are there things in your life that take first place instead of Christ?



Luke 9:23

Jesus names 3 steps a disciple needs to take. What are these three steps?

- a.) _____
- b.) _____
- c.) _____

1st Step: Deny yourself

In your opinion, what does it mean to deny yourself?

What it (doesn't) mean

When Jesus says that we should deny ourselves, He does not call us to give up our identity, to surrender our individuality, or to ignore our basic needs. We are all individuals created in the likeness of God with the ability to think and to decide for ourselves. The problem is that we often use this ability to go our own way, separated from God. Our pride and ego is the biggest stumbling block that stands between us and the salvation that Jesus completed on the cross. That is why He calls us to give up selfish lifestyles that revolve around our own wants and desires. He wants to rescue us from a life centered on "me, myself and I". A rescue that is only possible when we totally surrender our will to Him. He invites us to trust Him and to lay our goals, plans, needs, and desires at His feet. He will then put them in their rightful place.

In which solar system are you living?

In the past people believed that our solar system, including the Sun, revolved around the Earth (known as geocentrism)! Later, they discovered that the Earth had a more modest role; it is only one of many other planets that revolve around the Sun (known as heliocentrism).

The geocentric belief is an analogy for the person living without Christ. They see themselves as the central focus of their existence. Unfortunately, this illusion leads to an egotistical lifestyle that will only end in disappointment. Whereas heliocentrism is an analogy, and truly the reality, of the person whose life is centered on Jesus Christ, the Son of Righteousness.



Galatians 2:19-20

How does Paul describe denying self?

To deny oneself is the beginning of something new. How does he describe the new life?



2 Corinthians 5:15

Whom should we *no longer* live for?

Whom should we live for?



Matthew
26:39-42

How did Jesus deny Himself?

**For myself or
for God?**

Every person must ask the question: should I live for myself or for God? Your answer will lead you in a specific direction. It just so happens that the two options are mutually exclusive. The first way is the broad path. There is a lot of fun and partying along the way but in the end it leads to damnation. The second way is the narrow way. It is often thought to be much more difficult, spiritually speaking, with many hardships. But it is the only path that leads to true joy and eternal life. Each person can and must decide which of the two paths they will take.

This world is full of people who live only for themselves. Jesus is calling people to turn their back on that type of existence and to live for Him. He wants His followers to stop worrying about fulfilling their own desires and start serving others. This is the only way that the world can be a better place.

**The denial
of self and
the great
Controversy**

Every person is affected by the great controversy between Christ and Satan. According to the Bible, our fallen nature makes us children of wrath (Ephesians 2:1.3) and an accomplice to God's adversary. There is only one way to be saved and that is by surrendering our old, godless life to death so that Christ can awaken in us a new life centered on Him. Only when we have dethroned our Ego and given Christ first place in our lives can He then work on our behalf, giving us His righteousness so that we can be saved.

Quote #2

"The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness." (*Steps to Christ, pg. 43*)

Quote #3

"The Life spent on self is like the grain that is eaten. It disappears, but there is no increase. A man may gather all he can for self; he may live and think and plan for self; but his life passes away, and he has nothing. The law of self-serving is the law of self-destruction." (*Desire of Ages, pg. 624*)

Quote #4

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself' (Matthew 11:29; 16:24) let self be dethroned and no longer hold the supremacy of the soul." (*Thoughts From The Mount Of Blessings, pg. 14-15*)

Quote #5

"Self-surrender is the substance of the teachings of Christ. Often it is represented and enjoined in language that seems authoritative, because there is no other way to save man than to cut away those things which, if entertained will demoralize the whole being." (*Desire of Ages, pg. 523*)

Quote #6

"It is the love of self that destroys our peace. While self is all alive, we stand ready continually to guard it from mortification and insult; but when we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God, we shall not take neglects or slights to heart. We shall be deaf to reproach and blind to scorn and insult." (*Thoughts From The Mount Of*

Blessing, pg. 16)

2nd Step:
Take up your cross daily

The process of denying self means saying no to the old, selfish life. Whereas “take up His cross daily” means saying yes to the new life that Christ has given us and allowing God’s will to work in every aspect of it. I take my eyes off of myself and fix them upon Jesus who carried His cross before me. To carry your cross means to imitate Jesus and His life. He has become your role model. Jesus requires us to carry our cross *daily*. This is not a one-time experience but a daily experience.

Jesus took upon himself the cross that we deserved to bear. On this cross He suffered the curse of Sin. This cross would have brought us eternal death. But Jesus offers us another cross. A cross that gives His disciples eternal life.

Quote #7

“Jesus now explained to His disciples that His own life of self-abnegation was an example of what theirs should be. Calling about Him, with the disciples, the people who had been lingering near, He said, ‘If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.’ The cross was associated with the power of Rome. It was the instrument of the most cruel and humiliating form of death. The lowest criminals were required to bear the cross to the place of execution; and often as it was about to be laid upon their shoulders, they resisted with desperate violence, until they were overpowered, and the instrument of torture was bound upon them. But Jesus bade His followers take up the cross and bear it after Him. To the disciples His words, though dimly comprehended, pointed to their submission to the most bitter humiliation,—submission even unto death for the sake of Christ. No more complete self-surrender could have the Savior’s words have pictured. But all this He had accepted for them. Jesus did not count heaven a place to be desired while we were lost. He left the heavenly courts for a life of reproach and insult, and a death of shame. He, who was rich in heaven’s priceless treasure, became poor, that through His poverty we might be rich. We are to follow in the path He trod.” (*Desire of Ages, pg. 417-418*)



Philippians
2:5-9

What did Jesus do as He took the cross upon Himself?

What does His example mean for us when He calls us to take up our cross?

Suffering and trials

When we follow Jesus’ example and take up our cross, we are not seeking the easiest and most comfortable way in life anymore. We are prepared to give up our own will. We are prepared to place our needs on the backburner and to endure trials and suffering for the sake of God’s will.



What has God promised those who experience trials and suffering?

James 1:2-4: _____

3rd Step:

To follow Jesus

Jesus does not just tell us what to leave behind and what to carry. He does not just say, "Go!". Instead He invites us to follow Him. Every step He asks us to take, He has already taken Himself. He knows quite well every step along the way.



How does Paul express this idea in the book of Hebrews?

Hebrews 2:17-18: _____

Hebrews 4:15-16: _____

To follow Jesus makes us more like Him

When we spend time with Jesus and contemplate His words and His example; when we take His life as the model for ours, we become changed—step by step, bit by bit. Growing by faith and sanctification occur only when we follow Jesus. See how Ellen White describes this very idea in the following quote!

Quote #8

"God takes men as they are, with the human elements in their character, and trains them for His service, if they will be disciplined and learn of Him. They are not chosen because they are perfect, but notwithstanding their imperfections, that through the knowledge and practice of the truth, through the grace of Christ, they may become transformed into His image." (*Desire of Ages*, pg. 294)

Following Jesus means...

When you decide to follow Jesus, you become His disciple. In the first lesson, we covered what a life of discipleship entails. When you follow Jesus, you will:

- Have a relationship with Him and allow Him to be the Lord of your life.
- Accept His goal for your life and work to achieve it.
- Walk in the path of Jesus guided by the word of God.
- Submit your life to His authority and live a life in obedience to all of His commandments.

Discipleship and Marriage

Many times the Bible compares a person's relationship with God to marriage. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become *one* flesh." (Genesis 2:24) As he thought about these words, Paul said with great awe, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:32). When we compare the three steps in marriage to the three steps in discipleship we find a very fascinating parallel.

Marriage

Leave
Be joined to
One flesh

Discipleship

Deny yourself
Take up your cross
Follow Jesus / Relationship

Those who marry, forsake the ability to make all the decisions and bind themselves to their partner in order to experience a deep relationship. But neither one can be considered a big sacrifice when compared to the happiness that one can experience in marriage. The same thing happens when God calls us to forsake our own selfish ways and bind ourselves to Him. All because He desires to have a happy and fulfilling relationship with us. Is that too big of a sacrifice? No, not when compared to what comes from a relationship with Jesus in this life and for eternity! The benefits are well worth it!

The reward of discipleship

Discipleship has a price. Jesus expects us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. But discipleship also has wonderful benefits. How do the following verses describe the benefits of discipleship?



Mark 10:28-31: _____

Jesus promises us our rewards in eternity. But even more, Jesus promises us benefits today. We can experience, today, the priceless gifts that God gives: inner peace, forgiveness, sense of purpose, brothers and sisters, and much, much more. The whole universe is in awe of what God can do with a person who has completely surrendered to Him.

Quote #9

“There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God” (*Desire of Ages*, pg. 250-251).

The cost is not too steep.

When we keep the rewards in sight, we would never come to the idea that the cost is too steep. Especially when all the things we gave up were only harmful. What was helpful for us was blessed and sanctified by God. Our sacrifices pale in comparison to what Christ gave up for us!

Ellen White in her first vision described the glory of Heaven and the difficulty she had comparing that with the difficulties endured on the way to Heaven. How little seemed the cost of discipleship when compared to the glories of Heaven.

Quote #10

“We tried to call up our greatest trials, but they looked so small compared with the

far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory that surrounded us that we could not speak them out, and we all cried out, 'Alleluia, heaven is cheap enough!'" (*Early Writings, pg. 17*).

When we are with Jesus in heaven, we will no longer think about what we had to sacrifice for our faith! The communion that we can begin to experience with God today, and continue for eternity, cannot be labeled with a price tag. Keep your eyes fixed on that glorious future!

