

The Requirements of Apprenticeship to Jesus

a sermon in the series

The Apprentice: An Analysis of What it Means to be a Disciple

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Luke 14:25-35

Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, 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. 27 And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. 28 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—29 lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, 30 saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ 31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? 32 Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. 33 So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. 34 Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? 35 It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said, “Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.”

It is true. If we remove discipleship from Christianity we will remove Jesus Christ for He came into this world to make disciples. And when He left this world He gave the command to the disciples that they were to make disciples themselves. Discipleship is essential to the Christian faith. It’s sad that we are at a time, a crossroads in history, when the church in the west, for the most part, has reduced Christianity to a profession of faith. You are labeled a Christian because you agree with certain facts and consent to them. We’ve removed discipleship as a requirement and created a dichotomy that says you can be a Christian without being a disciple.

Bonhoeffer’s statement reminds us what Jesus said in our text: You cannot have Jesus without being His disciple and you cannot be His follower without following Him. It’s sad what the American church has done and what it has transported to other places of the world—removing the necessity of being an apprentice of Jesus Christ.

We’ve defined discipleship as a man or woman sacrificing their life to following Jesus in order to be like Him. That’s what Jesus has called us to be and do. That’s what the call to Christ is. The

call to be saved is a call to become a disciple, a new way of life. You once lived according to this world and according to the prince of the power of the air but now you follow in Jesus' steps in order to be like Him. There is no Christianity short of that. Without discipleship the faith we call Christianity is reduced to a cult, a sham, a farce, and empty religion.

It's equally sad to see many people who are saved, real Christians who have the light of God in them, who have not been discipled. They've not been trained and they are not making disciples. They are, as we said last week, undisciplined disciples. This is a tragedy.

Some people sitting here this morning have learned the system of the American church, the Christian culture of our land, which says to be a Christian you go to church on Sunday and if you're a real good Christian you'll come back on Sunday night and Wednesday night. You do the best you can. You live better than most people around you and when you die you go to heaven. That's what we have reduced Christianity to. Some of you have learned this system and go through the rituals, the motions, week after week yet there is no intimacy with Jesus Christ, no fellowship. Is this what Jesus Christ died for—a Christ-less Christianity? That's the sadness of our hour, and it's a sad case for you if you can live from Sunday to Sunday without Jesus Christ. If that's you, then you're hampering, hindering, and abusing your own soul. Jesus died for more than your forgiveness and assurance of a position in heaven. He's died to be your Friend, your Disciple, your Master, your Teacher, your Comrade, and your constant Companion. This is what discipleship is and this is the call He's given us to follow Him.

I. The Requirements of Discipleship

I want to give you four requirements of following Him that I find in this text. These are four requirements Jesus has mandated if you are to be His disciple. If you're to be a Christian and assured of heaven as your eternal destiny, these four requirements are not options—that's why they're called requirements—they're a necessity.

REQUIREMENT #1—AN ATTRACTION TO JESUS

You must be attracted to Jesus. There is something about Him you find interesting and attractive.

A. What Kind of Attraction It Isn't.

Here in verse 25 we see great multitudes following Jesus just as the other 12 but Jesus knows something about these multitudes. He knows what's in their heart, He read their minds and He knew these were not true disciples. So He turns and says, "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." Why did He say that? It's obvious that these people were not attracted to Him with the right kind of attraction.

1. Mere Curiosity

“Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them,” (Luke 14:25)

For these men, Jesus was just a mere fascination. Of course Jesus is fascinating, here is this young itinerant preacher saying things they had never heard before. He taught not like the Scribes and Pharisees, it was a new thing to their ears and it was exciting. They were following Him out of mere curiosity. *What will He say next?*

2. Thrill Seeking

Some of them were just thrill seekers. They'd heard the miracles. *This man makes the lame to walk, blind people can see, and we've heard He has even raised dead men. We can't miss this. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity. We've got to see this. I want to see it for myself.* So they were following Jesus. The mere attraction of the thrill is not the right kind of attraction that Jesus is now laying down as a requirement.

3. Self Gain

Others followed Jesus and were literally attracted to Him for self-gain like those in John 6. Again, multitudes of thousands of people, were following Jesus and we know this because in John 6 He fed 5,000 men, that's not counting women and children who were also there. So we have throngs of thousands following Jesus. They want to be with Him, they want to follow Him. In fact, He tries to escape the crowd and elude them; He gets up and leaves but they find Him the next day.

Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.” (John 6:26)

They were following Jesus merely because they wanted a free lunch. *Ah, they thought, perhaps this is the Messiah and this is one of the ways He's going to save His people—we won't have to work anymore! He'll feed us.* They were attracted to that. Jesus said that wasn't the kind of attraction He was talking about.

You can be attracted to Jesus and not be His disciple. There is a wrong kind of attraction. There are some people who sit in churches like ours, maybe someone in this room this morning, who is attracted to Jesus because you believe you will have a better life because you're a Christian or that you'll have a more comfortable, pleasurable life. In one sense of the word that's true, is it not? My life is much better having become a disciple of Jesus Christ than when I wasn't. There is no comparison, so I acknowledge that is true and that He will make your life better. He said, “I've come that you may have life, and have it more abundantly.” But there is more to Jesus than being attracted to Him in order to have a comfortable life.

Some follow Jesus for reputation sake. They believe being a Christian will aid their reputation and they will be considered a better citizen, a better functioning member of society because they are a Christian, which will gain them better access in society. So they follow Jesus, there is an attraction to Him because they see that somehow it will benefit them. This is not the kind of attraction Jesus is talking about.

B. This Kind of Attraction is Love.

The kind of attraction Jesus requires of His disciples is love. Do you love Him? *Oh yes, I love the Lord.* Let's put it to test. Look at what He says here in our text.

"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." (Luke 14:26)

Jesus said, "So you're attracted to Me? You want to follow Me? You want to be called a Christian? Good. Here is what I require from you: a fascination that causes you to follow Me because you love Me more than you love anything and anyone else."

Jesus uses the word *hate* here, does He not? This verse has been misinterpreted so much that some have literally interpreted Jesus to say they were to hate their family, their friends, wife, children, and grandchildren. Jesus is not saying that. We'll talk more about that in a moment. Jesus is making a distinction between the love we have for others and the caliber and degree of love we have for Him. Do you love Him so much that your love for others seems to wane in comparison? Does your love for you family look so small, that in fact, some might misinterpret your love for Jesus as hatred for them?

Did you know there are some people in this room who, because they've given their life to Christ, have family members that will not have a thing to do with them now because they feel like they have betrayed them by following Jesus. They accuse them saying, "If you really loved me you wouldn't be that religious." Jesus says the kind of attraction required to be His disciple is that you find Him worthy even if it means your family despising you. He requires your love for Him not be diminished in the least by your relationship with someone else. You find Him more worthy and fascinating than you do your own children, even your own life.

Let me ask you a question. Is it not true that if your loved one, a mother, father, child, or sibling, were in the hospital right now that you would be there with them? Of course you would. I wouldn't be in the pulpit today if one of the people closest to me was in the hospital. I would be with them, especially if they were in critical condition. Why would we do that? Because we love them. We care for them. We want the best for them. It hurts us when we see them hurting.

Do you love Jesus that way? Does it grieve you when your sin grieves Him? Does it bother you that you often quench Him in your spirit and your hearing becomes dull? Does it hurt you that it breaks His heart when He tries to talk to you and you're too busy to hear Him? Doesn't that

bother you? Are you moved in your soul to think that your sin was the very thing that nailed Him to the cross? Is your love for Him so passionate and full that you cannot bear to think how much you wound His soul?

When I have with my words pierced my wife's heart, I tell you immediately I am broken in spirit because I love her, and to think that my words wounded her terrifies me and breaks my heart. How much more should we love our Lord Jesus? This is the kind of attraction He is talking about, that you love Him so much that you're willing to pursue Him as the great treasure and the pearl of great price.

REQUIREMENT # 2—A WILLINGNESS TO SUFFER

“And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” (Luke 14:27)

Jesus said if you are to be His apprentice you must be willing to suffer as He suffered, and oh, how He suffered. He came into this world born of a sinful woman. Gathered always about Him were sinners. He was rejected by men, came under their scorn, and verbal abuse. They said some nasty things about Jesus. They called Him an illegitimate child; only they didn't say it as kindly as I just did. They mocked Him, called Him a blasphemer, full of Satan, and that was just during His ministry. Then they arrested Him and took Him into the place of judgment and there they blindfolded Him and struck Him on the cheek and said to Him, “Okay, Prophet, tell me, who just hit You?”

Then they took Him to a place called the pillory and with the cat of nine tails they flayed His back. It was a place not just of torture, but many people suffered even death on that stone. He received forty stripes save one, then they climbed Him up the hill of Golgotha and they nailed His hands and feet to the cross and He died a most excruciating death a man can die. He was tortured beyond recognition, but that's not enough. He suffered on your behalf the wrath of God for your sins. He paid what you should have paid an eternity for. Why? Because He loved you. That's the only explanation friend. Why do you need more? Jesus loved you and suffered for you. “If you love Me,” Jesus says, “surely you should be willing to suffer for Me.” This is a requirement of a disciple. Jesus said, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you” (John 15:18). “If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!” (Matthew 10:25).

Are you willing to suffer for Jesus? I don't mean to be cruel, but I wish I could awaken your conscience. Some of us are afraid to pray publically in a restaurant over our meal, fearful that somebody might see you. I have to confess to you there was a time I was a little apprehensive about praying publically. I would still do it but I would pray the shortest of prayers. I would hate it if someone at the table was asked to pray and they prayed a very long prayer. Thank the Lord that He helped me to understand I was being ashamed of Him. There is no way to dress it up, it's shame. And Jesus said, “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of

His Father with the holy angels.” I’m thankful now that people see us pray, not for the sake of boasting in me, but I’m thankful that they can see that Jesus is so attractive that He’s worth being made fun of and scoffed.

I read the other day of a young man who was saved in Iraq and when He announced it to his mother and dad, his dad took a wooden plank from a fence and struck him in the head. He was hospitalized in critical condition but survived. When he was released from the hospital he kept telling his loved ones and friends about Jesus and he was arrested. His own father turned him into the authorities. He was put on trial and sentenced and on the way to the prison the vehicle in which he was being transported had a terrible accident and everyone in the vehicle died except he and the other young prisoner with him. He escaped to Jordan and there, for the next 17 years, he was discipled and taught the Bible. Increasingly over those years, he began to feel the call of God to go back into harm’s way to reach his people and plant a church right in the heart of that Muslim country. Here’s a man who knew the cost. He knew the price. He had already suffered it and yet, he said, “I love Jesus so much and Jesus has suffered so much for me I’m willing, in fact, gladly willing to being counted worthy to suffer for His name.”

Notice these are not emotions we are talking about. Look at the text. This is not just about being pulled along by emotions. Some people criticize Christianity and say, “Well, you’re just an emotional kind of person and you need a crutch, so you have Christianity. You know, the singing, the emotions, and the hoopla, that’s why you’re a Christian. That’s why you believe. You’re too weak mentally and emotionally without it, so this is what you need.”

Jesus debunks that. He says this is not an emotional decision. “I don’t want you to be pulled by the words even of a preacher, not even My words. I want you to stop and consider, calculate this because to follow Me is a decision of the mind, the will, *and* the heart. The whole person has to be involved.” Are you committed to the Lord in this way? Do you pursue Christ with your mind and your will and your emotions so much that you’re willing to suffer with Him?

REQUIREMENT # 3—A DESIRE TO BE WITH JESUS

If you want to be His disciple, you’re saying you want to be with Him. Wherever He is, that’s where I want to be.

*“And whoever does not bear his cross and **come after Me** cannot be My disciple.” (Luke 14:27)*

Jesus’ statement in these three words, *come after Me* is, “If you are to be My disciple you must be where I am. You’ve got to follow Me.” Isn’t that what He said to Peter, James, and John that day by the Sea of Galilee? They had fished all night and caught nothing. He said, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” And straightway the Bible says they dropped their nets, left their boats, families, and their possessions, and followed Jesus. Why? Because they were attracted to this Man. Something in their heart had been changed and they wanted to be with Him.

You can't be a disciple unless you're with Jesus. How can He teach you, how can He apprentice you if you're never with Him? In the days of Jesus the disciples had to be with Him because discipleship is more than just instruction. Oh, they could catch Him at the local synagogue every time He came to Capernaum and they could have listened to Him and learned but to be a disciple is to be an apprentice. They had to observe Him in different scenarios and see how He responded so they could learn to respond as He would in those situations. There is a training involved, an equipping, that demands His presence rather than just instruction.

Which leads us to this question: did Jesus really mean we have to leave our families? Does He really mean that we have to treat them in a way that is dishonorable, disrespectful, and just leave them behind and serve Him without any concern for their wellbeing? Not at all. Yet there are a lot of people who have literally believed that they must to be true to Jesus' words here in this text. It's sad; I've known a few—not many—who take this passage literally and have little concern for their wife and children. Basically they've abused them by neglect because they believed Jesus meant for them to hate wife and children, brothers and sisters, and not until then could they be His disciple. They thought, "I can't let anyone or anything hold me back."

So the question is, if Peter, James, and John and the other nine disciples had to leave their families in order to be with Jesus and be His disciple, maybe there is something to this. Maybe we all ought to sell our homes and move to Africa and join Paul and Velda? I'm sure they would enjoy the company.

But that's not what this passage means.

How can you be bodily with Jesus if He's not bodily around here anymore? To have Jesus bodily on the earth made discipleship quite easy. You went wherever He went. There were no on-line courses then. If you were to be a disciple, a student, a learner, a pupil, you had to be with your teacher. And as with the rabbis before Jesus, and as with Christ Himself, they called men to themselves to live with them, eat with them, listen to them, and watch them. Back then you had to, for a period of time, leave families and professions and be a disciple. When Jesus said to Matthew the tax collector, "Follow Me," he got up from his table and left his profession. He quit it all. Because he had to be where Jesus was. Therefore, when Jesus says a disciple must forsake the persons and things he loves most, even his own life, He was merely stating the obvious.

It's no different than what we said last week. When a scribe came to Jesus and said, "I want to follow You," what did Jesus say to him? "There's no Holiday Inns where I'm going. I don't even have a bed. I don't even have a bed roll. I don't have a tent. Birds have their nests, foxes have their dens, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head." This man knew he had to be wherever Jesus was to be His disciple. He said to another man, "Follow Me," and he said, "Let me wait to bury my dad." The problem was his dad wasn't dead or even sick. He was basically saying, "When my dad dies I'll get my inheritance and then I can follow You." To be a disciple during the days of Jesus' life on earth required you to be where He was. When Jesus was bodily on this earth that was the only way in which you could practice discipleship—you had to be with the Master. How can you do that now if He's not here bodily?

Today, to leave family, friends, and employment is not a requirement, because Jesus is not physically here. Before Jesus left to return to heaven, He changed the methodology of being a disciple. No longer would His disciples be able to be *with Him* bodily, now He would be *with them* in the person of the Holy Spirit. Now everyday, every moment He is with you.

In the early church there is no visible command to desert families in order to follow Jesus. Even Jesus confirmed the command to “honor father and mother” when addressing the young rich ruler. The Apostle Paul confirms the same command and also commands fathers to train their children in the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). He says to the father, “Train up your child.” It’s your responsibility, dads, to raise up your children in the Lord. So here the New Testament doesn’t justify desertion of families but a reconfirmation of them. In fact, even more than that, New Testament discipleship says you are to bring the Gospel into those relationships at home, at work, and at school. No where does the New Testament epistles tell men to leave family and home to serve the Lord.

So the command here to “hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also,” has taken on a new direction with the ascension of Jesus. It can only mean—that we are not to let anything come between us and Christ and doing His will. Because to be with Jesus is to be where He is, which means—in the center of His will. To be with Jesus means you are wherever He is directing you to be. You cannot be His disciple without doing His will. You cannot be an apprentice of Jesus Christ without following His instructions to be with Him. Now listen, if you are truly a disciple of Jesus Christ you long to be with Jesus.

Can I give you some helpful advice concerning your devotions? Every one of us struggles in that area; I do. There are times you don’t feel like doing them or you want to do them but have little passion to do so. There’s something not right, you can sense it in your heart and you just seem to be a million miles away from what you’re supposed to be concentrating on. We all struggle. Let me tell you that you would reduce your struggles by half or more if you would cease to stand upon Bible reading and prayer as a duty, a religious practice to fulfill in this system of being a Christian, but rather see it as spending time with Christ. It’s just that simple but the mind has to see it and believe it for it to be true.

This is the primary way in which we have fellowship and there’s not a believer in this room that doesn’t want to have fellowship with Jesus. The problem for a true believer is that we know there’s more to our Jesus than what we’re experiencing and there’s a hunger and a thirst for it. We have Jesus but what we have is not enough, we want more! Dear friend, I plead in the name of Christ if there is no hunger and thirst as I’ve such described, ask yourself if you’re truly a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. A disciple wants to be with His Lord. *Why are you all up in arms about this, pastor?* It’s worth being up in arms about. It’s worth being passionate about. I speak out of my own experience. I long for Jesus, to be with Him.

REQUIREMENT # 4—A PASSION TO BE LIKE JESUS

“ . . . My disciple.” (Luke 14:26, 27)

Those two words tell me that Jesus required Christians to want to be like Him. How do I get that out of those two words? Because discipleship wasn't just following Jesus around and watching Him do His miracles and listening to His teaching. It was listening to His teaching and watching what He did so you could turn around and do likewise. There it is. The goal of discipleship is always to be like the Discipler.

A disciple is someone who voluntarily submits to someone else in order to become like that person as that person imitates Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). The word *follow* can be translated *imitate*. A discipler—which is what we are all eventually to be, we are all to be discipling somebody—has the goal to live like Jesus so that other people can see what that looks like. What if someone you're discipling comes up to you and says, “What does it mean to love your enemies?”

The persons asking can read that command, they can quote it, they can even believe that is what they are supposed to do, but not know how to do that. You must show them how to love their enemies by loving your enemies. How do you live, whether you eat or drink, to the glory of God? I believe that's what the Bible commands, but how do you do that? These are the kind of things people learn by being with you and observing how you live. They will learn by watching someone who has learned to do it just like Jesus does it so that in the end they're not trying to be like you but like Jesus whom you demonstrate. That's always the end product and goal of discipleship.

“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate . . . his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.” (Luke 14:26)

A true disciple wants to be more like Jesus than they want to be like themselves. That to me is profound. If you're a true disciple, you want to be more like Jesus than you want to be like you. Some of us are quite happy with ourselves. We would like to tweak ourselves a little bit here or there but basically we're quite comfortable in our skin. But whoever is happy with who they are, as they are, well, they are not a true disciple. Anything that doesn't look like Jesus, a true disciple will want to throw that characteristic overboard; it may even make him or her nauseous because he or she wants to be like Jesus very badly. That's the goal. That's why Jesus is in you. He's living His life through you so the characteristics of His personality comes out of you.

George MacDonald said, “Instead of asking yourself whether you believe or not, ask yourself whether you have this day done one thing because he said, ‘Do it,’ or once abstained because he said, ‘Do not do it.’ It is simply absurd to say you believe, or even want to believe in him, if you do not do anything he tells you.”

To be like Jesus means to live according to His commandments because the commandments are not a duty to fulfill, they are signposts that tell us how He would do things. The commandments are not some legal responsibility they are simply indicators of what Jesus did in His life

and what you are to do in yours. Therefore the Christian is not weighted down with the Lord's commandments and feels them to be a burden; he delights in them. Do you delight in the Word of God? Do you read it to find out what Jesus would do if He were living your life? That's what a Christian, a true disciple does. He reads this Book to see Jesus so he or she can be like Him.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "Only those who are obedient believe and only those who believe are obedient. Faith is only real in obedience."

"It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master." (Matthew 10:25)

In other words, that's the goal. That's God's goal for you—to be like Him.

"A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher." (Luke 6:40)

Are you like Jesus? That's a question. Do people mistake you for Jesus? You say, "Oh no, not me. Not hardly." Oh, be careful my friend. Are you denying the work of God's sanctification, are you denying God conforming you to the image of His Son? I know there is a lot of room for improvement in you and me, we'll agree on that, but that's not the point. The point is that I'm more like Jesus today than I used to be. I'm more like Him now than I was five years ago, 10 years ago, 15 or 20 years ago, and I have this expectation, this hope that keeps me going: one day I will see Him and I will be like Him because I will see Him as He is. Isn't that your expectation today, isn't that your hope? You're going to see Jesus and finally you will be with Him and be like Him. Oh, Lord, come quickly!

This is the work of discipleship and these are the four requirements. You are attracted to Him with a love that's greater than you love anybody else so that if somebody dear to you would come between you and Jesus you would almost hate him or her for it. You love Christ that much. Therefore you're willing to suffer for Him, even by the hand of a loved one. Did not Jesus say the greatest enemy a man will face as a disciple will be those of his own household?

The first requirement of discipleship is to be attracted to Christ, in love with Him. Second, the requirement is a willingness to suffer for Him. Third, you have a desire to be where He is. You want to be with Him. And lastly, there is a passion that won't go away. Oh, it subsides and lessons at times but it always comes back—*Oh, to be like Him. Oh, to be like this Jesus.*

My question to you is why would we not want to be like Him? Never has a man lived like this Jesus. He is the greatest figure of all history. Tell me another person who is as selfless as Jesus, who is as humble, meek, and gentle as Jesus. Tell me. Never has there been one as selfless as He. He came into this world not to be served, He said, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. This is the Jesus, He made Himself as low as possible in order to pick up everyone else. He came into this world to put Himself at your feet, He humbled Himself to serve you. Why wouldn't we want to be like that?

Have you ever thought about how compassionate He is? A woman was caught in the very act of adultery and they brought her to Jesus and said, "This Book says she ought to be stoned. Your Father's Word says that." And Jesus looked upon her with compassion. What did He do? You know the story. After He said, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first," everybody left. He looked at her and said, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you? . . . Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." This is holy God talking to an unholy sinner with compassion. Who wouldn't want to be like Him?

He touched lepers. The Word of Gods says that when you touched a leper you were unclean and yet when He touched lepers they didn't stay lepers. What compassion evidenced by His touch!

Who could be more loving than Jesus? Look at your own story. It doesn't matter if you're saved or unsaved, look at your own story. How much does He love *you*? He's brought you to this point. He's got you through many a storm and dark hour. He has been the only light you have had and He's brought you through because He loves you. Even if you're not a Christian you can say today, "I have testimonies also. God has loved me. He has given me life, He's kept me alive, He hasn't damned my soul yet." For that very reason you ought to bow before Him on your knees and commit your life to Him because you'll never find somebody who loves you more than Jesus does. Don't wait, come to Christ.

Look at me. I'm not perfect. I wish you would understand that I battle as you battle; I fight as you have to fight. I wonder how God could love me. I have so many responsibilities and I don't live up to them. I fail so much as a child of God, as a brother, as a fellow comrade in the faith, and yet He still loves me. I can't shake His love nor do I want to. But I'm amazed that He continues to love me even when I do spite toward Him. Why wouldn't you want to be like this Jesus?

Oh, to know He hung on a cross. And what did He say about the very men who put Him there, the nasty, cruel, coldhearted, bloody men as He prayed? "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." There is no one like this. Come and be His disciple. Follow Him. Be where He is. Be like Him. He will help you to be like Him. Love Him. He loves you and He was willing to die and suffer for you. Come, one and all.

I'm asking Christians to come and be His disciple today. Quit trying to be a Christian according to the definition of this world, going through the motions, knowing what to say and when and how to say it. Cease with that! Forget about that. If you know how to do the Christian life, then you're not being led by the Spirit. Come back to Jesus and be a disciple who hangs on His every word, observes His every movement, and watches the countenance of His face. Come to Jesus and follow Him. May God help you to do so! Amen.