

## **Sermon 4: "Sacrificial Discipleship"**

**Scripture:** Luke 9:23-26 (NIV)

### **Main Points:**

1. Denying Self and Taking Up the Cross
2. Counting the Cost of Discipleship
3. Embracing Sacrifice for the Sake of the Gospel

### **Introduction:**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, today we come together with open hearts and humble spirits, recognizing our need for forgiveness and seeking reconciliation through the power of God's grace. I stand before you with a repentant heart, ready to explore the profound truths found in **Luke 9:23-26**. As we delve into the call to deny ourselves, count the cost, and embrace sacrifice for the sake of the Gospel, let us reflect on our own discipleship journeys and seek healing in our pursuit of Christ by reflecting on the following questions:

- 1. How does our culture's focus on self-championing conflict with Jesus' call to deny ourselves daily?**
- 2. How can we honestly evaluate the cost of following Jesus and the rewards promised to His disciples?**
- 3. What does sacrificial living for the sake of the Gospel look like for us today?**

### **The word "Disciple in Context"**

The word 'disciple' is a term commonly used in Christian circles, but it is important to understand its biblical significance and the depth of meaning behind it. In its simplest form, a disciple is a student or a follower of a particular teacher or doctrine. However, the term takes on a deeper and more nuanced meaning in the Bible. To fully grasp the concept of discipleship, we must examine the corresponding Hebrew and Greek terms and explore the various ways in which the word is used in the Old and New Testaments.

### **Hebrew Word for Disciple:**

The Hebrew word for disciple is "talmid" (תַּלְמִיד). This word is derived from the root word "lamad" which means "to learn" or "to be taught." The word "talmid" is used in the Old Testament to refer to a student, scholar, or apprentice actively engaged in learning from a teacher or master. It implies a close relationship between the teacher and the student, with **the student following the teacher and modeling their life after them.**

### **Greek Word for Disciple:**

The Greek word for disciple is "mathetes" (μαθητής). This term is derived from the verb "manthano" which means "to learn." In Greek culture, a disciple was someone who was devoted to a particular philosophy or way of life. This devotion often involved a personal and intimate relationship with the teacher. In the New Testament, the word "mathetes" is used to refer to the followers of Jesus and is often translated as "disciple" or "learner."

### **Biblical Usage of the Term 'Disciple':**

#### A) Jesus' Disciples:

The most well-known and significant usage of the term "disciple" is in reference to the followers of Jesus. In the New Testament, the word "disciple" is used to describe those who learned from Jesus and followed Him. Jesus called these men to be His disciples and to **follow Him in both word and deed (Matthew 4:18-22; Luke 5:1-11)**. These disciples were not just learners or students, but they were also commissioned to continue Jesus' ministry after His ascension **(Matthew 28:18-20)**.

#### B) Disciples of the Pharisees:

In addition to Jesus' disciples, the New Testament also mentions disciples of the Pharisees (Matthew 22:15; Mark 2:18). These disciples were followers of the Pharisees who were known for their **strict adherence to the Law of Moses and were considered experts in the interpretation of the Scriptures**. However, Jesus rebuked these disciples for their hypocrisy, as they were more concerned with **outward appearances** rather than true obedience to God (Matthew 23:1-33).

#### C) Disciples of John the Baptist:

Before Jesus began His ministry, John the Baptist was preaching and baptizing people in the Jordan River. Like Jesus, John also had disciples who followed him and learned from him (Matthew 9:14; Luke 5:33). However, when Jesus began His ministry, John pointed his disciples to Jesus as the Messiah, and many left John to follow Jesus (John 1:35-37).

#### D) Disciple-Making:

Another important aspect of discipleship in the Bible is the call for believers to make disciples. In the Great Commission, Jesus instructs His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). This task involves teaching and baptizing new believers, helping them grow in their faith (Acts 2:41-42).

#### E) True Discipleship:

**Throughout the Bible, there is a distinction made between being a nominal or superficial disciple and being a true disciple of Jesus.** In **John 8:31-32**, Jesus says, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples." This statement implies that true disciples are those who not only hear and learn from Jesus but also practice and live out His teachings in their lives. Similarly, in **Luke 14:25-33**, Jesus emphasizes the cost of discipleship and the need for total surrender to Him, stating that anyone who does not forsake all cannot be His disciple.

In summary, the term "disciple" in the Bible refers to a dedicated learner, follower, and imitator of a teacher or master. **In the Old Testament, it is often associated with the idea of being a student, while in the New Testament, it takes on a more active role of following and learning from a teacher or master. As Christians, we are called to be disciples of Jesus, following His teachings and example and making disciples of others.**

This involves a deep and intimate relationship with Jesus, a devotion to His teachings, and a willingness to surrender all to Him. May we strive to be true disciples of Jesus, continually learning from Him and growing in our faith.

### **1. Denying Self and Taking Up the Cross:**

In a world that promotes self-centeredness and personal ambitions, Jesus challenges us to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily. Denying ourselves means surrendering our desires, will, and way of life, and instead submitting to the will of our Heavenly Father. It requires us to let go of pride, selfishness, and worldly pursuits and embrace Christ's example, who humbly served others and sacrificed Himself for our sake. Through this denial of self, we find true freedom and the ability to love and serve others with selflessness.

In His teachings, Jesus called us to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily, and follow Him. This radical call to discipleship requires that we prioritize our love and commitment to Jesus above all else, including our own families. In **Matthew 12:46-50**, Jesus emphasizes the importance of spiritual family by stating, "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." This challenges us to reevaluate our priorities and put our relationship with Jesus above familial ties, being ready to sacrifice and suffer hardships for His sake.

**In Matthew 10:37-38**, Jesus highlights the significance of loving Him above our own families: "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me." This passage challenges us to prioritize our devotion to Christ above all earthly relationships. **Loving Jesus more than anything means being willing to deny ourselves, sacrifice our desires, and embrace the path of discipleship, even if it means facing difficulties and opposition.**

### **2. Counting the Cost of Discipleship:**

When considering the cost of discipleship, we must recognize that our actions and deeds have eternal consequences. In Matthew 16:27, Jesus declares, "For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done." As followers of Christ, we are called to live with integrity, understanding that we will be held accountable for our actions. Just as the apostle Paul endured persecution for the sake of his apostleship, we, too, may face challenges. Yet, we must remain steadfast, knowing that our obedience and faithfulness will be rewarded by the righteous judge, Jesus Christ.

**Discipleship is not a casual commitment or a half-hearted endeavor. It demands our full dedication and a careful calculation of the cost.** Jesus urges us to consider the sacrifices required to follow Him wholeheartedly. It may involve letting go of relationships, comfort, financial security, or the approval of others. It may even bring persecution and rejection. However, the rewards of discipleship far outweigh the temporary losses we may encounter. Let us examine our hearts honestly and reassess our level of commitment to Christ, counting the cost and renewing our resolve to follow Him unconditionally.

**Jesus made it clear that following Him would come at a cost. In Luke 14:25-33, He speaks of counting the cost before embarking on the journey of discipleship.** Discipleship may require letting go of relationships, comforts, and even societal acceptance. The apostle Paul experienced intense persecution, shame, and suffering throughout his apostleship. But he understood that the cost of discipleship was minuscule compared to the eternal rewards awaiting us.

Let us reflect on whether our commitment to Christ is wholehearted and be willing to pay the price for the sake of the Gospel.

### **3. Embracing Sacrifice for the Sake of the Gospel:**

The Gospel is a message of radical transformation and unending grace, but it also calls us to embrace a life of sacrifice. **Jesus reminds us that the ultimate tragedy would be gaining the world's treasures while losing our souls. To truly live out the Gospel, we must sacrifice our convenience, comfort, and even our lives to share Christ's love and bring others into His Kingdom.** Through sacrificial living, the power of the Gospel is made evident to the world, and lives are touched and transformed.

As followers of Christ, we should be prepared to face challenges and persecution. Jesus Himself faced shame, rejection, and, ultimately, crucifixion. The apostles also faced persecution, imprisonment, and even martyrdom to spread the Gospel. We are called to testify as worthy workers of the Gospel by living authentic lives reflecting the teachings of Christ and fearlessly sharing His message of salvation. Let us prepare ourselves to face any challenges that may come our way, knowing that our faithfulness in the midst of adversity testifies to the truth and power of the Gospel.

**Quote:** "Discipleship is the process of learning, growing, and becoming like Jesus." - Rick Warren.

**Conclusion:**

Dear brothers and sisters, let us humbly bow our heads in repentance, seeking forgiveness for the times we have faltered in our discipleship journeys. As we reflect on the teachings of Jesus, His declaration of coming judgment, and the example of Paul enduring persecution, may we renew our commitment to wholeheartedly follow Christ. Let us love Him above all else, counting the cost of discipleship and being prepared to face challenges on our path. May we live our lives in a manner that reflects the love and truth of Christ, understanding that our deeds will be judged by our righteous Savior? May the Holy Spirit empower us to remain faithful as we walk this challenging journey of discipleship. Amen. \_

**Prayer:**

Gracious and loving God, we come before you in humility and surrender, seeking your forgiveness and guidance. Thank you for the powerful message of denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and counting the cost of discipleship. We confess that we have often been driven by our own desires and have put our own interests before that of following you wholeheartedly.

Lord, ignite within us a deep love for you that surpasses all other relationships and commitments. Help us to truly understand what it means to love you more than our families, and grant us the strength to make the necessary sacrifices to follow your call.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

**Benediction:**

As we go forth, may we carry in our hearts the message of denying ourselves, taking up the cross, and counting the cost of discipleship. May we love Jesus above all else, even amidst challenges and sacrifices.

May the peace of Christ guide our actions, words, and thoughts as we strive to live as true disciples.

Go in peace in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. \_