



Four D's of Discipleship
Luke 9:23
Westport Christian Church
October 4, 2009

"And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me." (Luke 9:23 NASU)

Before we can talk about discipleship, we must first ask the question. What is discipleship anyway? I found out that discipleship is the act of being a disciple. But what is a disciple? I looked in Webster's dictionary and discovered this, 1) a follower or pupil of a teacher. 2) one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another.

So, from that I feel it is safe to say that a disciple is more than just a person who studies books and listens to what the teacher or instructor says. A disciple is one who learns by living and working with the teacher in daily hands on experience. It is like building a relationship.

In our time today, there is a big need for true discipleship. I feel there are so many today who claim to be a follower of Christ, but are they? If we just claim to be a disciple, are we? You see a true disciple is one who not only learns, but puts in into practice what they have learned.

In the book by Charles Sheldon, "In His Step," we find the reverend Henry Maxwell has an encounter with a stranger that challenged him to look closer at being a disciple. Henry Maxwell comes to the conclusion that to be a disciple is an everyday event. He challenges the congregations to practice what they know is true. It is from this great book that we got the saying, "What would Jesus do?" You see it brought to light what being a true disciple was.

The life that you live will tell those around if you are a disciple.

What you believe in, and whom you are following in your life's journey will be evident in your behavior.

Remember one of the definitions that I shared with you at the beginning was one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrine of another. Doctrine is another word for teachings. So, a Christian disciple is one who is to spread the teachings of Christ. One who lives out what they have learned from studying the Scriptures.

So, today I would like for us to take a look at the four D's of discipleship. The first D that we come to is . . .

I. DESIRE TO FOLLOW

In the NASB, it says "If anyone wishes to come after Me." The Greek word that is used is "theloo" means, to have a purposeful desire. You see this is a deliberate desire to follow. It is a choice that one makes, then follows through. Some come to Christ without a real desire to follow and learn. Some desire a position--Some come to please friends or family. Some to conform to society--Some out of fear, and many for selfish reasons.

Perhaps you heard about the man that got a job in sales. His boss asked him, "where do you go to church?" The man replied, "I don't go to church." His boss said, "well I go to the Baptist and my wife goes to the Methodist." "You need to go to the Presbyterian because I think it would help our business." Sad but unfortunately I feel there is a lot of truth to that.

To be a true disciple you must have a desire to follow Christ. True desire must be motivated by your love for God. A sincere belief and trust built upon God and His Word. It must be motivated by honest repentance of sin and a willingness to serve others.

"Bo Bollinger was a famous football player under Bud Wilkinson, coach of the national champion, Oklahoma Univ. team. During a radio interview the coach was asked what he would consider was the greatest skill that a player should have. Speed? Strength? Knowledge of the game? To which the coach replied, "none of those." It is his desire!" (Sermon illustrations)

Discipleship is a choice. It is based upon our desire to follow Christ. Not just to follow, but to assist in the sharing of the message of Christ.

To be a disciple, one must . . .

II. DENY SELF

Jesus said, "he must deny himself." Self denial is not a bad thing. We live in a time where we hear things like, 'go ahead you deserve it.' Where pop psychology tells us that we are to put ourselves before anyone. Many young couples get divorces because each one thinks they should be able to do whatever they want, whenever they want to. They are focused on self instead of others. It's all about me!

Jesus said that we are to deny self. Does that mean we are not to take care of our self? No. Does that mean that we are to be a door mat for

anyone to walk on? No. Denying self does not mean denying things that we need to survive. It means to give yourself wholly to Christ. It means to turn away from selfish desires of this world to the desires of God's love and His perfect and pleasing will for our lives.

It carries this concept of surrendering all to Him. Sometimes we sing a song called, "All to Jesus I surrender, all to Him I freely give." We sing that song but I wonder, do we mean it? Are we surrendering all? Are we denying self to gain Christ?

With the understanding of denying self, should lead us to . . .

III. DAILY SERVICE

Take your cross daily! How often? Daily! It must be a constant thing that we do in our lives each and every day. It is an act of making a sacrificial choice each day. Do you realize that you cannot crucify yourself? You can only yield your body and let God do the rest.

If you have ever seen the movie, "Passion of Christ." I was greatly moved at the scene where they got Jesus to the hill and they knocked Him down. Then did you catch what He did next? He crawled up and laid Himself on the cross.

"The yoke and the cross are twin symbols of Christian experience. The cross speaks of leaving the world for Christ; the yoke speaks of learning in the world from Christ. The one speaks of sacrifice; the other service. The disciple must bear both; he cannot choose to take one and leave the other. (The Prairie Overcome.)

Martin Luther once said, "a religion that gives nothing, costs nothing, and suffers nothing, is worth nothing."

You see it must be a constant daily activity, not just one big sacrifice. Paul wrote in Romans 12:1-2, "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

This passage is right in the middle of living our daily lives as service for our King. Discipleship is a daily discipline, for we follow Jesus one step at a time.

There is one more thing we must understand about being a disciple and that is it takes . . .

IV. DETERMINATION

Follow Me! And that is what His disciples did, they place everything second when it came to following Jesus. And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God." Another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home." But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:59-62)

Was Jesus cold and so heartless that He wouldn't let this man bury his father? Or the other one to say good-bye to his family? No! Keeping things in context, this passage is dealing with putting things in proper order. Some commentators state that this man's father wasn't even died yet. Whether he was or not I don't know. What I do know is that Jesus knew and understood the intent of this man's heart. Yes, I will help but I want to do these other things first. I will help out as soon as I can get to it! First, I want to watch this TV show. First, I need to do this or that. People can come up with thousands of reasons for not following first. We have all heard these things and perhaps even have said it ourselves.

It has been said that "to obey is proper order of rational being." We need to have obedience of accepting Christ. In our daily living. In our church worship and service. In carrying out the great commission. Obedience in calling on others, home evangelism. Supporting missions by giving or participating. Spending time with a family in need. Getting up out of our easy chairs, out of our air conditioning, and doing something!

However, the understanding of the word obedience in this case is not a legalistic conditioning. The act of obedience leads us to Christ, but after we are in Christ, after we have surrendered ourself to Him and confessed Him as Lord and Savior and met Him in the waters of baptism, then it becomes a matter of love! Legalism destroys our loving relationship with God.

It is no longer a matter of I have too, but the understanding I get too! I get to serve God daily. I get to worship—I get to carry out the 'Great Commission'—I get to support missions—it because a matter of I get to because of love!

Conclusion; If a disciple is one who works hand in hand with the teacher, not to only learn of his ways, but to become like him, then we who call ourselves Christians, disciples of Christ, we must be striving to be more like our Lord. Being a disciple is serious business.

A little boy went with his mother to church for the very first time. The preacher started telling of the crucifixion of Christ. He told of how cruel and gruesome it was. A scene of suffering and anguish. Soon the little boy began to sniffle, then cry, then sob out loud. His mother tried to quiet him, she looked at him and said, "don't take it so seriously."

I'm afraid many people today don't take being a disciple of Christ serious. Are you?

AMEN!