

We are finishing up Matthew 10:34-39. This is The Cost of Discipleship Part Two. The entire chapter of Matthew chapter 10 is a sermon on discipleship.

In verses 1-4 we saw The Calling of the Twelve Apostles from out of the disciples.

In verses 5-15 we saw The Commissioning of The Twelve Apostles to go out and minister and perform the signs and miracles of the Messiah to proclaim that He has arrived.

In verses 16-23, The Conditions of the Twelve Apostles. He told them to beware that I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. The wolves will be out there to capture you, to persecute you, and to harm you. They are going to bring you before the religious leaders. They are going to bring you before the Roman government. Even family members are going to deliver other family members up and turn them in as having received Christ, in order for them even to be put to death.

In verses 24 to 33, The Characteristics of Discipleship. That a disciple is not above his teacher. So as we are under the Lord's discipline, He is disciplining us to become like Him. And how the world treated Him, and how the world responded to Him, is how the world is going to respond to us.

But He also revealed in verses 26 to 31 what the key factor is that a believer has to watch out for and that is fear. Fearing how people are going to respond. Fearing the consequences of obedience to Christ. **Therefore**, He says in verse 31, **do not fear. But rather fear the One who cannot only take your life but cast your soul into hell**, and that is God himself. So as we started out our study this morning the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge. Fear the Lord, not people. It is interesting how we fear people more than we do the Lord's response to what we do.

But the key to this section is verses 32 and 33, The Confession. This is something that has been twisted and misapplied over the years, but I want you to notice it in context and we are going to add a few more verses to it. Verse 32, **Therefore**. Jesus, at this point, He not only applies it to the twelve apostles but to everybody, all disciples. **Therefore everyone who will confess in Me** (that is literal) **before men** (that is they confess, "I am in Christ,") **I Myself** (Jesus said) **will also confess to be in him before My Father, the One who is in Heaven**. And again, the word *confess* does not mean *to recognize* or *acknowledge*; it means *to identify with*. In other words Jesus is using it in context that when they bring you before the magistrates, when they bring you before the authorities, you confess that you are in Me and I am in you, and you stand before them as in Christ, with Christ in what you are doing. You are actually suffering their persecution because of your obedience and identification with Christ.

Verse 33, **But whoever should deny Me before men, I Myself also will deny him before My Father, who is in heaven**. I cannot over emphasize this. I cannot go too far if I emphasize it every week.

Remember this morning I started off with saying that we are two-thousand years removed from the actual person of Jesus Christ being here; from the actual identification with Him

Himself to where now we have two-thousand years of history and we have a book called the Bible. And it is through the Bible that we relate back two-thousand years. But we have lost the reality of a personal relationship with Him as they had back then because now we have a book. Back then they had Christ. We have Christ today, but we would rather study a book.

The word *deny* here means *to reject*. It does not mean I deny what Jesus did, or that I denied that Jesus existed. It means *to reject Him*. So in situations and circumstances where I am to identify with Christ or reject identification with Christ, that is what He is talking about here. And it is not about doctrine. I can hold correct doctrine. I can believe the right things from the Bible. But Jesus said, "You are not going to be tested on your Bible knowledge. You are not going to be tested and how much of the Bible you knew, but whether you confessed to be in Me or not. Whether your identification was with me or not." See it is personal.

Back in Matthew 7 as we mentioned last week, Jesus said "Many will come before Me and call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' but I am going to tell them, 'I never knew you.'"

"But didn't we do many things in Your name?"

"Yes, you did. But I never knew you. I never knew you personally. You never identified with me personally."

It will be on that basis that a person enters into heaven or not. Not whether they have claimed what Jesus did for them on the cross, but whether they knew Him. Whether He was in them. Whether they were born of His Spirit and now as His Spirit leads their life they identify with His Spirit. We have a tendency to fear, "Look how the Lord is leading and people are going to persecute me, because look what the Lord is doing in my life." So we have a tendency to compromise and to fear the outcome. But Jesus said, "Those who identify with Me, I will identify with you. You reject identifying with Me, I will reject identifying with you." Very important.

In II Timothy 2:11-12 Paul told Timothy, **This is a faithful saying: for if we died with Him we shall also live with Him: if we suffer (literally *endure*), we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us.** Point-blank statement.

In Titus 1:15-16 Paul writing to Titus, **To the pure all things are pure: but to those that are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their own mind and conscience is defiled.** So these are people who are corrupt and defiled. Listen to what he says about them. **They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him...** They reject Him. When they go to identify with Him in the working of everyday life, they reject Him, but they say, "I know God." They are religious. They have beliefs. But as they live out their life, they reject Him. They do not identify with Christ. **...being abominable, being disobedient, and unto every good work they are reprobate (or *they are disqualified*).**

So interesting that Paul should bring up the fact that there are many people who say they know God. There are many people that say that they are Christians and that they are saved but reject Christ. Reject identification with Him. They identify with the church system, maybe with

a system of beliefs, but it is identification with Christ. It is having Christ in you and you being in Christ that is the qualification maker for heaven.

So as Jesus moved from verses 32 and 33 into verses 34 to 39, we move into, first of all The Concept of Discipleship that we took last week, verses 34, 35 and 36. The first thing we saw last week is The Perception of the Ministry of Christ. Our perception is wrong. Listen to what Jesus said. And I emphasize to you that I am sharing with you the teachings of the Jesus of the Bible, not of a denomination or a church system. This is the Jesus who will say, "Depart from Me, I never knew you," or He will say, "Enter in, I knew you." This is the Jesus we have to face.

The Perception of the Ministry of Christ. Because Jesus said, **You should not think.** You should not presume because that is the human way. The humanitarian or the humanistic way of looking at love and joy and peace and religion is that we should be trying to unify people and be at peace here on the earth. Jesus said, **You should not think that I came to send peace.** So from the time that He came until the time that He comes again at His second coming, that time period is not a time of peace. Never will be. **You should not think that I came to send peace upon the earth. I did not come to send peace, but I came to send a sword. For I came to divide a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a bride against her mother-in-law. And the foes (or the enemies) of a man will be the ones of his own household.** It does not sound too peaceful. It does not sound too unified.

And we get reactions all the time from people saying, "How can the Lord be so cruel as to divide families up? We should be bringing them together." Except to understand the three things we shared with you last week:

(1) The Lord was ministering according to spiritual truth not according to humanitarianism. The spiritual truth is that if a person is not born of the Spirit of Christ, if they do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them, they are under the influence of the god of this world, who is the prince and power of the air, Satan himself. There are only two kinds of people in the world, spiritual kinds of people: people who belong to Christ and are under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and people who are under the influence of Satan.

In Ephesians chapter 2, Paul says that Satan himself energizes and influences people to fulfill the desires of the flesh and of the mind. In other words, please yourself, do whatever you want to do. To belong to Christ means to surrender to Him and follow what He wants. The end result of sin is going my own way, according to the Bible. Doing what I want to do. Doing what is right in my own eyes. Being my own God. Whereas surrender to Christ, is not only surrender to Him as my Savior because of what He did for me on the cross, but my surrender to Him as my Lord. He is now my master. Because sin makes me go my own way and sin makes me want to do what I want to do, which is opposite of what the Lord wants.

So it is not cruelty to divide families. Jesus is saying, "This is spiritual. There will be five members of a family," He said in the Gospel of Luke, "one member will receive

Christ, and the other four will not." So you have two different spirits in the house: the Spirit of Christ in this person and the spirit of Satan influencing these four. You have darkness with light. You do not have unity.

You have one person that says, "I am under the guidance and leadership of the Spirit of Christ."

And you have the other four going, "Hey, come over here and do things with us."

"I can't."

See, there is your identification. "I am in Christ. I am following the Lord." There is your identification. "I am confessing Christ. I am confessing why I am making the decisions that I am making. I am following the Lord." And there will be a backlash. There will be a reaction and a response to that.

So we saw in II Corinthians 6:14-18 Paul says that we have two different spiritual forces, light cannot fellowship with darkness. So God said, "Come out from among them and be separate." But by doing that we are not talking about legalism. We are not talking about, "You are not a Christian so I cannot do things with you." It is not legalism. It is relational. I have to follow what the Lord wants me to do. And if the Lord tells me that there is a dangerous spiritual influence there then I am not to go. As simple as that.

(2) So there are two kinds of people in the world and there are two kinds of families. We saw last week from Matthew 12:46-50 Jesus teaching in someone's living room and the whole place was filled full of people. And the Lord's mother and His brothers and sisters came and sent a messenger in and said, "Let the Lord know His mother and brothers and sisters are here." And Jesus said, "Who is My mother and my brothers and my sisters?" And He spread out His hand to the disciples and he says, "Behold, My mother, and My brothers and sisters are those who do the will of My Father." There are two families in the world too. There is the family of Christ and there is the family of the world. So if I am a member of a family in the world and I become a member of the family of Christ, that is my family now. Jesus is My Lord. There is now a separation and a division. There is a different spirit and there is a different family. It is all spiritual, not religious, not legalism.

(3) And last week in verse 36 when we talked about, **The enemies will be those of your own household.** The word *enemy* means *hostile*. You can recognize family members who are hostile toward you in your relationship with Jesus Christ. Even people who claim to be Christians get hostile over the way in which you follow the Lord, and what you believe or where you go to church. But there is another kind of hostility that we need to be aware of. There is a hostility that is nice. Smiling. Loving. It could be the very person that you consider to be your best friend, but they do not know the Lord. They are of a different spirit. And through friendship and kindness that influence can pull you away from the things of the Lord. They also are enemies. So the people that you get along with and the people that you do not get along with, if they don't know Christ they

are all enemies, hostile toward me identifying with Christ and doing what the Lord wants me to do, either through kindness or through hatred.

But now we enter into the second part, verses 37 to 39, The Priority of Christ as we study The Conditions of Discipleship.

1) The First Condition

This first one is so good. Verse 37. This is Jesus speaking. **The one loving father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And the one loving son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.** There are three conditions mentioned in these verses 37, 38, and 39. I want to break this down for you. The word *loving*, notice it is an -ing word, it shows continuous action, it is a present participle. But it is the word itself that is important. We are talking about a natural family love, **φιλέω** (phileō). *The one who is naturally loving father or mother more than Me.* So He is not saying, "You cannot love mother and father." Notice the comparative phrase that is used here: *the one loving father and mother more than Me.* He is not saying, "Do not love them," or "It is wrong to love them." He is saying that in comparison you must love Me more than you love your mother and your father. And you must love Me more than your son or your daughter, or you are not worthy of Me.

Now with that you can find a church where you can practice your religious beliefs and you do not have to follow this, according to the edicts of most churches. This is Jesus speaking about a personal relationship with Him. A Christian is to love his family. Husbands and wives are to love their children. Children are to love their parents. But it is interesting that the comparison here is the priority. Now just how much priority should there be? I am glad you asked me.

In Luke 14:26-27, this is something - and I want you to stop for a moment and realize this verse that we read in verse 37 and in Luke 14:26 is that on more than one occasion Jesus turned around and told the crowds these statements the w Him because they were attracted to him because of the miracles. Can you imagine turning around and just telling people point-blank that you have to love Me more than you love anybody else on the face of the earth or you cannot follow Me? You cannot just have a religious belief and go to church and hope you make it.

In Luke 14:26 Jesus said, **If anyone is coming to Me and does not hate father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, and even his own life also, you are not able to be My disciple.** *Hate.* The Greek word **μισέω** (miseō) is a word of comparison. In other words, He is not telling them to go out and hate people in order to prove their commitment to Christ. What He is saying is that your love for Me must be so great, must be more than all these other people, that it seems like or looks like you hate them. I have even heard that before in years past, brothers and sisters together, where a sister wanted to do something and a brother did not want to do it, "You hate me, that's why." You know, accusing them of not liking them anymore because you will not do what I want to do, along with hatred. Jesus is now identifying what does it mean to love mother and father if you love them *more than*. It is that the gap is so wide, it is the

difference between love and hate. The allegiance to Christ is so 100% committed that other people would think that we hate them, when in reality we do not.

And interesting that last phrase in Luke 14:26 where Jesus said, **Yea, and even his own life also.** If you do not hate your own life. It is interesting that in Acts 20 a group of Christians came to Paul and warned him about going to Jerusalem because they said, "There has been prophecy made over you that if you go to Jerusalem you are going to suffer." Now the prophecy did not say, "Do not go to Jerusalem," but they interpreted that because the prophecy was, "You are going to suffer," they took it upon themselves to try to stop Paul. And Paul in Acts 20:24 says, "Why are you breaking my heart? I am willing to die for Christ. I do not count my life dear to myself. So if I have to go there and suffer, then I have to go there and suffer." Do you see how much value we put on the human life?

"Paul, you are going to suffer, do not go."

And Paul is like, "I do not count my life dear to myself. I am not trying to preserve my life. If I have to go and suffer for Christ, then I go. Do not break my heart. I am willing to go."

Well, here Jesus is saying, "Not only must you hate, but you must hate your own life also." It cannot even be close about your own life. As we will see later on, is that Jesus is going to bring up the point, the person who rejects Him is the person who is trying to preserve their life. "I don't want to give it up."

So then the question comes up, and this is the biggie for you today, this is the big lesson I hope you learn, some enlightenment about meaning and interpretation of Scripture. What does love look like anyway? We know from I John 4:8 it says *God is love*. He is **ἀγάπη** (agapē). So love is not an action. Love is the very nature and person of God Himself. But what does love look like? In essence I am to love you and you are to love me. I want you to catch this. What does it mean, what do I have to do in order to fulfill the requirement of loving you?

I John 5:2, **By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep His commandments.** Easy to read over, but did you catch it? *We love the other children of God when we love God and keep His commandments.* "Well, wait a minute, that doesn't tell me how to love people." Yes it does. The greatest - listen to me - the greatest act of love that I can show to you is to love the Lord and obey Him. That is it. You might be over here thinking what are you going to do for me out of love? I am going to give myself to Christ and obey Him. It is not what I do for you. It is how I respond to Christ. The greatest act of love is for me to obey the Lord perfectly 100% and what is going to happen is when I do that you are going to have a response and a reaction. That is what Jesus is talking about.

If I seek to obey the Lord with all that I have and all that I am, you are going to have a reaction to that. It is either going to bless you and encourage you and minister to

you, or it is going to make you upset. It is like, "Don't you have time for me?" Or you are giving yourself wholeheartedly to the Lord and it is going to bring about conviction, "I don't do that." Do you see all the different responses that come just in my seeking to love the Lord and obey His commandments? When you come to me and say, "Hey, do you want to go somewhere?"

"Well, I have to obey the Lord. I have to seek Him, and I have to obey Him."

That might make you very upset, or it might make you very happy.

"Oh, I am glad you did that because it reminded me, I didn't do that. I didn't seek the Lord."

Or maybe you want me to go to do something with you or go somewhere with you and I seek the Lord, and He doesn't want me to go and you are going to get upset about it. Well, you should be happy about it. Well, if He does not want you to go, then that is what you should do.

Now here is how it works. In Matthew 22:34-40 - I am going to shed some light here on something that people stumble around because that they do not understand this concept: that loving other people is giving yourself wholly and totally to the Lord. That is how you love people. It is not what you do for them. It is how you walk with Christ.

In Matthew 22:34-40 here is what happened. One of the Pharisees saw that the Lord silenced one of the Sadducees (another religious sect group) as they were gathered together, and this man was a lawyer. And so he comes to Jesus and he has a question tempting Him and saying, "**Master, which is the great commandment in the law?**" **Jesus said unto him,** (quoted out of Deuteronomy) "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is this, you shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.**" Everything is expressed in these two commands.

Have you ever wondered what that last command actually means, *love your neighbor as yourself*? I have heard all kinds of spinoffs of people trying to explain what that really means. Look what the first command is. "**You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.**" Now, if you love the Lord your God with everything that is you, how much do you have left over? Zero. Because I have heard people say, "Okay and then after you love the Lord, then you turn around and you love your neighbor." How do you do that if you do not have anything left over? You have given everything to the Lord. What the text is saying, *love your neighbor as yourself*, what is your self doing? Yourself is loving the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. That is what you are giving your neighbor. Whatever my relationship with the Lord is, is what I am giving my neighbor. It is not that I love the Lord and then I turn around and start thinking of ways, "How can I go out here and how can I love my neighbor?" Now the Lord might have me do things. I am not saying you

do not not do things. But the greatest commandment of all is, "You will love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength." And your neighbor is going to get that. That is how you love your neighbor.

And everyone is going to have a reaction and a response. Not that you are trying to get one, but if you focus on that relationship with Christ people will either receive you or reject you. If their heart is right with the Lord, they will receive you, and they will be glad and they will be encouraged and they will say, "Thank you for that. Thank you for your obedience to Christ. It encourages me to be that way." But if you come across someone, even someone professing to be a Christian, whose heart is not right with the Lord; when you are obedient to Christ and you are not compromising; you are obedient to Christ, it is going to bring out that rebellion, it is going to bring out that disobedience that they have towards Christ. So whatever my relationship with the Lord is, it is going to bring out other people's relationship with the Lord. And that is love. My love for you as brothers and sisters in Christ is measured by my total devotion and commitment to be obedient to Christ. That is the best I can do for you - not thinking of ways how I can make you happy or feel good; but walk with Christ.

Picture this, two thousand years ago Jesus Christ did that. He just walked. He was Him. He was Himself. And everybody had a response to the truth and the love in Jesus Christ. Now that He lives in me, He wants me to walk with him in that way so that people have a response to Christ in me. So true love, catch this now, true ἀγάπη (agapē) love is my obedience to Jesus Christ, not what I do for people.

So when He talks about love, He is talking about the one person. He says, "The one loving father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and the one loving son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." He is talking about the natural family love but He's talking about now that you're saved you have ἀγάπη (agapē) love for the Lord and it is total surrender, total sacrifice, total commitment, total obedience to Christ. And so everybody else in the family they have a different obedience. They have a different spirit. They have a different pathway in life. So the more I seek to please the Lord and walk with Him the more they are going to get upset, because they do not have the same path. They do not have the same spirit. But yet I am called to be obedient to Christ in their presence. It is going to make them even more upset. That is why we have these reactions. And that is why Jesus said, "It is so powerful and such a strong witness that you are going to be tempted to fear how people are going to respond to you. You are going to fear the consequences of what it means to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And you are going to be tempted to compromise."

(2) The Second Condition

Verse 38, secondly, **And he who does not take up his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.** The Second Condition. It was the Roman custom that when a criminal was condemned to death by crucifixion, he was to carry the cross bar of his cross to the place of crucifixion. That is why Jesus fell under the burden of the cross as He was carrying His own cross.

In Colossians 3:1-3 Paul says, **If then you be risen with Christ** (that is, spiritually saved) **seek those things which are above where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above not the things on the earth. For you died and your life has been hidden with Christ in God.** When Jesus died on the cross He died my death. I died.

Galatians 2:20 the apostle Paul says, **I have been crucified with Christ nevertheless I live yet not I but Christ lives in me.** He died my death and so therefore I have died. So Jesus said, "If you're not willing to take up your cross and follow after Me, you cannot be My disciple." You might as well go find a church to join and be religious, but you cannot be a disciple of Christ.

Lastly verse 39, **The one finding his life will lose it. And the one who has lost his life on account of me will find it.** The word *finding* means - it describes what each person goes through in this earthly life. Everybody is trying to find themselves. Find where they are supposed to go, what they are supposed to do, what they are supposed to be. Everybody is searching for their own identification and to be their own person. To attain a state or condition. But Jesus said, "The one who is seeking to find his life is going to lose it. And the one who has lost his life on account of Me is going to find it." So you give up your life for Christ. You make Christ your identification, not trying to find your own identification. Then you are going to find life. It is basically saying the person who says, "I will not surrender my life to Christ, I am trying to preserve my life here on earth," is eventually going to lose their life throughout eternity. They are going to lose their soul.

In Matthew 16:24-26, another instance where Jesus turned to the crowds, every message He gave had this message in it. Matthew 16:24, **If anyone is coming after me let him deny himself, (reject yourself) and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever desires to save (that is, *preserve*) his life will lose it. And whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it. For what is a man profited if he should gain the whole world and yet lose his own soul?** What if you go through this whole life and you gain all the real estate in the world, and you die and you lose your soul throughout eternity. What good did it do? **Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?** Because that is what you are doing. I am trading my soul in for the temporary few years here on the earth to establish my own identity, rather than surrender myself to Christ and have Him be my identity.

So Jesus told everybody straight off. This is what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. You must reject yourself. Are you willing to reject yourself? Seeking your own identity, establishing your own self, are you willing to take the death of Jesus on the cross upon yourself? That when He died your death as a substitute for you, that you died? You do not exist. Only Christ is your life. And when you find yourself in various human relationships and human situations and circumstances, are you willing to identify with Christ and give Him the reason why you are doing or not doing what you are doing? Because that is what Jesus was talking about. Because once He lives inside of a person genuine true love is found in one's personal response to Jesus Christ with the whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. Love is not measured by what you do for other people. Love is measured by how you identify with Christ and interact with Him in front of people. That is what it is all about.

Next week we will finish out the chapter. I just hope and pray - these are scriptures that I have even been in churches and been with pastors in the past who basically refuse to get into these kinds of scriptures. It is very offensive to people. Especially since we have a culture that has invaded the church with a humanitarian philosophy; these things are just inhuman, cruel, abusive. It hurts people's feelings, and we know a God of love would never do that. Except that Jesus went about offending people, hurting people's feelings, and yet He is pure love. His pure love exposed rebellion to love, and rebellion to truth. That is our testimony. My testimony to people is not what I tell them, it is not my salesmanship, it is not my advertising, it is not the Christian sticker I put on the back of my car; it is my identification with Christ. And prayerfully and hopefully my relationship with Jesus Christ will bring conviction and expose other people who do not have that. And people who do have a relationship with Christ, it will encourage them, it will add grace to their life.

Let's close with prayer.