

Jesus- Discipleship

There are two very common misunderstandings about the matter of God's wonderful, amazing, marvelous grace. Each are equally erroneous and both cause many to stumble coming to genuine conversion and in understanding how they should live after.

The first mistaken application of grace is the attempt to add something to it in order to fully qualify for salvation. Though it seems reasonable that we should be required to add something or do something to meet the requirements to join the eternal heavenly family, it is absolutely, unequivocally wrong.

Anything, I repeat, anything added to grace like baptism, church attendance, better behavior, tithing, service or good deeds, in essence cheapens and even nullifies grace. Grace is God's unmerited favor. We don't deserve it and we cannot earn it. Grace plus anything is no longer grace.

8 For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift— **9** not from works, so that no one can boast. **Eph 2:8-9 (HCSB)**

The second mistaken application of grace is related more to how we live once we have been genuinely converted to Christ by His grace. The deceitful and destructive flaw in the thinking of many is that, once they have been saved and that salvation is secure in Christ, then it doesn't really matter how they live. "I'm going to heaven when I die, so I can live the way I want to and God will forgive me when I get to heaven." That to say the least is a gross under-appreciation for God's amazing grace. And to say the

most it is possibly an indication that someone may have entered the house through another door than salvation by grace alone.

It is this second misunderstanding of grace that leads us to our study of the teaching of Christ today- what it means or costs to be a true follower of Christ.... If we could just pay the price, a certain price, to gain our salvation, then we might somehow have the right to just enter the door, find a comfortable chair, and do as we please. But we didn't pay a price, any price, though a price had to be paid. Jesus paid it all. He purchased our salvation with His own blood and body. We have been redeemed, bought back. We who are saved belong to Him.

19 Do you not know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, **20** for you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body. **1** Cor 6:19-20 (HCSB)

All true believers belong to Christ. We are His slaves. He is our Lord and Master. So how did Jesus describe what His truly devoted follower is like? How should we live as redeemed ones?

18 As He was walking along the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea, since they were fishermen. **19** "Follow Me," He told them, "and I will make you fish for people!" **20** Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. **M**att 4:18-20 (HCSB)

Disciple Truth 1: Know your purpose. I admit that it would be a lot easier if Jesus showed up one day at your place of work and said "this is what I want you to do" like He did with Peter and Andrew that day. But I have to say, if you are a Christian and don't have a clear and present understanding of God's purpose for your life as His follower, either you are a brand new believer or you have neglected one of the major necessities of your spiritual growth. Even in our new believers class we offer some opportunities to discover God's purpose for your life. On a number of occasions on Sunday evenings and other special events we have extensively explored the discovery and application of our giftedness and how it relates to the body of Christ.

If you don't have a strong, clear idea of your life purpose as a follower of Christ, see me, one of our pastors, or John Castle. We'll get you started. God has a detailed plan for your life and He has fully equipped you to fulfill that plan. All you have to do is discover, develop and implement it. Know your purpose.

18 When Jesus saw large crowds around Him, He gave the order to go to the other side [of the sea]. **19** A scribe approached Him and said, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go!" **20** Jesus told him, "**Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.**" **21** "Lord," another of His disciples said, "first let me go bury my father." **22** But

Jesus told him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead." Matt 8:18-22 (HCSB)

²¹ "If you want to be perfect," Jesus said to him, "go, sell your belongings and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me." Matt 19:21 (HCSB)

DT 2: Turn from your past. Jesus was not being insensitive or overly demanding. He, in His infinite wisdom and knowledge, knew that if either of these two men who approached Him as potential disciples would truly follow Him, they would first have to turn loose of something in their present life.

For one, it was forsaking his own family. We don't know the whole situation, but my guess is that this particular scribe was a member of a family deeply rooted in the corrupt religious system of the Jews. For him to have gone back to his family even for a time would have drawn him back into the negative influences of his family and away from truly following Christ. Jesus knew the situation and called him out of it..... I would liken it to a Muslim young man coming to Christ whose family is very committed to that religion. The need to completely break away, at least for a time, from his family would be necessary for his spiritual and even physical survival. Jesus affirmed the likelihood of this necessity in Mat 19.

²⁹ And everyone who has left houses, brothers or sisters, father or mother, children, or fields because of My name

will receive 100 times more and will inherit eternal life.
Matt 19:29 (HCSB)

For the other man, it was forsaking his wealth. Jesus knew his heart. As long as he was still attached to his wealth, he would be detached from Christ. His wealth was His god.

You cannot be slaves of God and of money. Matt 6:24 (HCSB)

We all have come to Christ with baggage that needs to be left on the carousel of our past. We will never effectively and faithfully follow Christ as long as we hold on to the things in the past that keep pulling us back and down.

²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will find it. ²⁶ What will it benefit a man if he gains the whole world yet loses his life? Or what will a man give in exchange for his life? ²⁷ Matt 16:24-27 (HCSB)

DT 3: deny yourself

Selfishness is at the heart of deep seated rebellion against God and is contrary to being a true follower of Christ. We are all selfish, self-serving, self-centered. This is a "left-over" nature of the flesh and it wars against the nature of the Spirit of God now in us who is leading us to follow Christ. We must suppress this ungodly selfishness while allowing the fruit of God's Spirit in us

to produce self-control. Self-control against the selfish nature of the flesh and discipline to follow Christ.

27 My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me. **28** I give them eternal life, and they will never perish—ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand. **29** My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. **30** The Father and I are one." **J**ohn 10:27-30 (HCSB)

DT 4: Hear His voice. True disciples of Christ hear His voice. How? Especially since the Israelites wimped out at Mt. Sanai and asked that God not speak to them out loud any more lest they die. Primarily, but not limited to—personal and corporate worship, personal and group bible study, personal and group fasting and prayer.

If you are not frequently hearing His voice, it is because: you are not saved, you are saved but have known, unconfessed sin in your life, or you are not consistently engaging in daily worship, bible study, and prayer. It is hard to follow and be fully devoted to someone you only have a distant, infrequent relationship with.

I can only imagine how many marriages fall apart when one of our U.S. military personnel serves a tour of duty and when they come home they find that the time and distance apart was too much for that spouse to endure. They went seeking for companionship somewhere else.

If you are not spending time with your Lord on a daily basis, your relationship with Him to suffer. You are probably looking for and listening to other voices. You will drift away and you will rarely or no longer at all hear His voice.

25 The one who loves his life will lose it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. **26** If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me. Where I am, there My servant also will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him. **John** 12:25-26 (HCSB)

DT 5: Sacrificially Serve. Being a disciple, a follower, of Christ is directly linked to service. You don't follow Christ just because He is pleasant to walk with like following your daddy's footprints on the beach. At first we do follow to learn from Him, but ultimately it must lead to emulating Him and we do that best through serving Him. And how do we serve Him who is risen and seated and the right hand of the Father in heaven? Serve people!

Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.' **Matt** 25:40 (HCSB)

And if you want to serve people it is best and most effectively done through the ministries of a local church.

20 So Peter turned around and saw the disciple Jesus loved following them. [That disciple] was the one who had

leaned back against Jesus at the supper and asked, "Lord, who is the one that's going to betray You?" ²¹ When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord—what about him?" ²² "If I want him to remain until I come," Jesus answered, "what is that to you? As for you, follow Me." John 21:20-22 (HCSB)

It seems to me that most Christians practice conditional discipleship. "I will follow Christ as long as all the church's policies and practices line up with what I think they should be, as long as the pastors teach and preach and lead the way I think they should, and as long they sing all the right songs, and I get my parking place and my chair..... I will remain a faithful follower of Christ as long as everyone treats me the way I want to be treated. But, if all these things don't line up, I'm out of here."

I would like to say here that I don't believe you cannot be a truly devoted follower of Christ without being connected to a local body of believers though many have argued otherwise. I agree that no church is perfect, but it is still Jesus' church.

¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the forces of Hades will not overpower it. Matt 16:18 (HCSB)

The problem most people have with the local church is that it has people in it. A major portion of the Christian population moves around from church to church rarely making any serious commitments to service, ministry or giving. Most pastors only stay at a church for three or four years. And, the reason there is

so much motion and commotion is that we have people problems.... But aren't we supposed to be following Christ? Problem: We are way too worried about "John" when Jesus said, "follow me." Don't worry about what John says or John does. "Follow me."

Please don't misunderstand. There are times when we must move. Whether it is an ungodly, corrupt and unrepentant leader, God opening up and leading us into a new area of ministry and service, or moving to a new community because of work or retirement, sometimes we must move. But, much of the time we move because of what someone said or did. We're way too concerned with what "John" thinks and way too little concerned with what Jesus thinks.

DT 6- Follow Jesus. A true follower of Christ is not nearly as concerned with what others say and do as he is concerned with consistently, unwaveringly, devotedly, following Christ through service and ministry in the local church even if it means sometimes doing so in spite of John.