

“Discipleship: Difficult!”

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Being a Christian and follower of Jesus isn't as easy now as it used to be. Christian churches and communities are under attack and on fire in Egypt. Christianity is under attack in America. Anti-religious people petitioned to have a seven foot cross in the Mohave desert put up in 1934 by World War I veterans. In some new textbooks, Jesus Christ is seen as a theory while Mohammad is seen as a real person and founder and leader of a great religion. We don't have the right to profess our faith because it might offend someone else!

Jesus never promised that being a disciple of His would be an easy thing. He went so far as to tell His disciples that they would be hated and beaten and even put to death because of Him. Discipleship is not easy, it's difficult!

Part of the reason it's difficult is because we like to be in control! Our human nature wants the easy way. It doesn't want to exert itself into something that will take time or energy. Our human nature doesn't want obstacles that slow us down. It's in our nature to go way out of our way and add time to a trip because there's too much traffic!

Our human nature doesn't want to struggle. Inwardly, I think we feel that struggle can only be bad and never for our good. This happens even when we walk into church and we find a visitor sitting in our usual seat and we have to find someplace else to sit. Instead of celebrating someone new in worship, we're upset because it takes us out of our comfort zone!

Our human nature doesn't want to be different. We want to blend in and become invisible. Some times this is because if we don't go along with the crowd or believe another way, we're worried we'll be judged or rejected by the people we're around.

The call of Christ sets up a barrier between us and the world. He knows what the devil and the world is telling us is OK. He wants to be our center, and wants us to look to Him for all things.

It's only when we come to the realization that Jesus is our Savior that we can be separated from the world. We have to have faith in Him and trust in His guiding hand leading us through the difficulties and struggles we face. He never promised us discipleship was going to be easy, but as we put our trust in Him can we be confident even if the world turns against us!

But we can never simply run away from the world and hide! God hasn't called us to be like the world, but He has called us to be in the world and be His witnesses and share the Gospel with everyone we meet. Remember the disciples after Jesus' death and resurrection? What did they do? They hid in a house all by themselves because they were fearful and had forgotten what Jesus had said to them about His being with them forever! They forgot their discipleship mission!

Though we all have to enter discipleship alone, we don't remain alone! That's where the community of the fellowship of this church comes in. We have all been called to discipleship and we're disciples together! If we take Him at His Word and dare to be known as His, it won't matter what the world says about us or does to us, because we know we're His!

Turn to Luke 13. The followers of Jesus Christ are few and they will always be few! Even though this might be true, it doesn't mean that we can give up because whatever we do won't make a difference. Jesus gave us a mission to do for Him and we must do it! Look at verses 23-24, *“And someone said to Him, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” and He said to them, “Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.”*

The path to discipleship and the door to it is narrow and easy to miss. Because we sin, we stray away from the path of discipleship. As we stray, it's easy to get caught up in the things around us and we forget the path and we forget Jesus!

Jesus Himself reminds us, *"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through Me!"* This shows us that the narrow door leads us to the cross! When Jesus was on earth, He was here as a citizen of the earthly world and the heavenly one. We too are citizens of these same two worlds and walk the edge between them. This path cannot be wide but narrow as it leads to Jesus Christ and His cross!

The sad part is that our sin causes us to slip and we think we're still living as His disciples when we're not! Go on to verses 25-27, *"When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!"*

The life of discipleship is not easy, it's difficult! Everything in our lives has to remain focused on Jesus Christ. Christianity without the living Christ is Christianity without discipleship! And Christianity without discipleship is ALWAYS Christianity without Jesus!

From the beginning to the end, it's always His Word, His call, His alone! As you follow Jesus as His disciple, may you seek His forgiveness, cling to His Word, and let everything else go, and focus on Him alone as you live as His disciple living totally in His power, love, and grace!