

## The High Cost of Discipleship

**Matthew 16:24-27**

Intro:

This morning I begin a new series of sermons on the subject of Discipleship, I will call this series:

**Growing True Disciples.**

**George Barna has a book entitled: Growing True Disciples.**

And in his book he talks about what churches are trying to do to grow in numbers and be more effective in reaching their communities for Christ.

Many of the things he mentions in his first chapter are things we do here at PCN.

Such as:

- Fine-tuning their worship services to make them more attractive and compelling to people.
- The typical church who is trying to reach the unsaved are integrating numerous programs and classes.
- Special events that happen during the year to influence the thinking and behavior of people in their community.

And Barna says, “all of those activities can be justified by their intent and outcomes, **BUT HERE’S A BETTER STRATEGY: IGNITE PEOPLE’S PASSION FOR GOD AND GET OUT OF THEIR WAY.**”

You see – when individuals are single minded in their devotion to God, their commitment to His ways and His principles becomes much deeper, much more intense.

As a result of this conviction, they will endure worship in the church that may not meet their exact expectations because their focus is on God, not on themselves.

As a result they will attend activities when it is not convenient because the most important reality is to experience God’s presence in their lives.

As a result they will give their tithe and sacrifice more of their hard-earned money for the purposes of ministry because of they recognize that they are managers, not owners.

And as a result they will gladly share their faith in Christ with non-believers and invite them to Church because they understand their responsibility to other people and to God, because they simply cannot contain their own excitement about the privilege we have in Christ Jesus.

But Barna asks the question, “**What if we were to change our standards?**”

**Suppose we were to de-emphasize attendance statistics, square footage and income figures in favor of commitment to depth and authenticity in discipleship?**

We would redefine “success” in our churches to include:

- We would have congregants who worship not just on Sunday but every day of the week; not just in the sanctuary but wherever they are.
- There would be constant efforts by the laity to discover new insights into their faith and to convert that information into personal application.
- There would be complete submission to the Holy Spirit in both decision-making and behavior.
- Believers hearts would be sensitive to sin and wounded every time we do something that offends God.
- There would be Individuals who joyfully share their resources – time, money, skills, information, relationships, possessions – with those in need, especially those who share a love of Christ and a commitment to His people.
- There would be A deep commitment to building a lasting and life-changing

community among those who profess Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

- Believers would demonstrating selfless compassion toward those in need of emotional, physical, financial or spiritual assistance.
- Throughout the church believers would be engaged in effective evangelism.
- The church would be full of people who live differently than the norm because of their faith, leading lives that conform to the dictates of Scripture without cutting corners or trying to interpret biblical passages for personal comfort or advantage.
- We would have a church body that projects (and lives up to) an image of being loving, caring, focused and clear-minded in its pursuit of the ways of God.
- There would be individuals who are continually linked to God through prayer and meditation, as if they were “online” 24 hours a day with the ultimate spiritual power.
- We would have believers who take the initiative to use their spiritual gifts, skills and training for the benefit of their church, without having to be cajoled into serving.

George Barna closes this thought with these words, which really sums up what this series on **True Discipleship** is all about, he says,

**Why would these outcomes constitute success?**

5

Because churches would be made up of true disciples, not members; church would be bolstered by the efforts of lay ministers with the paid professionals facilitating rather than initiating and leading those efforts.

Most church leaders will nod their heads in approval and suggest that these are the very things that they are striving to achieve in their churches.

**In all honesty, though, few churches achieve these outcomes, largely because we're not really serious about them.**

**Do you want to make a difference?**

**Do you want your church and you as a believer in Christ to make a difference?**

If we were to redefine true discipleship, and truly invest in it, we could reach these laudable ends."

- George Barna

These sermons that I will be preaching on in the next few weeks will explain why Class 201 in our Discipleship course here at PCN is so important.

Class 201 is going to begin next Sunday afternoon at 4:30 here at the church taught by Brent Carroll.

6

Everyone who just finished Class 101 and even those who have transferred their membership from another church should attend Class 201.

In the restructure of our Church board, we have a Ministry Team made up of Pastor Derek, Teresa Wood, Brent Carroll and myself.

It is the goal of the ministry Team to do a better and more effective job in training and equipping all believers in this church in the area of discipleship.

This class is designed for any of you who have not gone through our process of discipleship.

Possibly you've been attending this church for years and you've not been through discipleship classes, I want to encourage you to come, bring some food, fellowship and learn more about this walk with Christ through Class 201 and don't stop there, plan on going through Class 301 and 401.

**Story:**

I heard someone tell this story several years ago and it kind of fits here about a hog and a chicken who walked past a church where the sign read,

"Help us feed the hungry."

The chicken suggested to the hog that maybe they could help by pitching in some eggs and bacon.

7

The pig thought about it for a moment and then responded, "That's easy for you to say."

And the chicken said, "Why, what do you mean?"

Well the pig said, "On your part it only requires a contribution, on my part it's a life or death commitment."

### **Application:**

This little story illustrates what I am going to preach to you about today, counting **the High Cost ... specifically in terms of discipleship.**

Counting the Cost is one of those things that you have to do often in our spiritual life, but in reality we would prefer not to.

Today, everything has a cost to it. If it says it's free, don't believe them. There is nothing today that is free. I thought there was. But I was mistaken! Would you agree?

Have you been to the store lately to purchase your groceries? That can of food is going up.

Have you been to the gas station to buy your gas? They are telling us that gas is going up to \$4 a gal.

No matter what you plan on doing with your life, there's a cost to that too.

8

- Some of you are still paying the bills for your college education.
- Some are paying on hospital bills
- If you need exercise, some of you are probably paying for that.

### **In terms of being a disciple of Jesus there is also a cost factor.**

We live in a day of "**Casual Christianity.**"

I heard someone recently say that the average church could drop 1/4<sup>th</sup> of its members from the membership roll and neither the church nor the dropped members would notice any difference.

### **LET ME EXPLAIN TO YOU WHO THEY ARE:**

"Casual Christians are those who want to be numbered among the Flock, but could care less about following the Shepherd.

They want the forgiveness the cross of Christ brings, but never intend to carry their OWN cross.

They want warm, fuzzy moments on Sunday morning but offer no commitment to Jesus on Monday through Saturday.

In short they want the crown without the cross.

But we know that's not what we are about here. Amen!

**First of all, we need to understand what a True Disciple is.**

**Let me show you a video clip that will give us the answer. (Show – Jewish Discipleship. 3:45 min.)**

**There are three things we need to understand what it meant in Jesus' day to be a disciple:**

- 1) To be a disciple meant being a learner**
- 2) To be a follower of the model rabbi**
- 3) To be a disciplined follower of the rabbi**

For the disciples to leave everything and to follow Jesus for 3 ½ years was an incredible thing – just to drop their next immediately and leave them - the learning experience of becoming disciples of Jesus.

**It became their Lifestyle! It has to become ours.**

**The Call of Jesus to those disciples was to make Him Lord of their lives. The call comes to us ...**

As many times as we've heard about it there is still that misperception of what a disciple is.

We hear "Disciple" and immediately think of 12 guys who ran around with Jesus . . . and Yes! They were His disciples, they were followers of Jesus!

But it also says **We are called to be disciples, the Great Commission** - ***"Go and make disciples..."***

One of the responsibilities of the Pastor and others on Staff is to make disciples of all the believers in this Church family. This is a huge undertaking!

**But why would Jesus tell us to make disciples?**

Simply put – Jesus set the example for us.

It was His strategy to equip those disciples to carry on and to do His ministry after He was gone.

He even told His disciples, ***"Greater works you will do because I go to the Father."*** **John 14:12**

Last night my wife read to me this passage before we went to sleep and she said, "Dan, God has called you to do greater things because Jesus said so."

Would that interest you to be that kind of disciple?

**What would motivate us to do this?**

**Some day there is going to be a Judgment for all believers.**

This is referred to what we call **The Judgment Seat** or it is literally referred to as **The Bema Judgment**.

**"Bema" is the Greek word for Judgment** in II Cor. 5:10 and it is the Greek word for tribunal where the Roman judges sat to render their verdicts.

The Apostle Paul tells us, ***“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due them for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”***

This Judgment of believers will not be to determine whether or not we go to Heaven.

That was decided when we truly put our trust in Christ to be our Savior.

We will be judged on how faithfully we followed the Lord as believers.

As we have learned in our Study in Revelation on Wed. night, when the Rapture happens and the earth is experiencing Great Tribulation, while that is happening, every believer will be judged – the **Bema Judgment** - in front of Jesus Christ.

No matter what you think this morning, the Word of God tells us that every believer will stand before Jesus some day and give an account of what we have done or not done for Him.

Primarily this will be a time when our Lord hands out some kind of rewards for faithful discipleship. The Bible tells us there are **Five different Crowns** that He will give to those deserving them.

It's at this point that we hope to hear the words, ***“Well done my good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord.”***

**So If I know this: How should knowing that Jesus is coming soon make me react as a Believer?**

Turn your Bibles with me to I Thess 5:4:7

***4 But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. 5 You are all sons and daughters of the light and sons and daughters of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. 6 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.***

Most of us have heard about Jesus coming again and yet we could never use the excuse, **“Well, I just didn't think it was going to be that soon, like the preacher said.”**

Paul tells us that we need to look for **THAT DAY** so His Coming Again would not catch us unaware like a thief.

**If anything should challenge us to become disciples of Jesus it should be this knowledge of His Coming and how we will have to give an account of what we did and didn't do for Him.**

The Apostle Paul identified **two kinds of people in the world:**

13

- Those who ignore the reality of Christ's return and the Judgment that follows.
- And secondly, those who let the reality of that future event spur them on to more intensely follow Christ.

Notice with me that Paul is addressing Christian brothers when he addresses them.

### **First, he warns them about “*the Darkness*”**

Darkness here is being away from God.

When we are in the darkness we become disoriented.

Things are not as clear as they should be.

It's a feeling of lostness.

### **Secondly, he warns them about being “asleep”**

In a sense when we are asleep we are helpless.

When we are asleep someone could sneak up on us before we would know it.

### **Illus.**

I recall when I was younger and going to camp. A sleeping person was a very vulnerable person. They could wake up with their fingers in warm water.

14

Or they could wake up with shaving cream covering their face because of a tickle.

I remember sneaking into the rooms of some of the students and shooting a tear gas gun and laughing at the reaction.

Needless to say, I got fined for that action when I was in Bible College.

This was before I met Drusilla.

Really, what Paul is trying to do is tell us we can't afford to let our guard down.

We Christian believers must become Disciples of Christ and be devoted to being prepared for His Coming, spiritually awake and devoted to prayer.

### **What should knowing this do to us? 4 things:**

**1) We should be alert to God's commands so we can live lives that will please Him.**

**2) We should be alert for opportunities to share the Good News that Jesus is the One who can bring forgiveness and a new life.**

**3) We should be alert to compromises and justifications of our own sins and make every effort to weed these out of our lives.**

**4) We should be alert to ways to show Christ's love to those who are hurting.**

15

So honestly, as I know this and I understand this, this gives me **a greater motivation** to want to learn how to be a better disciple of Jesus. Doesn't it you?

You see – **the point is the Second Coming of Jesus should influence the way we live.**

**I. SO - Where do I begin? Verse 24**

Jesus gives us the answer:

***“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’”***

The New Living Translation says, ***“Put aside your selfish ambition and take up His cross.”***

**First, we must deny ourselves, giving Jesus His proper place in your lives.**

The Purpose of your life when you came to know Christ as your Personal Savior was to become a Disciple of Jesus.

It's not about you. Everything is about Him!  
It's not about me. Everything is about Him!

Folks, hear me now – We struggle to relinquish self. So we need to die to selfish ambitions!

We struggle with self-centeredness.

16

**Making Jesus Christ Lord, not just Savior ... it is not one or the other! He is to be Savior and Lord in every life.**

To be Lord means that Jesus has dominion over us and we willfully give ourselves to His Lordship.

The phrase, ***“Deny himself”*** literally means, ***“to completely disown, to utterly separate oneself from someone.”***

In Romans 6:11 it refers to dying to self. Paul said, ***“In the same way, count yourself dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”***

To deny oneself means to follow the example set forth by the Lord Jesus when He came into this world.

But what does this mean in a practical sense? Let me read to you a quote that I feel explains it.

***“If when you are good, evil is spoken of you, and when your wishes are crossed and your advice is disregarded, and your opinions are ridiculed and you refuse to let anger rise in your heart and even defend yourself, but you take it patiently in loving silence, then you are dying to self. And when you lovingly and patiently bear any disgrace, any irregularity, any annoyance, when you stand face to face with extravagance and folly and spiritual insensitivity and endure it, as Jesus did, that is dying to self. And when you are content with any food, any money, any***

clothing, any society, any solitude or interruption by the will of God, that is dying to self. And when you never care to refer to yourself in conversation or record your own good works, or itch after commendation from others, and when you truly love to be unknown, that is dying to self. When you see your brother prosper, see his needs wondrously met, and can honestly rejoice with him (with his big house, with his big car, with his big pool – whatever it may be) without feeling envy, and never question God though your needs are greater and still unmet, that is dying to self. Now when you can receive correction and reproof from someone of less stature, and admit that he is right and find no resentment or rebellion in your heart, that is dying to self.” **Gaining by Losing**

**So Discipleship begins when we call upon the name of Jesus Christ for our salvation, and then when we give Him our life.**

**When we do this – we are denying our old ways, dying to the old self and choosing to follow Him.**

Discipleship is a Lifestyle for the rest of your life!

**Secondly – What is required? The Disciple of Christ is called to lift something up - “*We must take up our cross*”**

To better understand this – I need tell you what the cross is not:

- It is not your husband or wife.

- It isn’t any of your children.
- It isn’t your crazy neighbor.
- It isn’t any of your difficulties.
- It isn’t your health.
- It isn’t the bad situation you’re in.

We say, “Well, this is my cross I have to bear.” But this is not what Jesus was talking about.

The cross is not just a place of suffering. The cross was an instrument of death.

When Jesus says for us to take up our cross, He is saying that we are to live as dead to our old way of living.

We believers are called to take up His cross, never looking back, never turning around, but being willing to follow Jesus all the way.

No holds,  
No bars,  
No turning back.

“I have decided to follow Jesus.  
I have decided to follow Jesus.  
I have decided to follow Jesus.  
No turning, no turning back.

Take this old world, but give me Jesus.

I am going to follow Jesus in places that I don’t understand, even when those places are dark and

scary and even painful and unpleasant; because I trust in and follow the Shepherd.

- Following Jesus costs you a life that is dying in exchange for a life that never ends.
- Following Jesus costs you a life of bondage in exchange for a life of freedom.
- Following Jesus costs you a life that is cursed in exchange for a life that is blessed.

I am challenged by verse 25, ***“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loves his life for me will find it.”***

It reminds me of that old Abbott and Costello skit, **“Who’s on first”**:

**What is required? Losing your life.**

**Why? So that you may have life.**

**But you said I was going to lose my life. Yes I did**

**But when do I gain life? When you lose it!**

**Lose what? Your life.**

**And gain what? Your life**

**How do I gain life by losing it? God’s Grace!**

You see – now understand this, Jesus had a way of making His listeners think.

Jesus’ point was that there is a huge investment that needs to be made on our part when we choose to be a disciple.

## **Does Jesus really mean we will loose our lives?**

God will sometimes take away the very thing that we cling to the most because we will often place that before Him.

God will not always require us to give up our life to the point of death, but because of our love for Him it should never be an issue.

***Paul said, “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” Phil 1:21***

There is a massive difference between being involved in the church and being committed to Jesus as a Disciple.

Jesus calls for us to tear down the altar of selfishness that we have built and embrace His radical life of selflessness.

You see – being involved means that you can do what you want, as you want and when you feel like doing it.

In other words, you can be involved in teaching or ushering and whenever you feel like it, you can quit.

Being committed as a disciples means you are at the call of Jesus 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year.

Commitment to being a disciple of Jesus puts within a desire to serve Him not just on Sunday morning but each and every day that we live.

**The Third thing we are asked to do is To Live something Out – Jesus said, “*Follow Me*”**

Here Jesus says literally, “***Let him/her follow me day by day.***”

To be a disciple of Jesus Christ is to be continually following after Him.

It’s a way of life.

It is to be your pattern for living.

Let me make this clear: If a disciple is a “follower” and we are Disciples of Christ, it follows that we are willing to be led.

Are you willing to be led by Christ today?

Are you willing to live a life that is completely sold out to Him?

By sold out, I mean – deny everything you want in return for wanting everything He wants out of you.

**Conclusion:**

Paul tells us to encourage one another in this truth.

Jesus tells us what we must do to be a disciple.

Warren Wiersbe sums it up this way for the Believer in Christ:

Live expectantly. This does not mean putting on a white sheet and sitting atop a mountain. That is the very attitude God condemned. But it does mean living in the light of His return, realizing that our works will be judged and that our opportunities for service on earth will end. It means to live “with eternity’s values in view.”

There is a difference between being ready to go to heaven and being ready to meet the Lord. Anyone who has sincerely trusted Christ for salvation is ready to go to heaven. Christ’s sacrifice on the cross has taken care of that. But to be ready to meet the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ is quite another matter. Scripture indicates that some believers will not be happy to see Jesus Christ! ***“And now little children, abide in Him; that when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” I John 2:28***

Fellow Christians, Are you living in light of the future that you’re doing everything you know to do to be a genuine disciple?

Are you living right now with the knowledge that someday you will stand before Him and give an account of the way you have lived, talked, reacted?

Here are some questions I want you to answer to yourself:

- 1. Am I a true follower of Jesus Christ or am I only pretending to be one?**
- 2. Am I serious about following Jesus Christ in every area of my life or am I putting things off to a later and more convenient time?**
- 3. What would you regret most in your life if you were suddenly struck down today and had just hours before you died?**
- 4. What behaviors are you currently engaged in that you would be ashamed to explain before the Lord?**

If you will be honest with those questions this morning it will give you the grade for where you stand with Jesus in being an authentic follower of Christ.

**Invitation:**