

Quote

Research

Illustration

Scripture

Big Idea: God always knows what we need to give up

Introduction

Today we're starting a new series, and it's called Disciple. And over the next eight weeks, our goal is really simple. **We want to help you understand what it actually means to follow Jesus.**

Not just believe in Him.
Not just agree with Him.
But to follow him.

In the New Testament, the primary Greek word translated as disciple is **mathētēs** (mah-THAY-tace.)

It means *learner* or *student*, but not in a classroom sense.
It's not about sitting in rows, taking notes, and passing a test.

In the first-century Jewish world, a mathētēs learned by doing.
Think more like apprenticeship or an internship.
You learn by being with and doing what your example does. That's what it means to be a disciple.

You spent time with them.
You watched them.
You followed their example.

That's what it meant to be a disciple.

I like the simple way author John Mark Comer describes it. He says being a disciple means:
Being *with* Jesus
Becoming *like* Jesus
Doing what Jesus Did

So discipleship was not primarily about information.
Information is helpful, but discipleship is about learning by doing.

And that's the journey we're stepping into together over these next 8 weeks.

Setup

So today, in this first week, we're going to talk about two simple words Jesus used over and over again: "Follow me."

That was the invitation Jesus gave to His disciples.

And it's the same invitation He still gives to you and me.

In the Bible, the disciples literally followed Jesus around; wherever he went, they went.

But in order to follow Jesus, they had to leave their old life behind.

Let me show you...

Matthew 4:18-20 NIV

18As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 19"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." 20At once they left their nets and followed him.

Here's another example right after that one...

Matthew 4:21-22 NIV

21Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, 22and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

We don't literally follow Jesus around like they did, but we do follow his teachings and his instructions.

And just like the disciples had to drop their nets and leave their boats, following Jesus still requires us to lay some things down.

So what we're really talking about, when we talk about following, is we're talking about surrender.

That's what I want to talk about today: *surrender*.

When we hear the word surrender, we don't think of freedom—we think of loss.

An army surrenders when it's been defeated.

An athlete surrenders when they tap out.

A criminal surrenders when they're caught.

The word surrender makes us think of giving something up, not gaining something better.

But with God, surrender is always about getting something better than what you're giving up.

We're talking about more than just being a Christian.
There are a lot of Christians who are saved but not surrendered. They're not the same thing.
When you become a Christian, you become a child of God. That happens in a moment.
But you can be saved and still live bound.
You can be forgiven and still live defeated.
God wants more for you than forgiveness alone—He wants freedom.
And freedom requires surrender.

But we struggle to give it up. We're afraid.

They say when someone is drowning, they often fight the person trying to save them. They panic, even though someone is trying to save them, and they fight against them.

We do the same thing with God, don't we?

He asks us to surrender certain things
a relationship
control
unforgiveness
an addiction
a dream
money

Because he's trying to rescue us.

Sometimes we trust Jesus to forgive our sins, but we struggle to trust Him with our future.
With our relationships.
With our dreams.
With control.

It's like trying to give a small kid money. They don't really understand the value of money, so if you try to trade a kid a \$20 bill for 4 quarters, they won't do it. They don't realize one \$20 bill is better than 4 quarters.

That's what it's like when God wants us to trade our life for something better.

Scripture

I want us to look at a story in the Gospels, where Jesus invites someone to follow him.
I think a lot of us will be able to relate to this story.

It's in Mark 10...

Mark 10:17-22 NIV

17As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 18 “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’” 20 “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” 21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” 22 At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

I think a lot of us can relate to this guy.

He was obviously religious

He was a morally good person

He was rich and young, so he was obviously a hard worker, and dependable

And he was seeking Jesus.

But what’s interesting about this story is that even though this guy had kept all the commandments, he still felt like he was missing something.

Maybe you feel that way today.

Maybe you’re trying to do all the right things, but you still feel like your relationship with God is missing something.

If that’s you, it may be because you’re still holding on to something God wants you to surrender.

But there’s something else about this story that seems unfair.

There is nowhere else in the Bible where God asked anyone else to give up all of their money. Abraham gave 10%.

Even Zacchaeus only gave back half of what he had stolen.

But here Jesus is asking this guy to do something he didn’t ask of anyone else.

Why would he do that?

Because Jesus always puts His finger on the thing we don’t want to let go of.

Joy and growth come from hard obedience.

The harder the obedience, the greater the joy and freedom.

Application: 3 Things We Can Learn From The Rich Young Ruler

So let’s look at 3 things we can take from the Rich Young Ruler’s story that will help us surrender.

1. Jesus loves you where you are

Notice the words in verse 21.

It says, “Jesus looked at him and loved him.”

This is so important because when you talk about surrender, it can sometimes feel like Jesus is punishing you, or he’s mad at you.

In this story, Jesus knew he was about to ask something incredibly hard of this man, but he did it *because* he loved him.

Jesus could’ve rolled his eyes.
He could’ve talked down to him.
But he didn’t do that.

As you follow Jesus, there will be lots of times, when you feel like your sin or addictions or flaws make God mad at you, but he’s not mad at you. He loves you. And yes, he will ask you to do hard things, but not because he’s punishing you, but because he loves you.

Jesus loves you right where you are.
Not where you should be.
Not where you want to be.
But where you are.

So, as we read this story today, don’t misunderstand and think you have to surrender in order for God to love you. He already loves you. The surrender is for you not him.

Which leads us to the second lesson we can learn from this story....

2. Jesus always wants what’s best for you

Because God loves you, anything he ever asks you to lay down is always in your best interest. Always.

It doesn’t feel that way, though. Does it?
When we feel God convicting us to end the unhealthy relationship
Or lay down our dream
Or give our money

It feels like he’s hurting us, but he’s not—he’s *helping* us.

When Jesus asked this man to sell his possessions and follow Him, He wasn't trying to take something away—He was trying to give him something better.

Think about the opportunity Jesus was giving this man.
He could have become one of the disciples.
He could have had a front row seat to Jesus' life.
He could have built the church and changed the world.

But the man never got to experience any of that, because he couldn't give up what he loved most.

In God's kingdom, what you lay down determines what you can pick up.
Anytime God is asking you to surrender, it's because he has something better for you.

And this will happen over and over again in your life by the way.
Surrender is not a one-time decision.
You get saved once, but you surrender over and over again.

As we grow, Jesus continues to lovingly point to new areas and say, "Trust me here too."
We're constantly learning to trust God in new ways.
And each time we obey, we learn that God knows best.

But let's look at this one last painful lesson we can learn from this story...

3. Jesus won't force you to obey

The man walked away sad.
And Jesus let him go.

No lecture.
He didn't chase him.
He didn't force him.
He let him walk.

Surrender is an invitation, not an obligation.
He leaves it up to you.
He will let us learn a lesson as many times as we want to learn it.

I think so many of us can relate to where this man was.
He was religiously committed, but didn't feel like his faith was alive.
That's what it feels like to follow Jesus half-heartedly.
You're in, but not all-in.

I heard another pastor call this the miserable middle. It's when:

You don't have enough Jesus to experience His power,
But you have enough religion to feel guilty.

You don't surrender enough to experience His peace,
But you surrender enough to resent the sacrifices you do make.

You don't commit enough to see real transformation,
But you commit just enough to feel like you're missing out on the world.

You know enough truth to be convicted,
But you're not surrendered enough to be free.

You've given God enough to feel religious,
But you've held back enough to think you're still in control.

And you're miserable.

The miserable middle makes you wonder why the Christian life doesn't feel like the abundant life Jesus promised.

The middle is miserable because you're divided.

One foot in the kingdom.

One foot in the world.

Trying to serve two masters.

Trying to keep control.

Conclusion

So let me end by asking you this challenging question: **What's the thing you hope Jesus never asks you to give up?**

It might be a habit,
a relationship
a comfort
a dream
a dollar amount
or a sense of control

What's the one thing you're hoping Jesus won't touch?

Whatever it is, that's probably the thing that is keeping you from experiencing the joy and life you want to experience.

Jesus gives you the same invitation he gave the man in the story: “Go surrender it, then come follow me.”