

# Is A Life Of Discipleship Really Worth It?

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, I'd like us to turn back together for a short while to Mark chapter 10. Now, a couple of weeks ago we looked at this passage, especially the section that's often known as the rich young ruler, where Jesus met this man who said, what must I do to inherit eternal life?
- But we didn't call him the rich young ruler, we called him the blind young ruler. And we called him that because he couldn't see who Jesus really was.
- He couldn't see what Jesus expects of those who come to him. He couldn't see just how much Jesus offers us.
- And he and all the people who were listening couldn't see just how much Jesus really can do. And it's crucial that we get all of these things right.
- We must understand who Jesus is, that he's not just an important figure from history and not just a good teacher. He is God the Son. He is the only saviour.
- [ 1 : 0 7 ] He's the King of kings and he is so good. We must understand what Jesus expects to recognise and he's not asking us to come to him with this big long list of achievements that will show that we're good enough.
- Instead he's looking for us to come to him knowing that we can bring him nothing except empty hands. We must understand what Jesus offers us, just how much he offers us.
- He offers us treasure in heaven, peace, joy, security, togetherness that can never be threatened, that can never diminish, that can never ever end.
- And we must understand what Jesus can do. Sometimes it can look and it can feel like there's huge hurdles between us and coming to faith or between other people and then them coming to faith.
- But we must never ever forget that with God all things are possible. So there's loads that we learned from this passage and we looked at all of this a couple of weeks ago.
- [ 2 : 1 3 ] But there's one other question that this passage raises. And it's equally important to all the other things that we've considered before and it's actually possibly the most important question because this is the one that is likely to have the biggest influence on how you respond to Jesus tonight and how you respond to him in the week ahead.
- And the question is, is a life of discipleship going to be worth it? Or to put it a wee bit more bluntly, is following Jesus going to be rubbish?
- And that's a massive question for every single one of us. For anyone who's not the other Christian or who's not sure where they stand, it's so easy to be hesitant about the gospel out of fear regarding the impact that it'll have on your life.
- You think about what might change. You think about what it might cost. You think about what people might say about you, all that kind of stuff, all of that kind of a massive influence. But it's also a massive question for those of us who are Christians.
- And I worried at my question carefully. I didn't say, I deliberately didn't say, is becoming a Christian worth it? Because I think everybody here knows that it is. What we're asking is, is a life of discipleship going to be worth it?

[ 3 : 35 ] And that's a crucial question for us as Christians because just as it's possible for somebody to get stuck on their way to the cross and thinking, I don't know if I want to become a Christian because I don't know the impact it's going to have on my life.

It's also really easy if you like for Christians to get stuck at the resurrection thinking, yes, I'm so glad my sins are forgiven, but I don't really want this to affect my life too much.

I don't really want this to change too many things. And we can find ourselves feeling like, you know, feeling glad that we're saved. So for that, happy to be getting to heaven when we die, but I'm not really sure if I'm ready to commit to too much in my life just now.

And so as Jesus calls us to follow Him and to serve Him in a life of discipleship together, it's very easy for us to be paralysed by the fear that following Jesus is going to involve changes in our lives that we're not going to like.

It's very easy to think that it's going to be a bit rubbish. And that can affect you if you have been a Christian for a week. It can affect you if you've been a Christian for 50 years. It's so easy to think that a life of discipleship is not going to be worth it.

[ 4 : 53 ] Tonight we're asking, is that true? And to help us answer that question, we're going to look at the last few verses that Neil read for us. Let me read again, Mark 10, 28 to 30.

Peter began to say to him, See, we have left everything and followed you. Jesus said, Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions and in the age to come eternal life.

In these verses, Jesus is talking about two crucial things that we have got to make sure that we understand. In verse 29, he is talking about the cost of following him.

And then in verse 30, he talks about the gain, cost and gain.

I want us just to look at each of them in turn tonight. So in these verses, we are giving a clear reminder that a life of discipleship will result in changes to your life.

[ 6 : 14 ] And sometimes those changes can be in relation to big things in your life. If you look at these verses at verse 29 again and the stuff that gets mentioned here, house, brother, sisters, mother, father, children, lands, none of these are minor.

We've got to recognize straight away that this is some of the most important stuff in our lives. This is big stuff that Jesus is referring to. That instantly makes this verse unsettling.

So please don't worry if you read that version, you think, oh man, if it feels unsettling, it will feel unsettling. And don't worry if you feel like that.

That's how I feel. That's how anybody is going to feel reading that verse. You think, okay, well, what kind of changes should we expect? And in particular, is Jesus telling us to leave behind the stuff that matters most?

Is he telling us to leave behind our families and our homes and everything that's most dear to us? What exactly is Jesus' meaning?

[ 7 : 16 ] Now, to help us understand that, we need to spend a little bit of time thinking about this word left. Okay, this is a very important word and it's one that we have to spend a wee bit of time thinking about.

They always say when you're training for a ministry, never, ever, ever teach a congregation Greek words. But I can see from here that you're all very intelligent and so I shall teach you a Greek word tonight.

This word left is the Greek word, aphiemi. Aphiemi, if you write it in Greek, it looks like that. That makes me look incredibly clever.

I'm not really that good at Greek, but that's it. Aphiemi. This is a really interesting word. It's a very common word and it has a very broad range of meanings.

So I've got a list of verses here. Sorry that the font is a wee bit small, but I wanted them all on one screen. Here's a selection of verses that have all come from the Gospels.

[ 8 : 15 ] Jesus answered him and as I go through I'm going to just circle a phrase. Jesus answered him, let it be so now, for thus it's fitting to fulfil all righteousness. That's when John the Baptist said, I don't want you to, you know, Jesus asked John, will you baptise me?

John was like, I shouldn't be baptising you. Jesus said, let it be so now. In the Sermon of the Mount, Jesus said, if anybody would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus tells us to pray, forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors.

Mark 5, he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John, the brother of James, and he did circle the word aloud. Mark 10, when Jesus saw it, he was indignant, said to them, let the children come to me, don't hinder them for to such salemans that he know God.

We read that verse tonight. We need to circle, let the. Mark 14.6, when a woman was anointing Jesus' feet with expensive perfume, people rebuked her and Jesus said, leave her alone.

In fact, I should include the alone in that. And then last one, we have our own, the verse that we're repeating here. Jesus said, truly I say to you, no one who has left, how so, brother or sister or mother or father or children or lands from Isaac and for the gospel, etc, etc, etc.

[ 9 : 25 ] Why did I circle all those circles? Because it's all the same word. In the Greek, in all these verses, it's the word, aphiemi, same word all the way through.

And what that's telling us is that this is a broad word and it speaks of the ideas of letting go of allowing, of releasing and of forgiving.

It's all referring to that kind of thing. Okay, I think that's very, very important for us because when we see that word left there in these verses 28, it also appears there.

When we see that word left, it's easy for us to think that that kind of means like abandoning. It's as though, you know, like, you know, just forget it, forget all that stuff, follow Jesus, that's what you should be doing.

And sometimes Christians give that impression. And sometimes you can be given the impression that if you're a serious Christian, if you're a proper Christian, then, you know, if you're really on fire for Jesus, then you'll be willing to abandon everything.

[ 10 : 37 ] And I've heard of people say, you know, I've heard of Christians who say, you know, if I've got to leave my wife, my kids, my parents, if I could leave it for God, I'll do it.

And it can sound very impressive. It's actually wrong. How do we know it's wrong?

How do we know it's wrong to have that kind of abandonment mindset? Well, one of the things, and this is a really good opportunity to talk about something that's immensely important in the church and for all of us as we seek to understand the Bible.

One of the very important and helpful things that came from the Reformation 500 years ago was a rule that has become since then really the golden rule for interpreting the Bible.

This is the rule that has to shape the way we understand the Bible. And the rule is very simple. Scripture interprets scripture.

[ 11 : 38 ] And it summarized very, very well in the Westminster Confession of Faith. Now, don't be scared when I say Westminster Confession of Faith. It's actually a wonderfully simple document. It's not very long, and it's just a summary of what we believe.

In chapter one, which is all about the Bible, there's this paragraph that says, the infallible rule of interpretation of scripture is the scripture itself. Now, what does that mean? Well, it explains it in the next reboot. It says, when there's a question about the true and false sense of any scripture, which is not manifold but one, it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.

Now, what that's basically saying is that if you find one part of the Bible that you're not sure how to understand, you go to another part of the Bible that will help you understand and clarify it.

So that means that you don't just grab a text in isolation. You have to look at it in light of the rest of scripture. And so here, when we could say that it's saying the idea, lead everything, abandon everything, the reason we know that it's not meaning in that kind of sense the idea of just deserting family, parents, children, siblings, the reason we know that's wrong, that's the wrong interpretation, is because the rest of scripture tells us that it's wrong.

In fact, the very first section of the chapter we read tells us that it's wrong because that section highlights the importance of the family unit. It was saying for men not to just discard their wives and divorce them willy-nilly.

[ 13 : 05 ] Elsewhere in Mach 7, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees because they tried to absolve themselves of their responsibility towards their parents by making out that they were devoting things to God instead and in doing so they disobeyed the fifth commandment.

And scripture as a whole emphasizes that being faithful to your family is incredibly important to God. So in this passage, Jesus is not saying proper top notch Christians will leave behind their families because they're so committed to Jesus.

And in fact, if you think about it, that kind of mindset, I don't think that that mindset displays humility at all. I actually think that that mindset is motivated by a kind of weird pride and a sort of control mindset that wants to put people into this weird category of superstitions that doesn't actually exist.

This verse is not saying that real disciples must leave their families and properties so that they can be all in for Jesus. So what is it saying?

It's not saying that you must abandon these things. What it is saying is that sometimes you might have to let them go.

[ 14 : 24 ] And I think that's where this word atyemi is so helpful and so important. In all the examples we looked at, it was all speaking or letting something go.

The children who the disciples held back from reaching Jesus, Jesus says to them, let them go. Let them come to me. The woman who they disapproved of when she was anointed Jesus, Jesus said, let her go.

What she's doing is beautiful. The sins that other people have committed against us and that leave us hurt and frustrated, Jesus says, let them go.

And I think that that's a helpful emphasis for us in understanding Mark 10 and in understanding the cost of being a disciple. Sometimes there will be things that we have to let go of.

We're not abandoning, we're not deserting, but we might have to let them go. And in verse 28 Jesus lists them.

[ 15 : 35 ] He talks about a house, first of all. A house is the place where you belong, your home, the place where you're safe, where you can rest, where you're welcomed and protected.

Jesus then mentions brothers or sisters. That's family. That's the people whose friendship and companionship you enjoy, the people who you know are going to be there for you.

Fathers and mothers, they provide wise leadership. They're the ones that you look up to. They're the ones who provide stability and consistency through all the changes that life might bring.

Children aren't just a source of joy. They're a huge source of joy. But in New Testament times, you are also dependent on your children as you got older. As you were going to get on, you needed your children to be there, to look after you then.

And your lands, that's literally the word field. That was where you worked. And it was also your supermarket. That was where you got your food and your sustenance.

[ 16 : 44 ] In other words, Jesus is talking about the stuff where we find our security. And that's why it can be an unsettling version.

Our home. The place that we know and love, the place that is so dear to us, we can all think of a place that just means everything to us. It might be a house, it might be a district, it might be this island.

Our home. A place that we love. And our houses, that unique place that's ours, cozy, safe, secure. Our family, the people we have a unique relationship with, the people who we love the most, the people who we are most dear to you.

And our jobs, the places where we find purpose, where we contribute to society, where we achieve things, where we get our income and our resources. All of that's really good stuff.

Jesus is not talking about sinful things in this verse. He's talking about things that are often incredibly precious, things that are a huge part of our lives. In other words, he's talking about the stuff that we hold onto most tightly.

[ 17 : 51 ] And Jesus is saying that as disciples we might have to let some of them go. And that can happen in lots of ways.

Maybe you've always had a dream house. Maybe you've built it, maybe you live in it, but maybe it's still just a dream. But you've always had a dream house. Perfect spot, you've got the layout, sustenance in your mind, perfect garden, perfect view, dream come through.

It's nothing overly elaborate, but you just think that would be my dream house. What if Jesus opens a door to a new job that is an incredible opportunity to serve him, but it's going to mean leaving the house behind?

Maybe there's a guy or a girl that you've fallen for, but they're not interested in Jesus and they're forcing you into this kind of double life whereby Jesus is at the center of your heart, but he's got to be kept at the periphery of your relationship.

And then long before you're married, they want a level of intimacy that's way too much, way too soon, and they're not willing to budge.

[ 18 : 58 ] You need to be ready to let them go. Maybe you've been the apple of your mum and dad's eye your whole life. Maybe they've poured a huge amount of energy into helping you get good grades so that you can get the job and the salary that they've always dreamed that you would get.

Maybe they actually want you to achieve the stuff that they felt they never managed to do in their lives, but then Jesus calls you to something completely different and they don't accept it. They don't like it.

They don't understand and they're approval of you that you've treasured all your life. You have to let it go. Maybe you worked hard to get your dream job.

It's a cracking salary, but success in that job is going to mean compromise in terms of your faith. It means treating people in a way that breaks God's moral code.

It involves deceit, manipulation, dodgy dealings. In that situation, if there's no possibility of change, then we have got to be ready to let it go.

- [ 19 : 55 ] Now, I'm not saying, and please don't misunderstand me tonight, I am not saying that a life of discipleship is always going to mean this kind of thing in all these parts of your life.
- I am not saying that if you're a Christian, you're not going to get to marry the girl or the guy that you love, or that you're not going to live in a nice house in a place where you're happier, that your parents are going to hate you. I'm not saying any of that.
- These are amazing blessings that so often God will want us to enjoy, but what we need to recognize is that there will almost certainly, in fact, there is definitely going to be a place in our lives where we need to be ready to let go.
- Discipleship does come with a cost. And one of the reasons why discipleship comes with a cost is because everything in life has a cost.
- Getting fit has a cost. Getting a new car has a cost. Going on holiday has a cost. And don't just mean financially. Sometimes it's quite stressful getting ready to go on holiday and deciding what to do.
- [ 20 : 59 ] Being in a relationship has its costs. Marriage has its costs. Pursuing an education has its costs. Everything in life has a cost and especially, especially money.
- And that's a crucial lesson that everybody in Britain has got to learn. Money comes at a huge cost.
- So many people want a higher earning job and we all of us think, you know, how wee bit won't money will be good? Do you think, oh man, it would be so good if we just had a little bit more and we didn't have stress over this, that or the next thing.
- But one thing that you've got to recognise, one thing you've got to recognise is that as salaries go up, so does the grief.
- And the higher you go, the more pressure, the more difficulty, the more it dominates your life.
- [ 21 : 58 ] Try asking anybody who runs their own business. All the burden falls on you. And it's wonderful to do that, but just recognise that it does come at a cost.
- Same with having lots of possessions that always brings with it inescapable burdens. Jesus here is not teaching us that he will only like us if we abandon everything.
- He's not saying that. That kind of mindset won't impress him at all. I mean, that's never how the Gospel works. We never impress him by the stuff we do. He already loves you eternally.
- But he is teaching us that there are times in life when we might have to be ready to let things go. And sometimes those might be the area where our security really lies.
- Now that's a really important lesson, but it's only half of what Jesus says. And in fact, the main point that Jesus wants to make is not that there's going to be a cost in following him.
- [ 23 : 04 ] It's that where there is a cost, there is also an amazing gain. And what I want us to recognise in the last 10 minutes is that when Jesus says that he's not just being nice.
- He's not just saying, oh, well, you know, if there's a cost, don't worry, it'll be fine. Kind of pat on the back kind of stuff. He's not just being nice. He's not some kind of vague, oh, don't worry, it'll all be okay in the end kind of thing.
- What I want us to see is that Jesus's words in verse 30 are grounded on rock solid theological truth. It's all absolutely grounded on theological truth.
- And not only that, what Jesus is talking about here applies now in this time. So it's not just, you know, cost now, reward then.
- He's talking about right now. We always talk about the fact that God's saving plan has an already not yet balance. So there's what we have not yet received, the new creation, all wonderful promises, but there's what we enjoy already right now.

[ 24 : 09 ] This stuff here is the already. It's what we receive now as Christians.

At the heart of it all lies what we could maybe call the theology of home and family. Now, that's not really an official theological title, but I think it's helpful.

Following Jesus, whether you're about to become a Christian or whether you're a new Christian or whether you've been following Jesus for years, following him brings you into an amazing family.

And with that family comes lots of wonderful theology. And so the theology of home and family tells you that we have been adopted as God's children.

That's in many ways is one of the great climaxes of what it means to become a Christian. You become the child of God. You're His. To Him you are precious, beautiful, beloved.

[ 25 : 11 ] You're a treasured child. And with that adoption comes so many privileges. I'm going to read the shortest chapter in the Westminster Confession of Faith, but it's I think the most magnificent.

It's the chapter on adoption. It's only one paragraph long, but it summarizes everything that it means to be an adopted child of God. Those who are justified, God vouchsafeth in and for His only Son Jesus to make partakers of the grace of adoption by which they're taken into the number, they are one of His.

You enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, all of freedom and privilege that that brings.

You have His name put upon you. You receive the spirit of adoption. That's the Holy Spirit coming right into your heart.

Having you to recognize God as your Father. You have access to the throne of grace with boldness. In other words, you can go straight up to God and talk to Him and He'll always hear you.

[ 26 : 22 ] You're unable to cry, Abba, Father. That word Abba's just the Aramaic for Daddy. You're pitied, protected, provided for, chastened by Him as a Father.

That's a good thing. So you're looked after to be a Father, to be a child, you're loved and guided by a Father, yet you're never cast off, sealed for the day of redemption, inherited the promises heirs of everlasting life.

What an awesome paragraph. What an awesome paragraph. And if you think about a child, sometimes children, remember this morning we had an enormous teddy on the pulpit up there.

You weren't going to go any longer. There was an enormous teddy up there. And if they didn't have a child and they're holding that teddy and go and feed them up and they're still holding the teddy. And you try to kind of put your arms around them. There's this massive teddy in the way, they're holding a teddy or a whatever, or a bike or something, and they're holding onto it.

You know, you've got so many of them in the way. If they let go of it, you can hold them so much closer.

[ 27 : 42 ] Sometimes God asks us to let go of stuff, not because he wants to give us a ride, but because it means he can hold you so, so close and never let you go.

So often we long for the approval of parents. Some people have it. That's wonderful. Other people wish they had it, and that's incredibly hard. In Jesus, you have God's fatherly approval.

In other words, you have his smile. You have God's smile. You wake up tomorrow morning and God is smiling at you and he is smiling about you.

That is what happens when we come to faith. That theology of home and family tells us that we're all siblings together, brothers and sisters.

All around you in here tonight are brothers and sisters. We've got them all over the island. We've got them all over the country. We've got them all over the world. It's a great reminder that God does not do clicks.

[ 28 : 48 ] He doesn't do elite groups. God doesn't have an in-crowd. You know, when there was two of us at SU in 6th year, in the Nikki 22 years ago, we weren't the coolest two guys in school at all.

We weren't. But God doesn't have an in-crowd. He doesn't have the kind of cool whatever that everybody kind of panders around but no one actually likes.

There's none of that in the Gospel. We're all just together as brothers and sisters. And that's an incredible thing that you can travel as a Christian to any other country in the world. You can meet somebody you've never met.

You can sit down for dinner and you can discover that you've got so much in common. And that's why you never need to be afraid of not having friends in the life of discipleship.

And you never need to be scared of new adventures because those new adventures are going to bring wonderful new brothers and sisters into your experience who you can get to know and love along the way.

[ 29 : 53 ] So we're brought together. We've got God's approval as father with his children. We've got wonderful brothers and sisters. But the theology of home and family also tells us that as Christians, we've got wonderful work to do.

We've been brought together to work. We've got a family business. We've got the greatest job of all. We've got an amazing mission to take part in.

We can bring the life-changing news of the Gospel to the people that we meet this week. And that can be through the way we live our lives and we pray and hope it will be through the conversations that we can have.

Jesus in this verse talks about giving up an agricultural field in order to follow him. And in his place, he's giving you a mission field that is hundreds and hundreds of times bigger.

And you're all going to be in it this week. You're all in that mission field together this week. And what this means is that the life of discipleship is a life where you belong.

[ 31 : 01 ] And that's sometimes one of the hardest things to believe in the Bible. It's so easy to feel like we're kind of an outsider that we don't quite fit in and we don't quite belong. You think of all the glory and splendor of God.

You think of him in his inapproachable holiness and majesty. You think how massive and powerful and glorious and incredible God is that he is the source of everything, that he is the destination of everything, that he reigns over all.

The entire universe is in his hands and you belong in his arms. You think of all the wonderful people you've met in church.

You think of all the people you know here, people you've met over the years, people who you really admire and people who have displayed the wonderful fruit of the Spirit in a way that you just look up to and think, you know, these are, these have been wonderful people in my life.

You belong in that friendship too. You belong in that group. You're not excluded. And you think of all the incredible things that Jesus has done and is doing across the ages of history.



[ 32 : 03 ] You think of the way that he's building church, his church. You think of the way he's reaching people. You think of the way he's using men and women, boys and girls to share the good news of Jesus. He has achieved the most incredible results in the last 2000 years and he's used a magnificent team of people to do it and you're on that team.

You are part of that team and we're all able to serve him together and that makes, it's just so good. It's just so good.

Now with that all, with all of that persecution might come. That can happen in loads of different ways. It can happen with, can people talking about you at work tomorrow or it can happen in much more aggressive ways as you see in other parts of the world.

That can happen. But one thing I just want to say about that is that if persecutions come, it means that you are living for something that's worth fighting for.

Now don't you want that? Of course you do.

[ 33 : 17 ] We want to live for something that is worth fighting for. Not in an aggressive way, but in a way to say this matters more than anything.

And all of that is leading towards the wonderful future that God has for us in the age to come, eternal life. So I want you to think about all of that in the week ahead.

So many of our hurdles as disciples, whether it's people who are not yet come to faith or people who are living as Christians, so many of our hurdles come from an inaccurate view of the cost. It's so easy to think that, it's so easy just to focus on the things in our lives that we want to hold on to really tightly.

In these verses, Jesus is reminding you and me that the most that we can hold on to is far, far less than what he wants to give you.

The most that we can hold on to is far less than what he wants to give you. And it all makes sense because only an open hand can let go, but only an open hand can be filled.

[ 34 : 35 ] So is a life of discipleship going to be easy? Probably not. Will it involve persecutions? Likely in different ways.

Is it going to involve letting go of things? It may very well. I think it's the most amazing life that anyone can have.

Will it be worth it? That's what you've got to decide. Amen. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we bow before you as King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and the keeper of the greatest promises that humanity have ever heard.

And we pray that we would have that right balance that these verses speak of tonight. We thank you for all the precious, wonderful things that you've given us in our lives, and we rejoice in them and in your generosity to us in them.

[ 35 : 38 ] But we pray, Father, that we would also, that if there are things that we do need to let go of in a way that honors you, that we'd have the courage to do so, but also that we would recognize your wonderful promise that an open hand that lets go is an open hand that's going to get filled.