



The Story of Redemption

God Reaching Out to Restore **COMMUNITY**
through the cross of Jesus Christ



How Does God Want Me To Live?
Part 5: The Radical Life of a Disciple

Copyright James Nored 2003

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the author.

Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations in this publication are from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. All rights reserved. "NIV" is a registered trademark of International Bible Society. UK trademark number 1448790.

The Story of Redemption

How Does God Want Me to Live?

Part 5: The Radical Life of a Disciple

While some people wander aimlessly through life, most people follow after someone or something, whether they know it or not. We can consume all of the latest celebrity news and gossip, following our favorite stars and dreaming of living their lives. We can idolize the stars of the financial world, hanging on their every word and envisioning ourselves with fists full of money. We can follow after people like Ghandi, Confucius, or Buddha. We can set our sights on things like football games, the environment, an early retirement, or a life of leisure. Those options are available to us all, and it is hard not to follow after something. But if we want to please God, we will live our lives as followers of Jesus. We will become *disciples* of Christ.



1. THE CALLING OF THE DISCIPLES.

After Jesus was tempted in the desert, he went and lived for a time in the town of Capernaum. He began his ministry by preaching the same message as John the Baptist: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Mt. 4:17). Then he began to gather his disciples.

Disciple—a follower, a devotee, a student, an apprentice

¹⁸ As 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 make you fishers of men.” ²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him.

²¹ Going 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, ²² and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him (Mt. 4:18-22).

When Jesus comes calling, Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John do not hesitate. “Immediately” and “at once” they leave their nets, their boats, and their livelihood to follow Jesus. Did they know Jesus before this? Other accounts seem to indicate that they did. But by depicting the story in this way, Matthew wants us to understand that becoming a disciple of Christ requires us to make dramatic and radical changes in our lives. Becoming a disciple cannot be accomplished by sitting in our easy chair, doing the same old things in the same old way.

If we want to become disciples, we must be prepared to leave everything behind, including our jobs, our hobbies, our entertainment, and even our family. This kind of change requires trust that God’s way is better than our way.

However, we do not do this alone. By calling the disciples, Jesus created a type of new community--a loving, serving community centered around him.

Why is it important to be a part of a Christian community?

2. THE BLESSINGS OF DISCIPLESHIP & CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.

After calling his disciples, Jesus went around the countryside teaching in the synagogue, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing diseases and casting out demons. These powerful workings of the Holy Spirit were signs that the kingdom of God was breaking into history through the peace and joy that they brought. As Jesus performed these miracles, his popularity grew. Many people flocked to him, coming to see and hear him from miles around.

On one of these occasions when the crowds were gathered together, Jesus gave what has come to be known as the “Sermon on the Mount.” This “sermon” was directed to his disciples, though the crowds overheard him. In this sermon Jesus teaches us what it means to be a disciple and all of the blessings that come from being a part of a Christ-centered community of believers. This section of the sermon, found in Mt. 5:1f, is called “The Beatitudes.”

The Beatitudes

1 Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them, saying:

- **The Blessing of the Kingdom** - *3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Those who are poor in spirit are humble and depend upon God. They know that they are “poor” and cannot save themselves. They are blessed because by placing themselves under God’s kingdom (his rule), they receive peace and joy in their lives.

- **The Blessing of Comfort** - *4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

Those who mourn are those who are saddened by all the evil and pain that is in the world. They will be comforted because one day, all evil and pain will be eliminated when the creation is restored.

- **The Blessing of the Earth** - *5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

Those who are meek are the weak and the powerless whose only hope is in God. They will be given all of the blessings of the earth because God upholds the cause of the helpless.

- **The Blessing of Righteousness** - *6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are those who have a deep

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”

and abiding desire to see good triumph--and God will ful--"fill" this.

- **The Blessing of Mercy** - *7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.* Those who are merciful find forgiveness in their hearts for those who have wronged them, usually because they are aware of their own faults. Because they are merciful to others, God will show them mercy.

- **The Blessing of Seeing God** - *8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*

Those who are pure in heart are totally committed to God, and nothing in the world conflicts with their allegiance to him. Their undivided loyalty will be rewarded when they finally see the God they love in heaven.

- **The Blessing of Being a Child of God** - *9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.*

Peace between God, humanity, and the earth is a fundamental characteristic of the kingdom of God. Those who work towards the elimination of violence, hatred, and misunderstanding and the promotion of peace are given the ultimate compliment, being called "sons of God."

- **The Blessing of the Kingdom** - *10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

True disciples of Christ will be persecuted at some time for their beliefs or actions, whether at work, school, or from their families. They can take comfort that they will be rewarded for their loyalty.

*Which of these blessings do you find most attractive?
How are they different from the world's blessings?*



"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God."

3. THE LIFE OF A DISCIPLE.

In his teaching, Jesus corrected many mistaken beliefs that people had concerning the Old Testament law. In each case, Jesus tells them they "have heard" a particular belief from a teacher, and then he gives them the proper understanding. Through this teaching, we learn the lifestyle that should be exhibited by a disciple in the Christian community. Jesus taught the following (Mt. 5-7).

- Not only should a disciple not murder—he **must control his anger** (5:21-24).
- Not only should a disciple not commit adultery—he also **must not lust** (5:27-30) after someone who is not his wife.

A Disciple Seeks to:

- Love
- Give
- Pray and Fast
- Forgive
- Study the Bible
- Treasure spiritual things
- Trust God
- Share his/her faith
- Worship
- Keep learning and growing

A Disciple Does Not:

- Murder
- Remain angry
- Have sex before marriage
- Commit adultery
- Lust
- Divorce
- Take Vengeance
- Break his/her word
- Lie
- Cheat
- Steal
- Worry

- A disciple **cannot divorce his wife unless she is sexually unfaithful** (5:31-32).
- A disciple must be a person who keeps his word. He **should not try to break his agreements** (5:33-37) due to some technical loophole.
- A disciple **does not take vengeance into his own hands** (5:38-42). When someone mistreats him, he finds a way to serve that person.
- A disciple **loves his enemies** (5:43-48). This kind of love is not an emotion; it is a commitment to do what is best for one's enemies.

How does this picture of a Christian community differ from the world in which we live?

Jesus also spoke against doing religious things to impress other people, teaching instead that good deeds must be motivated out of love for God and others:

- A disciple **gives to those who are in need** (6:1-4). But he does this in secret, without bragging to others about his giving. This is the kind of giving that God will reward.
- A disciple **prays to God sincerely (6:5-15)**. His prayers are just between him and God, and he does not try to impress God or others with his words.
- A disciple **fasts at certain times (6:16-18)**. But when he fasts, he does not walk around with a long face, telling people of his sacrifice. He gets up, gets dressed, and goes about his day as if everything were normal.



A disciple gives from the heart--not to impress others.

Other teachings of Jesus include the following:

- A disciple's heart is not focused upon material things. His heart is focused upon heaven, and he **“treasures” spiritual things** (6:19-24).
- A disciple **does not spend all his time worrying about food, clothing, and shelter** (6:25-34). He trusts that God will provide these things for him.
- A disciple is **careful not to be a hypocrite** (7:1-6). He avoids condemning people, especially when he is guilty of the very same sin.
- A disciple **trusts that God will give him good things** (7:7-12) when he asks for them.
- A disciple **will show his wisdom by actually following Jesus' teachings** (7:24-27). If he is foolish, he will ignore Jesus' teachings.



A disciple seeks to put Jesus' teachings into practice.

While we must seek to follow these teachings, we must be careful to not misunderstand *why* we follow them. While there are things that disciples need to avoid and things that they need to practice, the Christian life cannot be reduced to a simple list of do's and don'ts. Much more is demanded of disciples than could ever be listed, and Jesus did not cover every situation. But more importantly, the joy of Christian living cannot be conveyed in a list; it can only be experienced by living the life of a disciple.

The demands of discipleship may seem overwhelming at this point in your life. In fact, Jesus says at one point in his sermon, *“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect”* (Mt. 5:48). What does he mean by this? Who besides God could possibly be perfect?

While God plainly tells us that everyone has sinned except Jesus, he still calls us to set our sights on perfection. It is true that we will never fully achieve this high standard in this lifetime, but we can become better people than we possibly could imagine. How is this possible? Through the power of the Holy Spirit, who dwells within baptized believers.

Long ago, God spoke through one of his prophets, a man named Ezekiel, telling his people that a new age was coming. This new age would be marked by the presence of the Spirit of God, who would help them obey God.

26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my law (Ezek. 36:26-27).

God's Spirit is now available to us, helping us to actually keep his commands!

What kind of person would you like to become? Do you think it is possible?

In the next part of our story we will begin to follow Jesus'

QUESTIONS:

Fill in the Blank.

1. The Holy Spirit helps us to actually _____ God's commands.
2. The central message that both John the Baptist and Jesus preached was "Repent, for the _____ of _____ is near."

True/False.

3. _____ A disciple must place Jesus above even his or her family.
4. _____ When Jesus called Peter and Andrew to be his disciples, they were hesitant at first, but soon became loyal followers.

Matching. Please match the following blessings correctly. One answer will be used more than once.

5. _____ Blessed are the pure in heart.
6. _____ Blessed are the peacemakers.
7. _____ Blessed are the poor in spirit.
8. _____ Blessed are those who mourn.
9. _____ Blessed are the meek.
10. _____ Blessed are the merciful.
11. _____ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness.
12. _____ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness
 - a. *For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
 - b. *For they will be comforted.*
 - c. *For they will be shown mercy.*
 - d. *For they will inherit the earth.*
 - e. *For they will be called sons of God.*
 - f. *For they will be filled.*
 - g. *For they will see God.*

13-15. List three things in your life you need to start doing.

- a.
- b.
- c.

16-18. List three things in your life that you need to stop doing.

- a.
- b.
- c.

For questions and/or to receive part 6 in the *Story of Redemption*, contact:



LIBERTY CHURCH
OF **CHRIST**

1401 Glenn Hendren Dr.
Liberty, MO
64068

816-781-5134
libertycoc@sbcglobal.net
www.libertychurchofchrist.org