

***Gospels: Lesson Seven,
Training of the Disciples, Part 2
Matthew 18-20, Luke 12, 14, 16, 18***

Subject: In the weeks prior to Jesus' crucifixion, He challenged His disciples' commitment by explaining the cost of discipleship.
Main Idea: Jesus insists that His disciples offer Him everything they have and everything they are.

Principles:

1. "Easy Believism" is not saving faith as the Bible describes it.
2. Jesus asks a great deal from us because He plans to do a great work in us.

Introduction

Have you ever witnessed a child receiving a handful of candy from a friend or relative and then hesitating to return even the smallest piece when asked to share? When you and I came to Jesus and received His gift of eternal life, He asked for our lives in return. He did not ask for some part of it, but for *all of it*. Let me ask you a question: What have you given Him? Everything? Some of it? One small piece?

During Jesus' second year of ministry, He moved in and out of Galilee, training His disciples wherever He went. In Matthew 17, we read of Jesus' transfiguration in the presence of Peter, James, and John, which may have occurred at Mount Hermon in the north. In the middle of chapter 17 (verses 23-24), Jesus and His disciples are pictured back in Capernaum in Galilee. Chapter 19 begins, "When Jesus finished saying these things, He left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan." With this departure, Jesus' ministry in Galilee finally ended. Therefore, Matthew 18, where we begin this lesson, is among the last of His teachings in Galilee. Furthermore, it seems that the teachings of Matthew 18-20 surround the event of Lazarus' resurrection recorded in John 11 and thus, *these teachings must have been given to Jesus' disciples only weeks before His crucifixion.*

Through missions, miracles, and parables, Jesus had challenged His disciples' thinking about His identity and His Kingdom. Now, His remaining time with them was short. So in Matthew 18-20, we find Jesus challenging His disciples' *commitment* by explaining the cost of following Him. Lazarus' resurrection will be covered in our next lesson, but in this lesson, we focus on the seriousness of our decision to follow Christ. He won't be content with just a few pieces of our lives, so He told us to count the cost before deciding to follow Him (Luke 18:26-35). The cost of discipleship is nothing less than everything. He wants everything we are and everything we have.

I. The Cost of Discipleship: Humility, Unlimited Forgiveness, and Faithfulness – Matthew 18:1-19:15, Luke 18:1-8

A. Humility – Matthew 18:1-14, 19:13-15

- i. The Question about Kingdom Greatness – 18:1-4, 19:13-15: Perhaps the special privilege given to Peter, James, and John in witnessing the transfiguration weighed on the disciples' minds. According to 18:1, they came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" Jesus answered this question by calling a nearby child to Him and telling the disciples that unless they changed and became like a little child, they would never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Matthew 19:13-15 records another occasion on which Jesus invited children to come to Him, "for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these." Entrance into the Kingdom and greatness in the Kingdom require childlike humility. Children are not naturally humble, so in what sense did Jesus mean this? It seems He was referring to a child's state of utter dependence. Children are lowly in position in the sense that they must ultimately rely on adults for their needs. Likewise, one cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven without recognizing their ultimate dependence on God's grace. The greatest is the one who is most dependent on Christ.
- ii. Treatment of "These Little Ones" – 18:5-19
 1. Not Causing Them to Stumble – 8:5-9
 - a. "*These Little Ones*": Jesus made the statement that whoever receives a little child also receives Him but whoever causes one of these little ones to stumble is in danger of severe punishment. This leads to the question, "Who are these 'little ones' we must receive and not cause to stumble?" Jesus has just told us to humble ourselves and become like these children. This is necessary, He says, to enter His Kingdom and the most humble is the greatest in the Kingdom. Surely then He meant for us to understand the "little ones" to be His disciples. We are to recognize one another's vulnerability and not cause one another to stumble.
 - b. *Skandalon*: These verses repeatedly use various forms of the Greek word *skandalon* ("stumbling block"). Although some translations have rendered this "cause to sin," the meaning of the words is less specific than sin. "Anything that gets in the way of effective discipleship is a *skandalon*, an unkind word or a cold shoulder no less than a 'cause of sin'."¹ Recognizing one another's vulnerability to stumbling is a great obligation; in fact, it is a requirement of discipleship.

- c. *Thrown into Hell*: Eternal condemnation is the fate of those who cause Jesus' disciples to stumble. This doesn't refer to any single action but for a lifestyle characterized by causing others to sin. A person cannot live that way and be a true disciple. The admonition to cut off one's hand or foot isn't meant to be followed literally. The point is that we take our obligation to prevent one another from stumbling seriously, making any necessary sacrifice.
2. *Value of the Little Ones* – 18:1-14: We are not to despise one another for each of us is valuable to God. The angels of “these little ones” always see the face of God in heaven. This verse offers the strongest Biblical support for the concept of “guardian angels” (each believer has an angel that attends and represents him or her). Elsewhere, the Bible teaches that angels are “ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation (Hebrews 1:14). We can't really know whether each person has an assigned angelic representative or all the ways in which angels minister to us, but that they do minister to us is certain.
3. *Dealing with Sin* – 18:15-20: Since Jesus' disciples are vulnerable, He addresses the subject of handling one who has fallen into sin. The emphasis is on winning the person over (verse 15). We shouldn't complain to one another over every small offense. 1 Peter 4:8 tell us to love each other deeply because love covers a multitude of sins. However, when the offense is serious (or ongoing), we shouldn't ignore this command.
- a. *First Step*: The first step involves private, loving confrontation. Note that it is the offended person who is to go. Normally, we shouldn't confront someone on behalf of another, although at times this may be necessary.
 - b. *Second Step*: If the matter is not resolved, then a second step is required. The offended party is to return to the offender, taking along one or two witnesses.
 - c. *Last Step*: If the person in sin still refuses to listen, the final step is church discipline.
 - i. *The Church's Authority to Discipline*: Jesus confirmed the church's right to take disciplinary action, saying, “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” The church has God's authority, with the assumption that it is acting with sensitivity, in accordance with Scriptural principles, and with the goal of reconciliation. Verses 19-20 refer to two or

three gathering in Jesus' name, agreeing, and asking for "anything" with the promise that it will be given to them. This promise specifically relates to church discipline, not to "anything" at all that we might request. "The word for any 'thing' (*pragma*) is a term frequently limited to judicial matters."ⁱⁱ

- ii. *Breaking Fellowship*: If the person in sin remains unrepentant, then excommunication is in order.
- d. *The Goal*: Remember that this passage comes in the context of a call to humility and serious consideration of the vulnerability of fellow believers. The goal in all of these steps is reconciliation between believers and restoration of the offender to fellowship. Dealing effectively with a believer in sin requires humility.

B. Unlimited Forgiveness – Matthew 18:21-35

- i. Peter's Question – 18:21-22: The subject of offense among believers and Jesus' description of the steps to be taken caused Peter to ask the question of how many times a brother or sister who sins against us should be forgiven. Thinking he was being generous, Peter suggested perhaps up to seven times. The very fact that Peter asked the question shows that he missed the point. Jesus had just explained that one cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven without first recognizing his utter dependence on the Lord. We only enter by God's grace. Jesus told Peter he must not forgive seven times but *seventy-seven* times (some translations, *seventy times seven* [or 490 times]). In other words, endlessly. Then Jesus told a parable to help His disciples put the matter into perspective.
- ii. Parable of the Unmerciful Servant – 18:21-35
 - 1. A king (representing God) graciously forgave one of his servants a very great debt (10,000 bags of gold). However, this servant refused to forgive a fellow servant who owed him a much smaller amount (100 silver coins). When the king learned of it, he called the forgiven servant in, reprimanded him for failing to show mercy as he had been shown mercy, and handed him over to be tortured until he could pay back all he owed. The point is obvious: our offense against God is immense; since He is willing to forgive us, we should be more than willing to forgive those who sin against us. We can't put a limit on the amount of mercy we should extend to those who sin against us. Additionally, this forgiveness is to be "from your heart" (18:35), sincere and complete.

2. Jesus ended, “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart” (18:35). These are sobering words and ones we make a serious mistake by taking lightly. The concept is echoed in the prayer Jesus taught His disciples to pray: “Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Matthew 6:12). The words are uncomfortable but clear: those who cannot forgive others have never truly been forgiven (saved) themselves. In other words, no true disciple would act this way. Refusing to forgive another’s sins shows refusal to see our own debt to God and refusal to receive His forgiveness. If we lack compassion and mercy for other sinners, we have never understood and appropriated the grace of God in our own lives. Many professing believers harbor resentment in their hearts, an unforgiving spirit. If this describes you, let Jesus’ words convict you of your pride and failure to acknowledge the full gravity of your own sin against Him. Following Christ demands that we give Him everything, and it begins by humbly acknowledging that we owe Him everything.

C. Faithfulness

i. In Marriage – Matthew 19:1-12

1. *The Pharisee’s First Question:* As previously discussed, the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 19 and 20 occurred while He was in Perea. The Pharisees were eager to arrest Jesus and sent their representatives with questions aimed at entrapping Him. One of these concerned divorce. The Pharisee asked Jesus whether it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason. Deuteronomy 24:1 required a man to give his wife a certificate of divorce if he “found something indecent in his wife” and divorced her. The debate between Jewish religious leaders over this question was addressed in Lesson 2. To summarize, two schools of thought developed on what was meant by “something indecent.” One was that it meant any offensive, no matter how slight. The other was that it referred only to sexual unfaithfulness.
2. *Jesus’ First Answer:* Jesus answered the Pharisee by quoting Genesis 1:27 and 2:24: God made us male and female with the intention that one male and one female would come together in a permanent bond of marriage. God saw the bond as so permanent that in His eyes, it was as though they had become “one flesh.” Jesus affirmed, “What God has joined together, let no one separate” (Matthew 19:6). This answer seemed a prohibition of divorce altogether, something neither school of thought accepted.

3. *The Pharisee's Second Question:* Therefore, the Pharisee asked Jesus why the law in Deuteronomy told a man to give his wife a certificate of divorce if divorce was not permissible.
4. *Jesus' Second Answer*
 - a. *Hard-heartedness Leading to Divorce Certificates:* First, Jesus clarified that Moses only permitted divorce; he did not require it. Second, Moses allowed it only because of their hard-heartedness. "It was possible for a husband to reject his wife and put her out of his house. But if she tried to contract marriage with another man (and there was little future in a patriarchal society for a woman not attached to some man), then a mischievous husband could claim that she was still his wife. Legally there was nothing she could do about it."ⁱⁱⁱ Apparently, this was happening, and so Moses required a man who divorced to give his wife a certificate to prove he no longer had a claim on her. In no sense was Moses condoning divorce. He was simply trying to keep one sin from leading to another.
 - b. Jesus then said that apart from divorce that resulted from sexual infidelity, remarriage following divorce was adultery. In making the statement, Jesus was not commanding divorce when sexual unfaithfulness occurred, only permitting it. The parallel passages in Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18 do not include the phrase, "except for marital unfaithfulness," but it is possible that this exception was already taken for granted. Reconciliation and unity is always God's ideal, as He already stated.
 - c. In Ephesians 5, Paul explains that Christian marriage is to be a picture of the love of Christ for the church and the submission of the church to Christ (verses 21-33). Christians are not to marry unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14), but in the case where one marriage partner becomes a believer after marriage, the believer is to remain married to the nonbeliever, so long as the nonbelieving partner is willing (1 Corinthians 7:12-13). A difficult marriage is only one of many ways in which a disciple of Christ may suffer. Faithfulness in marriage is part of the cost of discipleship.
5. *The Disciples' Alarm:* Divorce was taken lightly in first-century Judaism and thus, Jesus' disciples were alarmed by His answer and suggested that if divorce was sin, it was better not to marry at all. Jesus answered by saying that a few can accept singleness, including those who are born without great sexual desire and the

few have experienced forced castration. Jesus further explained that there are a few in every generation who are willing to remain single in order to devote their lives to the advancement of the Kingdom, and those who are willing to do so should. However, the majority will marry and in that way, carry out God's purposes in the world.

- ii. In Prayer – Luke 18:1-8: A disciple's faithfulness should not only be proven in his or her marriage, but according to Jesus' parable in Luke 18, it should also be exhibited in prayer. The parable is about an unjust and unkind judge who nevertheless relents to the request of a widow simply because she won't stop bothering him with it. In verses 6-8, Jesus made the statement that if an unjust judge gives what is asked of him because the one making the request is persistent, how much more will our good God reward perseverance in prayer. However, His real point comes in His next statement, "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (18:8). Jesus challenged us to remain faithful in prayer right up until His second coming.

Summary Statement: Jesus expects humility, unlimited forgiveness, and faithfulness from all of His disciples. Following Him is costly.

Especially in western countries, where there has been little if any persecution, we have grown soft and spoiled, expecting much with little or no sacrifice. However, the Bible never portrays a half-hearted individual as a true believer. In a recent interview conducted by Christianity Today magazine, world-renowned evangelist Billy Graham told how burdened he was, as he approached his 95th birthday, by what he calls an "epidemic of 'easy believism'": "It should not be surprising if people believe easily in a God who makes no demands, but this is not the God of the Bible. Satan has cleverly misled people by whispering that they can believe in Jesus Christ without being changed, but this is the Devil's lie."^{iv}

Principle: *"Easy Believism" is not saving faith as the Bible describes it.*

Saving faith, as the Bible describes it, doesn't even remotely resemble the "easy believism" we hear from pulpits today: "Simply pray, receiving Jesus as your Savior, and you will be saved." No, no! Saving faith, as the Bible describes it, is a free gift but not easy to live.

Jesus said it this way: "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish'... In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples" (Luke 14:28-33).

Application: Are you increasingly humble, quick to forgive, and committed to prayer and to your marriage partner (if you are married)? If you haven't seen these changes, then you must question whether or not you have experienced salvation, as the Bible describes it.

Transition: Beginning in Matthew 19:16, we find that the cost of following Christ includes surrendering our resources and worldly values.

II. The Cost of Discipleship: Surrender of Our Resources and Worldly Values – Matthew 19:16-20:28; Luke 12:13-21, 16:1-13

A. Surrendering our Resources

i. The Rich Young Ruler – Matthew 19:16-26

1. *The Rich Man's Search:* Matthew 19:16 tells of another man, a wealthy, young ruler, who came to Jesus (Matthew 19:20, 22; Luke 18:18). Whereas the earlier questioner was attempting to trap Jesus, there is no sense that this second man was anything other than sincere. He asked Jesus what kinds of good deeds could earn him eternal life.
2. *Jesus' Challenge:* Jesus challenged the man's definition of "good," stating that only God is good. Then, He challenged the man's ability to be truly good: "If you want to enter eternal life, keep the commandments" (19:17). When the man asked Jesus to clarify which ones, Jesus summarized the Ten Commandments. Although the man claimed that he had kept these, he apparently still sensed that there was something he lacked. Indeed, he most certainly was lacking, for eternal life demands perfection, a standard that only the Good One Himself can meet. Jesus exposed the man's imperfection by pointing to his idol, money: "Go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (19:21). At this, the man went away sadly. He loved his money more than he loved God and more than he loved his neighbor. It was the one thing he was unwilling to surrender.
3. *The Camel and the Eye of a Needle*
 - a. As the man left, Jesus told His disciples that it is harder for someone who is rich to enter the Kingdom of Heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. The idea that "the eye of the needle" was the name of narrow gate in Jerusalem has no historical basis. Jesus was talking about a sewing needle. Of course, it would be impossible for a camel (among the largest animals used by the Jews) to pass through the eye of a needle.

- b. Jesus' disciples were shocked, since Jewish tradition equated riches with God's blessing. If such a one as blessed as this man could not find favor with God, how could anyone?
 - c. Jesus answered, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (19:26). Here we find a most critical teaching of Jesus concerning salvation and discipleship. We cannot save ourselves and we cannot sanctify ourselves. Only God can do it. Although God can and does save some who are rich, Jesus' other teachings on money emphasize that it is usually a great obstacle to true discipleship.
- 4. Parable Concerning Greed – Luke 12:13-21: In Luke 12, Jesus told a parable about a rich man who considered what to do with an abundant harvest. The man decided to build bigger barns and store it for his own future security. That very night, God demanded the foolish man's life. Jesus concluded, "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God." The problem wasn't with the man's large crop; the problem was with the man's self-centeredness. The cost of discipleship is surrendering all we are and all we have to God. When it comes to discipleship, greed is lethal. Is this parable, and the story of the rich, young ruler, teaching that Christ's followers must sell everything they have? We find that answer by looking at some of Jesus' other teachings.
- ii. Parable Concerning Wise Stewardship – Luke 16:1-13
 - 1. *Teaching of the Parable*: Another parable of Jesus concerning possession and wealth is found in Luke 16. In this parable, a dishonest but shrewd manager prepares himself for his master's judgment. The master commends him, not for his dishonesty, but for shrewd stewardship of his possessions. Likewise, Jesus' parable of the gold bags ("talents") in Matthew 25 teaches that we will be held accountable for the wise use of our resources (25:14-30).
 - 2. *Implications*: Following Jesus doesn't necessarily mean that we sell all our possessions, but it means surrendering our resources for Kingdom purposes. How does this work out practically?
 - a. First and foremost, all disciples are to give generously to God. A "tithe" is an Old Testament concept. "Tithe" literally means "tenth." The law required that a tenth of every crop be given to God (Leviticus 27:30). The New Testament does not speak of a percentage, but in consideration of God's grace, a tenth might be a starting place with the goal of giving more and more.

- b. Secondly, the Bible teaches that only fools use up all of their money. Proverbs 21:20 says, “In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has.” The idea of saving some money for the future is consistent with Jesus’ teachings. Notice that the rich man who died the night he decided to put his abundant harvest into larger barns was not judged for storing grain but for storing up things for himself *without* being generous toward God (Luke 12:21). If we have some savings, we are far less likely to be put into debt by unexpected expenses.
 - c. Third, we should prayerfully consider our standard of living. Most twenty-first century westerners have grown so fat from luxury and excess that they no longer recognize their adultery with the gods of pleasure and comfort. The concepts of delayed gratification and self-denial are completely foreign.
 - d. Finally, Jesus told the rich, young ruler to give to the poor (Matthew 19:21). Loving our neighbor includes helping those in need.
3. No One Can Serve Two Masters: Jesus concluded the Parable of the Shrewd Manager by saying, “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money” (Luke 16:13). Why is money such a great obstacle to discipleship? Because Jesus asks for our all. We cannot fully trust Him and at the same time have our confidence in our money. Not every disciple is called to *sell* their possessions in full, but every disciple is called to *surrender* their possessions in full.

B. Surrendering Worldly Values – Matthew 19:27 – 20:28

i. Leaving Family and Fields Behind – 19:27-30

1. *Peter’s Question*: Peter considered how difficult it had been for the rich, young ruler to surrender all his possessions and said to Jesus, “We have left everything to follow you. What then will there be for us?” (19:27). Based on Jesus’ response, it seems that Peter was thinking that he and the other disciples would surely be greatly rewarded for their sacrifices.

2. *Jesus' Acknowledgement of the Sacrifices of the Twelve*: Jesus acknowledged that the Twelve had indeed given everything. They had followed Jesus in the fullest sense and Jesus affirmed that they would be greatly blessed for having done so. In the age to come, His disciples would sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus did not explain what He meant by this, so it is best to simply accept the plain teaching that His disciples will be blessed. If Jesus was speaking literally, considering that this has not yet occurred, some believe it may be fulfilled in a future millennial age.
 3. *Jesus' Acknowledgement of the Sacrifices of Believers Generally*: Then, Jesus speaks of all believers who have surrendered themselves fully to Him, some leaving houses and family and fields (livelihood) for His sake. He promised a hundred times as much *in this life* in return (Mark 10:30). Many missionaries and other Christian workers who have left their families behind in service to Christ can testify that God has in turn given them rich friendships, unique provisions of all kinds, and spiritual blessing beyond measure. In some times and places, the family has been undervalued by Christians. One's own children should be counted among those "little ones" whom Jesus so valued. Neglecting one's family obligations (especially to one's parents) is a poor testimony and displeasing to God (1 Timothy 5:4). On the other hand, idolizing one's family is all too frequent today (especially one's children and grandchildren). Not every disciple will be called to leave their work or their home and family in a geographical sense, but every disciple of Christ must have changed priorities: family, homes, and occupation are secondary to following Jesus. Jesus asks us for everything but we cannot out give Him. His blessings always outweigh the cost of discipleship.
 4. *Eternal Life*: The final blessing promised to those who surrender everything for Jesus' sake is eternal life, beginning here and now. Jesus was not teaching that it could be earned by our sacrifices. *Rather, He was saying that those who are truly His own will follow Him and willingly pay the cost of discipleship.*
- ii. Abandoning Our "Rights": Parable of the Vineyard Workers – 20:1-16
1. *The Last Will Be First*: Jesus ended His statement to Peter, "But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first" (19:30). He then told a parable that ends with the same thought (20:16). Although the parable is a very difficult one to interpret, these words must provide a key, since they frame it.
 2. The parable equates the Kingdom of God to a landowner who, at the end of the day, pays his hired workers the same amount, even

though some worked the entire day, some only half the day, and some only the last hour. Those who worked the longest complained to the landowner of injustice, but the landowner pointed out that no one had been cheated. Those who worked a full day agreed to do so for a denarius and that is what they were paid. No one was underpaid, however the landowner had shown exceptional generosity to those who came later. According to our values, people should get what they “deserve.” However, we should be thankful that God does not operate on such a system or no one would be saved. No one deserves salvation. It is a free gift of God’s grace.

3. Peter expected to receive much, but Jesus’ parable warned him against this kind of thinking. In consideration of Jesus’ words that the last will be first and the first last, we can understand the parable to teach that reversals occur in the Kingdom of Heaven. Our values are upended. This is true on several planes. First, God does not deal with us on the basis of merit but of grace. Like Peter, we think in terms of some being more deserving than others, but God gives salvation by grace freely to all who receive it. Second, God will reward as He sees fit, not according to our way of evaluating. Third, those who approach God in childlike faith “will be received and advance in the Kingdom beyond those who, from the world’s perspective, enjoy prominence now.”^v This was true for Jesus’ disciples and the Pharisees and continues to apply today. The Kingdom of Heaven is a Kingdom of reversals and will undoubtedly lead to many surprises in the end: the last will be first and the first will be last. Thus, Jesus corrected Peter’s attitude about his “rights.”

iii. Becoming a Servant – 20:17-28

1. *Jesus, the Ultimate Example (Death Predicted)* – 20:17-19:

Matthew 20:17-19 records Jesus’ third (or possibly fourth, 16:21, 17:12, 22-23) prediction of His death and resurrection. Jesus knew what awaited Him. Jesus was preparing His disciples for what was ahead. He would not call them to give their all without first giving His all. Philippians 2:5-8 says we should have the same mindset as Christ Jesus who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage, Rather, He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross! Jesus is our example. He gave all and His disciples too must surrender all.

2. *A Mother's Request* – 20:20-28: Before recording another healing (two blind men), Matthew records yet another example of Jesus' training with regard to the cost of discipleship. Salome, the mother of James and John (Matthew 4:21, Mark 16:1), came to Jesus requesting that her sons sit on Jesus right and left in His Kingdom. This is a surprising request in light of Jesus' prediction of His death. It is impossible to know whether she was still looking for Jesus to establish an earthly Kingdom or whether she was thinking of a future, perhaps millennial, reign. Jesus told her that God the Father would make that determination, but that what He wanted her and His other disciples to know for now was that sacrifice precedes glory. "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (20:26-28). As it is often has been expressed, in the Kingdom, the way up is down. If we are to follow Jesus, we must be willing to surrender worldly values and view service as desirable.

Summary Statement: Discipleship means surrendering everything to Jesus. Ironically, it is only through surrender that we can experience the deep fulfillment of becoming all we were created to be.

Illustration: In his work *Beyond Personality*, CS Lewis explains that God's demands are part of a bigger plan He has for our lives:

...[Christ-followers] must realize from the outset that the goal towards which He is beginning to guide you is absolute perfection... That is what you're in for. And it is very important to realise (sic) that. If we don't, then we are very likely to start pulling back and resisting Him after a certain point. I think that many of us, when Christ has enabled us to overcome one or two sins that were an obvious nuisance, are inclined to feel (though we don't put it into words) that we're now good enough. He's done all we wanted Him to do, and we'd be obliged if He would now leave us alone... But this is a fatal mistake. Of course we never wanted, and never asked, to be made into the sort of creatures He is going to make us into. But the question is not what we intended ourselves to be, but what He intended us to be when He made us... The job will not be completed in this life: but He means to get us as far as possible before death... That is why we must not be surprised if we are in for a rough time. It seems to us all unnecessary: but that is because we haven't yet had the slightest notion of the tremendous thing He means to make of us... You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage; but He is building a palace... The process will be long and in parts very painful; but that is what we are in for. Nothing less.

Principle: *Jesus asks a great deal from us because He plans to do a great work in us.*

Conclusion

Are you willing to let God make you who He created you to be? That is the cost of discipleship. Full surrender. Nothing less. There is no other way. Discipleship is not an optional “add-on.” It is the only way we can claim to belong to Jesus.

ⁱ Carson, D. A. (1994). *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition* (4th ed.) (Mt 18:6–9). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press.

ⁱⁱ Blomberg, C. (1992). *Matthew* (Vol. 22, p. 281). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

ⁱⁱⁱ Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel According to Matthew* (p. 483). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

^{iv} <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/october-web-only/billy-graham-interview-my-hope-easy-believism.html?start=2>

^v Carson, D.A. (1994). *Matthew: The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Abridged Edition* (p. 91). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.