

Jesus is defining what it means to be a Christian, i.e. Disciple, *before* people choose Him. This is not a good way to get votes, pointing out the costs and difficulties, but Jesus isn't about getting votes or getting decisions. He is about truth and life and reality all the way to the bottom because he is about glorifying God not pleasing people. To follow Him and to take His name means that we, too, must be all-in for the glory of God above all other glories and loves. So, what does it mean to be a Christian, i.e. a disciple of Jesus? It means at least these six things:

1. Being a Disciple of Jesus Means That He Takes ABSOLUTE Priority

- a. V33 – "Any of you who does not say farewell to all that He has cannot be my disciple"
- b. Hate: not disgust, but rather choice of one thing over and above another for a particular relationship of greater intimacy, blessing, and status
 - i. Thus, "Jacob I loved, Esau I hated" is in the context of redemptive history, the lineage of the Seed, the building of the nation of Israel as particulars
 - ii. Now, this type of hatred can be coupled with disgust, this is true, but the biblical definition of hatred does not necessarily imply the desired destruction of another, but rather that other things are chosen for a greater glory than another.
- c. Example: Genesis 29:31,33
 - i. Jacob "hated" Leah
 1. Most English translate this word as "unloved" or "not loved", but the word is "to hate"
 - ii. This does not mean that Jacob was actively hostile toward Leah, but rather that *in comparison to Rachel*, she was not chosen for distinct affection
 - iii. Thus, to hate, in Biblical terms, means to prefer and select one over another for a special relationship and/or treatment
 1. This is the same way that God chose Abraham out of all the other citizens of Ur
 2. He chose the Israelites over all the other nations of the earth
 3. This is to show His special grace of preference, according to His own sovereign will, but it did not mean that was actively hostile toward every other race, but rather that He chose Israel for a special relationship with him

2. Discipleship is Not Optional

- a. "If *anyone* does not say 'farewell' to all that he has, he *cannot* be my disciple."
- b. There are not carnal Christians and devoted Christians.
 - i. People think that are variations of Christians, but Jesus says anyone who follows me must put me absolutely first
 - ii. Full, complete, sacrificial disciples is the only way to receive and follow Christ Jesus
- c. All real Christians are devoted, dying to themselves and bearing up crosses *for His sake*
- d. All real Christians love Jesus more than anyone or anything else *for His sake*
 - i. It's not as if there are two standards for disciples: one to get in, and one to be mature.
 - ii. There is only one kind of discipleship, and that is prioritizing Jesus and His Kingdom above all other persons or things.
 1. Again, it's not the *perfection* of this love, but the *direction* of this love (see point #6)
- e. One cannot say that he is a Christian, but not into all that Jesus stuff.
 - i. "...he cannot be my disciple" – repeated three times regarding the cost of discipleship
 - ii. Side note: If the Church is Jesus' body and we its members, how then shall we view participating in the life of the church as disciples?

3. Discipleship is Costly

- a. If you don't hate your family, then you can't follow Me.
 - i. Jesus doesn't bait and switch with the gospel: "count the cost before you begin"
 - ii. One of the biggest pet-peeves is when the Church tries to influence people to "decide for Jesus" by promising something that is so far inferior to Christ, but easier to choose because it appeals to the idols of the heart
 1. Using programs
 2. Trying to show how "cool" Jesus is

3. Proclaiming His love, but with an inferior manish love, rather than holy-love of God with its emphasis on purity of heart, truth (doctrine), and action
4. Because we try get decisions rather than disciples, we make it appear easier to receive Jesus than it really is
 - iii. Jesus says that it is costly to follow Him, and that you will die, you will lose relationships, you will be offensive and despised by others
- b. Look at the breadth of the cultural values here
 - i. Mother, Father, Wife, Children, Brother, Sister
 - ii. These are the most *highly valued relationships* within the ANE society
 - iii. Honor began with these relationships
 1. You never shamed these people, at risk of great consequence
 2. You never moved away from your family, never married someone whom your family didn't approve, didn't take a job that your family found dishonorable, etc.
- c. To follow Jesus means that you must be willing to give up your entire life's honor and to accept the shame that may come from those whom you built your life around
 - i. One cannot come to Jesus with an agenda, trying to squeeze him into the mold of how you want your life to be
 - ii. To come to Jesus means that you entrust your entire life to how He wants it to be, for he will not be used
 - iii. Nothing can come before Him! That's a high cost!
 1. And Jesus wants you to know this before you come to follow Him because he is not about decisions but about disciples
- d. It also means that we cannot come to Jesus for a better...anything!
 - i. You don't come to Jesus to be a better father or a better wife or a better child
 - ii. Don't even come to him because you want a happier or more fulfilled life.
 1. Don't come to him because he's relevant, or makes you feel good, or makes you happy or is fulfilling or show you how to be a better you or have a better life now
 - a. To be a better citizen, better worker, less anxious or worried or afraid
 2. This does not imply that Jesus is not fulfilling, or won't make you a better person, but we cannot come to him for the primary purpose of these things, or else these things are more important to us than Him and we make him a tool to achieve something that we value more
 - iii. We come to Jesus for Himself, willing to give all these things up because he himself is our burning joy, the desire of our heart, the highest love and the truth
 1. Our true life, our true truth, our true way
- e. Don't make Jesus the means to the end of your life, but rather your life is the means and he is its end!

4. Discipleship is Affective

- a. It has its root in *affection* or in the category of covenanting desire
- b. What this means that Jesus is requiring a love for Him that supersedes all other kinds of love and objects of love
 - i. Mother/Father – love that submits, finds security and provision, etc.
 - ii. Husband/Wife love – love that covenants to give one's whole life, sexual love, romantic love
 - iii. Child – love that provides and lays down one's life, guides and disciplines, etc.
 - iv. Brother/Sister – love of comrades, friendship, partnership, etc.
 - v. Love for Jesus must supersede all of these
 1. Jesus is telling His disciples that He wants to be their Rachel, their Jacob, their highest beloved
 2. He is declaring worship here, for you worship what you love the most
- c. Just because discipleship has an affective root, does not mean that will or choice is not involved
 - i. Of course you obey the Master because He has said it, you trust Him enough to follow His commands
 - ii. Jesus didn't want to go to the cross, but He willed Himself to do it because He entrusted Himself to the Father who calls Him "Beloved One"
- d. You're not a disciple unless your highest affection is set upon Him

- i. Jesus could have stated this differently, with the emphasis on faith or on submission, but he states it affectively
 - ii. He wants your highest love, and that is an affective/desire/emotional thing
- e. We must not be content with mere willing, or going through the motions, or simply “reading our Bible” as if it were a manual or a textbook or God’s journal
 - i. We must strive to set our affections on Him, to see His beauty and His excellencies that would woo us to His heart
 - ii. What is the desire and the affections that drive our life, if not Jesus?
 - iii. This is why these sayings of Jesus are hard, not because they’re necessarily difficult to understand, but because they challenge our very soul and lay bare its weakness
- f. This affective love for Jesus is the heart of what it means to be a disciple and thus to be a Christian
 - i. It is not optional nor secondary, but it is the very heart
 - ii. Jonathan Edwards says that the key to true transformation, to being the men and women that we want to be, to live the gospel life of joy and peace and righteousness is by the proper ordering of our loves
 - iii. Think of all the negative emotions that you experience
 - 1. Fear
 - a. What are you afraid of not getting?
 - b. What are you being blocked from obtaining?
 - c. Is not this thing deeper in your soul’s affections than Jesus?
 - i. Who can keep you from Him?
 - ii. Who can block you from obtaining Him?
 - iii. Romans 8:35-39
 - 2. Anxiety
 - a. What are you worried about losing?
 - b. What you are anxious is being stolen from you?
 - c. What do you think that you *must* have in order to truly live?
 - i. Is this not loving something more than Christ Jesus?
 - ii. Luke 12:32 “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s delight to give the Kingdom.”
 - 3. Shame
 - a. What sense of shame do you have a hard time shaking?
 - i. You let your parents down? Your spouse?
 - ii. You failed at work and lost honor?
 - iii. The perversion of your soul was laid bare *before people whom you respect*.
 - b. Does this not imply that your love runs more deeply for the honor from these people than for Jesus?
 - c. The key to overcoming shame is to find any way to deepen your love for Jesus and your understanding of His great love for you *that supersedes all other loves you receive*
 - i. Romans 5:5 “Hope does not shame us because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit whom He gave to us”
 - ii. Romans 5:8 “God has shown His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”
 - iii. Thus, the Cross of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit are meant to reveal the depths of God’s love for you so that you would not be ashamed
 - iv. But when the love of other people’s judgments of you is more central to your heart than the ascertainment of God’s heart, you are burdened by shame
 - 4. Bitterness
 - a. What has someone done *to you* that is controlling your emotions and behavior?
 - i. What honor has been stolen by another who has wronged you?
 - ii. What injustice has made you the victim of another’s sin?

- b. Does not this bitterness, this hostility, imply that your desire for vindication from this person runs deeper than your desire for the vindication from Christ Jesus for yourself?
 - i. Where is such controlling affection for His mercy toward you?
 - ii. We forgive *because we have been forgiven* (Eph 4:32; Col 3:13).
 - iii. The servant who cannot forgive shows that he values his own vindication more than God's mercy toward Him in Christ Jesus and doesn't get the gospel in the heart (Matt 18)
- iv. Whenever we are embittered, irritable, angry, anxious, etc. it shows that something has become more important to our hearts than Christ and we are not following him, but rather hating him.

5. Discipleship is Dying to Self-Honor

- a. Jesus doesn't say, "take up my teaching and follow me"
 - i. You can't do that!
 - ii. Think about how crushing that would be to you.
 - iii. The Law crushes you when you try to do it on your own, so "I died to the Law" (Gal 2:19)
- b. "Take up your cross"
 - i. This means that you must put yourself in the place of the condemned criminal.
 - ii. The root of discipleship is to realize that when Jesus the condemned criminal died, you died.
 - 1. Col 3:1-2 "You died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."
 - 2. When you come to Christ Jesus it means that you are identifying with Him in His life, His death, and His resurrection by faith
 - a. This is what baptism images
 - b. You are buried under the water *with Him* and you are raised up to the newness of life *in Him* to carry on under His authority and for His purposes
 - c. God has transferred from the domain of darkness into the Kingdom of the beloved Son of God through His blood, i.e. His death
 - 3. Thus, your sins are paid down, but they're paid down by Jesus in your place, and the requirements of the Law and the teaching are followed perfectly, though not by you but by Him fully and completely
 - a. When you are bound to Him by faith, all that He has done is yours
 - b. It's like a marriage where the husband and the wife bring all the debts and all the assets in together and share them as one
 - c. In this way, Jesus pays down the debts that we bring to the relationship and we receive the honor and obedience that He brings to the relationship
- c. This means that you no longer belong to yourself, but to Christ Jesus.
 - i. As such, we walk the way that He walked for the purpose to which He walked.
 - ii. We submit to the Father as He did, we rely upon the Spirit as He did, we work the works that He worked for the glory of the Father who sent redemption and the Son who redeemed and the Spirit who seals us and holds us.
 - iii. This is what it means "to hate even your own life"
 - 1. This does not mean self-pity or self-loathing
 - a. That would be very self-centered, not dying to one's self, but living for one's self
 - b. Thinking about your own needs and wants and works
 - 2. It means to be self-forgetful, to value Jesus' life and honor and purpose more than your own
 - a. So sure and certain of God's love upon me and the honor of being brought into His banquet that I am *totally unconcerned about me*.
 - b. It's not that I hate me, but rather that in comparison to Him, I have totally forgotten about me as the Lord of my own life
 - c. I become so convinced that I have died with Him and now live with Him that His desires and His words and His glories are the vision of my soul
- d. Discipleship, then, is affective *because* it is connective
 - i. We rejoice and love the Lord because He first loved us by sending His Son to die our death and live our life and protect us as His sheep and we are *bound* to Him by faith

- ii. Thus, we love Him enough to count the cost and consider Him worthy!
- iii. We gladly take up our cross daily, seeing the great grace of Christ's death for us every day, and we are empowered to die to our own affections and live for Him and for His mission
 - 1. Galatians 2:19-20 "...I have been crucified with Christ...I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."

6. Discipleship is Gradual

- a. To pick up one's cross means to head toward death, to consider one's self as moving toward the finishing of the goal
- b. He doesn't say here, "consider yourself completely dead", but rather to pick up one's cross and take the long, difficult, road toward death
 - i. Just as he was "journeying toward Jerusalem" to take up his cross and be crucified for the glory of God the Father and for the redemption of His enemies
- c. Thus, we see that discipleship is to consider the judgment of death upon you (I have died with Christ) AND to consider that you are moving step by step toward its fruition
 - i. This is the cost of following Jesus, to consider yourself dead *and* dying
 - ii. To come to Christ Jesus and follow Him always means this kind of death and dying to anything that I would identify with as making me honorable, just, good, and sufficient
 - 1. Not my parenting righteousness or my marriage righteousness
 - 2. Not my career righteousness or my beauty righteousness
 - 3. I die to depending upon these things to make me somebody and I rely fully and completely upon Him alone and I take up the call to complete His sufferings
- d. The only way that we take these steps, day by day and moment by moment, is in the light of the great and glorious grace shown towards us in Christ Jesus
 - i. When he is the most beautiful object in the vision of our affections, we gladly and knowingly give all else up for the sake of Him alone
 - ii. Therefore, the striving in discipleship is not the striving to perform action or to behave in line with his commands (although we do these things), but rather the striving to see HIS BEAUTY that our affections would be set up on him more than on anything else, which are far inferior in every way

Conclusion:

Therefore, discipleship, begins and ends with theology. That is, seeing Jesus as He really is, as He has revealed Himself to be in all His burning holiness and absolute sovereignty over you, in His great mercy toward sinners and His great purpose of purity. Strive to see Him freely offering Himself to us at great cost, giving Himself for us at the moment of our mutiny, supremely powerful and suffering servant for our sakes. Strive to see and savor Jesus and your heart will count the cost and find Him supremely worthy of all things.

"Revelation 4:9-5:14"