

Discipleship – Level III

Total Commitment – Full Surrender

***“...The kingdom of God suffers violence,
and the forceful take hold of it.”***

Matthew 11:12



Discipleship Level III
Total Commitment – A Kingdom Mentality
Putting Christ First

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you as well.”
- Jesus (Matthew 6:33)



²³ “Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.”

– Jesus (Luke 9:23-24)

Lesson #1 – Total Commitment

The Call to Radical Discipleship

Lesson #2 – The Judgment of our Lives

Living every Day in Light of Eternity

Lesson #3 – Radical Spirituality

Cultivating Spiritual Passion

Lesson #4 – A Life of Destiny

Discovering and Living your Life Mission

Lesson #5 – Stewardship of Time

Putting “First things First”

Lesson #6 – Stewardship of Money

Putting Christ first in our Finances

Lesson #7 – A Servant Heart

Washing the Feet of the Saints

Lesson #8 – Submission to Authority

Renouncing Rebellion

Lesson #9 – Teamwork and the Resolution of Conflicts

Lesson #10 – “Secular” work in the Name of Jesus

Cultivating Excellence

Introduction to Level III – Radical for Christ! “Full Time” Christianity

*“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,
and all these things will be added to you as well.”
Matthew 6:33*

There is no such thing as “Part Time” Discipleship

The Smith’s had lived a “normal” Christian life for many years. They believed in God, attended church sporadically, and threw a few bucks into the offering plate as it passed by... etc. For them, God was an important “*part*” of their lives – along with other significant activities, such as work, study, family time and entertainment.



After many years, they began to attend a small group Bible study and become more fully involved in the things of God. The change was noticeable. Spiritual things began to take priority in their use of time and resources. They attended services more faithfully; began to tithe; pray in the home; and seek opportunities to serve God with their time and talents. God had come to occupy the *principal* place in their individual and family lives.

Their son summed up the change by commenting...

“Mommy, before we were ‘part time’ Christians, but now we’re ‘full time’ Christians!”¹

The Objective of Level III is to become “full time” Christians – Committing to God our time, resources, relationships and “self.”

For Discussion - What do you think are some of the differences between a “part time” and “full time” believer?

Some hallmarks of a “full time” Disciple

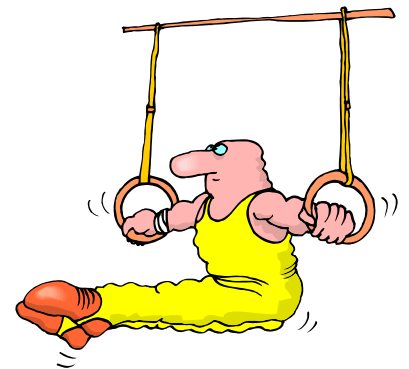
- Serves Jesus as “*Lord*” and not just “*Savior*”
- Seeks to live every day as if Jesus were returning that evening
- Cultivates spiritual passion through daily prayer, scripture reading and fasting
- Knows and seeks to fulfill their life mission
- Uses time and money according to spiritual priorities
- Has a servant’s heart
- Submits to civil and church authorities
- Works well with others and resolves conflict in a Christ-like manner
- Gives a positive Christian example in the workplace through an ethic of excellence

¹ True story, shared with verbal permission. Name changed.

Level III Exercises – “No pain, no gain!”

In the process of this course we will plan specific activities to learn better how to live a more fully committed life.

- ***Monitoring our hearts in the “moments” of daily life*** – (Lesson #2) – Exercises to analyze particular “moments” from daily life in light of eternal values
- ***Appointments with God***– (Lesson #3) We will return to the concept of a daily time for private prayer and reflection on the word of God.
- ***Extended Fasting***– (Lesson #3) – Plan an extended fast of two or more days during the course of the semester.
- ***Extended Seasons of Prayer*** – (Lesson #3) – Plan to attend a special meeting for prayer: early morning, late night, or a retreat.
- ***Declaration of my Personal Life Mission*** – (Lesson #4) - By using questions for self evaluation, we will seek to discern some components of our life mission, and compose an initial “personal mission statement.”
- ***Consecrating our Calendar*** -- (Lesson #5) – We learn to organize our time according to the values of the kingdom of God and our personal mission statement by identifying and planning one specific activity for kingdom living.
- ***Consecrating our Budget*** -- (Lesson #6) – We work up a “personal budget” based on the principles of the kingdom of God.
- ***A Plan to Serve*** – (Lesson #7) – We consider some practical ways to serve others at home, in the community and at church.
- ***Evaluation of my personal preferences for conflict resolution*** - – (Lesson #9) – Using a particular case of conflict from our own life, we will attempt to evaluate our own personal approach to conflict resolution.
- ***Evaluation of my testimony at my “secular” job*** - – (Lesson #10) – We consider specific ways to provide a Christian example through our “secular” work.



Counting the Cost The Radical Call to follow Jesus as Lord

²³Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. ²⁴For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. **Luke 9:23-24**

The “Cost” of Discipleship – Take up our cross – daily!

Our Goal in this lesson is to – Understand better the radical and far reaching nature of the call to be a genuine disciple of Jesus

We consider...

- The difference between genuine grace and “cheap” grace
- *The extreme nature of commitment to Christ as Lord*
- *The joy of a committed life*
- *The need for self-examination and honesty*
- *A prayer for full commitment*



1. Genuine Grace v. Cheap Grace

Salvation is free – but discipleship costs!

Salvation is by Grace!

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. **Ephesians 2:8-9**

We cannot earn the love of God!

⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **Romans 5:8**

It does not matter how often we pray; how much we give; how sacrificially we serve – God loves us the same!

We are sons and not slaves! Read 15:11-32

What did the younger son think he needed to do in order to win back the love and acceptance of his father? How did the reality of the situation differ from this expectation?



Why was the older son so miserable? With what attitude did he serve his Father?

We are called to be radical, but *the love of God cannot be won or lost by our good Works*. God loves us unconditionally!

No Cheap Grace! True Discipleship involves cost

Our salvation in Christ is absolutely free – by grace – but this grace is not cheap! True discipleship, like any commitment in life, has a price.

Cheap Grace...

- Is the grace “*we give ourselves.*”²
- Is the grace which permits us to enjoy all the benefits of the Christian life, without fulfilling the responsibilities which this commitment entails
- Is the grace which allows us to use the name “Christian” without putting Christ first in our lives.
- Is the grace which allows us to be religious, fulfilling certain “obligations” without consulting God and his Word about how we should conduct our daily lives.

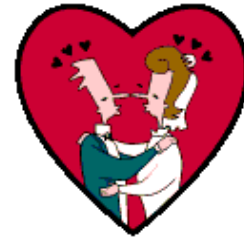
The Cost of Discipleship -. *Submit ourselves to Christ as our Lord, putting him first in every area of life.*



² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship.

2. The Cost of a Commitment

Every commitment in life has a cost!



Marriage

In order to marry – one must renounce other flirtations. Imagine a groom who asks to include the following sentiment in his marital vows ...

I accept to live with you, enjoy physical intimacy, and share a home, a name and children. But I reserve the right to go out on dates with other women now and again....”

While love may be unconditional, the true marital vows set a high price on enjoying this loving relationship!

Citizenship – An oath of loyalty to the flag



In order to become a citizen of any country, one must agree to honor the laws and obligations of that nation. Imagine a candidate for citizenship who proposes the following, self-styled, loyalty oath...

“I promise to live in this country, receive the benefits of the police, fire department and schools – but I reserve the right to abstain from paying taxes, to ignore laws I do not find convenient, and even sell arms to the enemies of this country should it be in my own financial best interest...etc..”

What nation would accept such a citizen?

The Military

In order to become a soldier – one must submit to military discipline and learn to obey orders without question or delay. Imagine the following vow for those enlisting for military service...

“I commit myself to be a member of the armed forces of this nation – to wear the snazzy uniform with the shiny buttons and medals – but I do not agree to have my hair cut and reserve the right to question those orders which seem uncomfortable or difficult to execute, depending on my feelings at the moment....etc..”



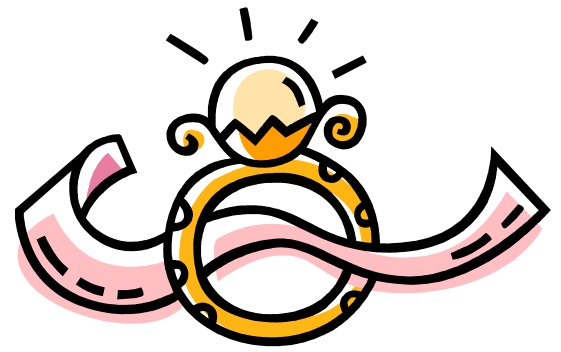
What army would accept soldiers such as this?

What is the “cost” of a commitment with Christ?

We read the following parable...

The Pearl of Great Price

From Discípulo – Juan Carlos Ortiz – pp.36-37



How much? The Cost of Discipleship

In Chapter 13 of Matthew we read that Jesus compared the Kingdom of God to a businessman who dealt in fine pearls. When he found the pearl of great value, he sold everything in order to purchase it.

We know that many Christians interpret the pearl mentioned in this parable to represent us, and the businessman to represent Jesus, who gave all to redeem us. But now we realize that He, Christ, is the pearl of great price, and we are that treasure hunter who seeks happiness, security, fame and eternity.

Once we find Jesus, we ought to give all that we possess to “have” him. He possesses happiness, joy, peace, healing, security, eternity – everything! And therefore we ask the obvious question. *“How much does this pearl cost? I want it.”*

“Very well,” says the salesman, “it is extremely expensive.”

“Ok, but how much?” We insist.

“It is very, very expensive.”

“Really? Do you think I can buy it?”

“Of course. Anyone can acquire it.”

“But didn’t you just say that it is extremely expensive?”

“Yes.”

“Well then, how much does it cost?”

“Everything you own,” responds the salesman.

We think for a few moments. *“Very good, I have decided. I’m going to buy it!”* we exclaim.

“Excellent. How much do you have?” he asks. “Let’s set the price.”

“I have \$30,000 in the bank.”

“Ok, \$30,000. What else?”

“That’s it. That’s all I have.”

“You mean to say you do not have anything else?”

“Well, I guess I have a few bucks here in pocket.”

“How much do you have on you?”



We whip out our wallets and start digging through our pockets, *“Let’s see... twenty, forty, forty five... that’s it. Forty five dollars and ten cents!”*

“Fantastic. What else?”

“I just told you. Nothing else. That’s it!”

“Where do you live?” He asks.

“Well, in my house... I have a house.”

“Ok then, the house also,” he says as he jots down notes.

“You mean I’ll have to live in my tent??!!”

“Oh, you have a tent?! The tent also. What else?”

“But if I give you that then I’ll have to sleep in my car.”

“A car also? Excellent.”

“Actually, I have two.”

“Wonderful. Both cars will be transferred to my ownership. What else?”

“Look, you already have my money, my house, my tent, and my two cars. What else do you want?”

“Are you single? Do you have any family?”

“Well... yes, I have a wife and two kids....”

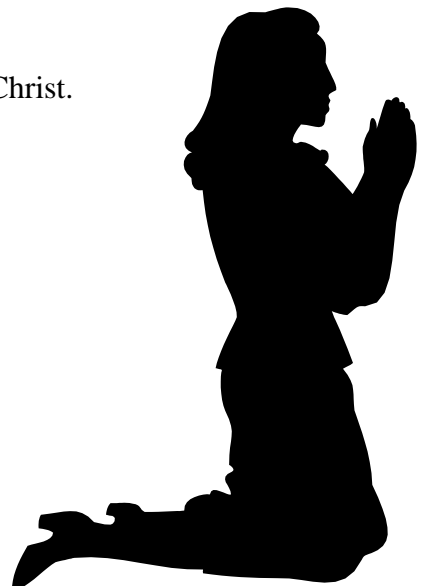
“Excellent. Your wife and kids also. What else?”

“I don’t have anything left!! I’m completely alone and empty!”

Then the salesman exclaims: “But how could I have almost forgotten! YOU! You also! Everything about you and your life becomes mine: Wife, kids, house, money, vehicles and also your person.”

Then he adds, “Now listen carefully, for the moment I will allow you to use all of these things, but always remember that they belong to me and that you yourself belong to me and that any time I have need of any of these things we have just mentioned, you must yield them to me, because I am the rightful owner.”

Such is the transaction when we choose to belong to Jesus Christ.



3. Components of Radical Discipleship

- A. Extreme commitment to the Lordship of*
- B. Joy!*
- C. Constant growth.*
- D. Brutally honest self-examination*



A. An extreme commitment – Jesus is my Lord!

The price of serving Jesus as “Lord”

- *Seeking to know and obey his will*
- *Renouncing the right to a “normal” life*
- *Counting the cost*
- *Choosing the narrow way*

Is Jesus your Lord? What does the word “Lord” mean?

For you, what does the title “Lord” mean? Mention three synonyms.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How do we know if Jesus is indeed the Lord of our lives?

Many would like to call themselves Christians and receive benefits of the kingdom of God without renouncing the right to manage their own lives. They desire to know Jesus as their savior, without accepting him as Lord!

Circle those qualities that mark a true disciple.

Miracles – Preaching the word – attending church – healing the sick

Praying for 15 minutes a day – Praying an hour a day – casting out demons

In reality none of these characteristics provide a reliable measure of the genuineness of a follower of Jesus as Lord!

A Disciple Obeys! Who is the “captain” or “boss” of your life?

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ - **Matthew 7:21-23**

How can it be possible to do all these things mentioned above, and still not be a genuine disciple?

According to this text, what distinguishes a genuine disciple?

Read Luke 9:47-62 -- A true disciple renounces the right to a “normal” life –

What are the conditions and excuses which these people give not to follow Jesus?



1. _____
2. _____

How does Jesus respond to them?

Satan’s Temptation –

Don’t be so “extreme!” You can be a “normal Christian”

Satan attempts to deceive us into seeking the blessings of God without submitting to the cost of following Jesus in truth.

- It is not necessary to dedicate *all your time* to Christ
- It is not necessary to dedicate *all your belongings* to Christ
- It is not necessary to be so *extremist* in your service for the Lord
- You can be a Christian and still have a “normal” life



Read Mark 8:31-38 – *Peter’s Temptation*

Why does Jesus rebuke Peter (and Satan)?

What does it mean to “deny one’s self?”

What is the promise for those who are willing to “lose” their lives for Christ and for the gospel?

What does Jesus mean when he says, “... *because everyone who wants to save his life, will lose it; and everyone who loses his life for my sake and for the gospel, will save it.*”

We cannot seek a “normal” life!

We all dream of the comfort of stable home and family. While there is nothing wrong with such natural human desires, this goal cannot be the main priority for a true disciple.

Read Luke 14:25-34 -- *A Disciple Counts the Cost* –

Why is it necessary for the builder to evaluate the cost of a project before laying the foundation?

Why is it necessary for a King to evaluate the requirements of battle before attacking?

What does it mean to “hate” parents, spouse, and children, in your opinion? Are we not called to “love” our neighbor, and much more our families?

The Disciple takes the narrow path

Without guidelines, there is no order

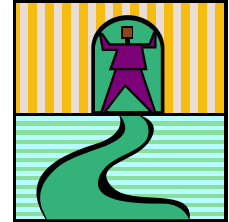
- A train goes nowhere if it leaves the rails
- No one can win a game with no rules
- A driver who leaves the lane risks his life



Likewise in the spiritual dimension. A disciple must follow the narrow path set out in scripture.

Jesus said...

¹³ *“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. - Matthew 7:13-14*



There are some who say - *“Being so radical robs the joy from life.”*

Is this true? How do we respond?

B. A radical life is a happy life God pays well!

²⁸ *Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!”*

²⁹ *“Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel ³⁰ will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. Mark 10:28-30*



Summarize Jesus’ promise in these verses.

Joy follows the pain of the cross!

Remember the agony Jesus suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane?

⁷ *During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.* **Hebrews 5:7**

⁴⁴ *And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.* ^[a] **Luke 22:44**

Jesus surrendered to the will of his Father “...not what I want, but your will be done.”

How could Jesus surrender to such unthinkable suffering? What motivated him?

²Jesus the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. **Hebrews 12:2-3**

According to these verses, what motivated Jesus to submit to the cross?

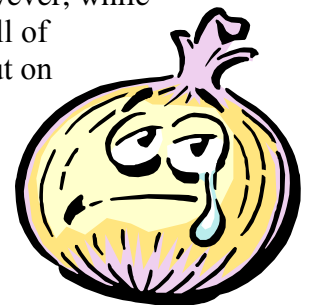
What should motivate us to yield all to Jesus as Lord, no matter the cost?



Let's not be Pharisees! -- Arrogant, Bitter and Joy-less

“Radical o Rajatabla”³ – Fully Committed or Full of ourselves!!

Jesus reserved his most scathing rebukes not for the tax collectors or prostitutes, but for the religious hypocrites of his day – the Pharisees! These religious leaders lived a radical life in every way. They fasted to the point of emaciation; they prayed hours and hours a day; memorized scripture and scrupulously obeyed the requirements of the law. However, while they appeared to be “fully committed” to the Lord, they in fact were simply “Full of themselves!” Their radical religiosity was based not on sincere love for God, but on an arrogant desire to become better than others!! Jesus described them as whitewashed tombs that appeared beautiful on the outside, but inside were filled with dead men’s bones! (Matthew)



³ Phrase coined by Mayra Rodriguez, instructor of level III at Lion of Judah.

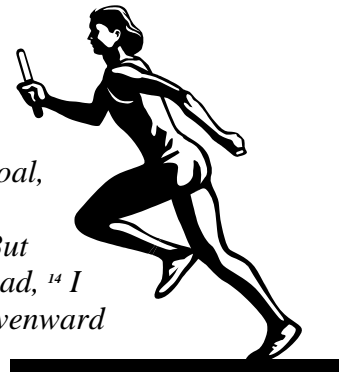
We can be radical, and still displease the Lord! While their actions reflected radical commitment, their character did not. Instead of the fruit of the Spirit, they were arrogant and acerbic – full of themselves!

Let us not become modern day Pharisees!! As we approach these topics of radical commitment, let us remember that our spiritual intensity and sacrificial behavior in no way earn the love of God or substitute for a loving, humble and merciful heart. Let the grace of Christ constantly sweeten our spirit and keep us focused on Jesus and his mercy, and not our own quest to become spiritual super-heroes! *A radical life is a joyful life!*

C. Full Commitment is a Process – We never “arrive”

The Apostle Paul always sought to be more fully committed

*¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. **Philippians 3:12-14***



The example of the Father of a demonized son – “I believe! Help my unbelief!”

*²⁴ Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” **Mark 9:24***

How many of have felt like this? We believe in the Lord and have surrendered to him, but at the same time we are painfully aware of how far short we still fall of being fully committed. We do believe, but need God to help us with our remaining unbelief.

Peter’s Example – John 12:15-19 – We are not as committed as we think we are!

Peter believed himself to be a fully committed disciple. With sincere bravado, he said the following to Jesus before his arrest...

²⁹ Peter declared, “Even if all fall away, I will not.”

³⁰ “Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice^[a] you yourself will disown me three times.”

*³¹ But Peter insisted emphatically, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the others said the same. **Mark 14:29-31***





But as we all know, Peter denied the Lord and later “wept bitterly.”

After his failure, Peter admitted his weakness (John 21)

After Peter’s fall, Jesus asked him twice...

Simon, son of John, do you love me?

(Using the Greek word, “Agape,” which means, “Self-giving love”)

In response, Peter answered twice...

Lord, you know I love you.

(Using the Greek word “Fileo,” which means “affectionate, fraternal love”)

Why do you suppose he answers in this way? Why does Peter not use the highest word, “Agape,” to express his love for Christ?

Humbled by his failures, Peter knew that his love still lacked full commitment.

Jesus called Peter to grow in self-giving love as his disciple

Finally, Jesus asked the third time,

“Simon, son of John, do you love me,” (using the lower word, “Fileo”)

Of course Peter was saddened that Jesus lowered his standard this third time, but answered truthfully;

“Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you.” (Fileo).

Jesus will take us “where we are at,” and bring us to higher levels of commitment.

In the following verses (John 21:18-19) Jesus predicts Peter’s growth, which ironically, will result in a more child-like submission to his heavenly father. He will eventually die a martyr’s death, the ultimate expression of “ágape.”

Give what you can! Full commitment is a process. Take your cross “daily”

Why do you think Jesus says we must take our crosses “daily?”

D. Self-examination is necessary to be a Radical Disciple



We must recognize our own excuses for withholding our full devotion

Read Luke 14:15-24

What are three excuses that the invited guests made for not accepting the Lord's invitation?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Which areas of our life lack 100% commitment to the Lord?

Indicate which area of life is most difficult for you, at this time, to surrender to the Lordship of Christ. (Circle one or two at the most)

Use of Money – Use of Time – Body – Possessions – Family – Friends – Work

Other _____.

Prayer of Surrender

We invite you to say this prayer, sincerely, to the Lord.

Lord, I surrender all my life and all my rights to you.

I surrender...

- *The right to use my time as I choose*
- *The right to use my money and belongings as I see fit*
- *The right to make my own plans for my future*
- *The right to seek comfort and pleasure in life*

I give to you...

- *My body – my mind – my emotions*
- *My family – my children – my parents – my spouse – my friends*
- *My money – my possessions – my job*
- *My dreams – my future*



I especially ask for your help to surrender this most difficult area of my life:

_____. *It's all yours – for you to use for the purposes of your kingdom. **You are my Lord!***