

Sermon Series: “Strengthening Your Grip”—Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Westfield, IN—6/16/2002

Title: “Strengthening Your Grip on Discipleship”

Text: Mark 3: 13-15 and Luke 14: 25-35

Intro.: Ills.: Discipleship I.Q.

Theme: Discipleship is not about membership to a church but rather is about a relationship with Jesus that is lived out in a life-giving way among fellow believers within His Church and out among the unsaved in the world.

• **Discipleship is a *relationship* with Him (Print and read Mark 3: 13)**

1. It is about being “wanted” by Jesus/not needed by Jesus
 1. **Ills.: quote by Rich Mullins**
 2. You and I are not doing Jesus a favor by being part of his church and carry out the ministry of his church
 3. “*People should think of us as servants of Christ and managers who are entrusted with God's mysteries. Managers are required to be trustworthy.*” 1 Cor. 4: 1-2 [GW]
 4. Grace is about the gift of the restored relationship which draws out of us a passion for a relationship with Jesus
2. We are made a disciple to make disciples through relationships
 1. “*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*” Matt. 28: 19-20
 2. Growing God’s kingdom is done *person to person* one-person-at-a-time in relationship

• **Discipleship is a *purposeful relationship* through Him (Print and read Mark 3: 14-15)**

3. Christ purposely chooses his disciples
 1. Many times we think: I could never be a disciple; those were special, holy guys!
 2. But Jesus did not pick theologians but fisherman, tax collectors, terrorist, and doubters to be his disciples
 3. “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last.” John 15:16
4. Christ calls us to purposeful discipleship (vss. 14-15)
 1. Purposefully dwelling in him and his word (*be with*)
 2. Purposefully allowing our life’s agenda and schedule to be directed by him (*apostle=one who is sent*)
 - **Ills.: I Serve at The Discretion of The President**
 3. Purposefully ordering my words and actions to proclaim the good news to my world (*preach*)
 4. Purposefully using the authority and power of Jesus to affect change within my world (*authority to cast out*)
 - **Ills.: the story of Acts 13: 4-12—Paul and Governor Sergius Paulus against magician Elymas**

• **Discipleship is the *priority of a relationship* with Him (Print and read Luke 14: 25-26)**

1. Divided love gets in the way of being Jesus’ disciple
 1. This is a first commandment issue: ***Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength***
 2. Often we compromise our walk, our devotion, our conduct to serve self, family, or friends ***before*** Jesus
 3. Jesus is not proposing literal “*hate*” but rather disowning anything that tries to take the place of my “first love”
 4. But Jesus adds this warning: “If you are not willing to do this—***you cannot be my disciple.***” (3 x’s he says this)
2. When I put Jesus first in terms of time, commitment, energy, resources, all my other relationships will be blessed
 1. He’ll bring his forgiveness, perspective, resurrection power, eternal hope to marriage, parenting, employment, church membership, community, recreational, friendships
 2. “*But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.*”

Matthew 6:33

- **Discipleship is the surrender to a relationship with Him (Print and read Luke 14: 27-35)**
 3. Discipleship not only demands that we prioritize our relationships but it requires a surrender of our very lives to Jesus
 4. Surrender of our eternal destiny to Jesus
 1. It gets us back to pre-Fall condition of God being God and we reflecting him as his creation (image of God)
 - “Put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.” Col. 3:10
 2. It is finding my worth, my purpose, my hope, my direction in Christ rather than other people, my job, or things
 - “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.” Gal2:20
 5. Surrender of our temporal journey, agenda, and schedules to Jesus
 1. **Ills.: Continuing Unnecessary Battle**

Discipleship I.Q. Quiz

A disciple is:

1. Someone who has completed a ten-week Bible study course and has joined a church
2. A Christian leader
3. A knowledgeable Christian
4. A zealous Christian who takes on regular service or mission projects
5. A Christian who uses compact “discs”

Answer? None of the above. Never has a word been so overused yet so misunderstood. Eugene Peter, in his book “*A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*,” explains this concept of discipleship as it related to our walk with Christ: “***Disciples are those of us who spend our lives apprenticed to our master, Jesus Christ. WE are in a growing-learning relationship, always. A disciple is a learner, but not in the academic setting of a schoolroom, rather at the work site of a craftsman. We do not acquire information about God but skills in faith.***” (Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* [Downers grove, Ill.” Intersity Press, 1980], p. 13)

Wanted not Needed

“There were many people that were needed in the real sense of the term in the story of Jesus. There was the Virgin Mary who gave birth in flesh and blood to Jesus. There was Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus. There was Pilate who in the real sense passed judgment and handed Jesus over to death. But there is a wonderful passage in the Gospel of Mark which says, “and he chose those whom he wanted. I would rather be wanted by Jesus rather than needed by him.” Rich Mullins

Continuing Unnecessary Battle

On **March 10, 1974**, **Lt. Hiroo Onada** was the last World War II Japanese soldier to surrender. Onada had been left on the **island Lubang in the Philippines on December 25, 1944**, with the command to "carry on the mission even if Japan surrenders." Four other Japanese soldiers were left on the island as Japan evacuated Lubang. One soldier surrendered in 1950. Another was killed in a skirmish with local police in 1954. Another was killed in 1972. Onada continued his war alone. All efforts to convince him to surrender or to capture him failed. He ignored messages from loudspeakers announcing Japan's surrender and that Japan was now an ally of the United States. Leaflets were dropped over the jungle begging him to surrender so he could return to Japan. He refused to believe or surrender. Over the years he lived off the land and raided the fields and gardens of local citizens. He was responsible for killing at least 30 nationals during his 29 year personal war. Almost a half million dollars was spent trying to locate and convince him to surrender. 13,000 men were used to try to locate him. Finally, on March 10, 1974, almost 30 years after World War II ended, Onada surrendered his rusty sword

after receiving a personal command from his former superior officer, who read the terms of the cease-fire order. Onada handed his sword to President Marcos, who pardoned him. The war was over. Onada was 22-years-old when left on the island. He returned a prematurely aged man of 52. Onada stated, "Nothing pleasant happened in the 29 years in the jungle." Like Onada, many people are fighting a lonely battle against the God who is offering reconciliation and peace.

Mark 3:13-15

And He went up to the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. ¹⁴And He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach, ¹⁵and to have authority to cast out the demons. [NASB]

Luke 14:25-35

Now great multitudes were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, ²⁶"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. ²⁷"Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. ²⁸"For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? ²⁹"Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, ³⁰saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' ³¹"Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and take counsel whether he is strong enough with ten thousand *men* to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³²"Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks terms of peace. ³³"So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions. ³⁴"Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? ³⁵"It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear." [NASB]