

## **Broughty Ferry Baptist Church: Teaching Series on Discipleship**

### **“The Attributes of a Disciple”**

#### **Session 1: “What does it mean, biblically, to be a “Christian?”**

##### **Read Luke 14: 25 - 35**

**What it means to be a Christian? In the media over the past 20 years there have been many depictions of “Christians” We all remember Dot Cotton from Eastenders, or Harry from Neighbours - the upright members of the community!**

**Our friends, our society - they all have their OWN opinions of what or who a Christian is? If you were to walk along Brook Street in the Ferry today and asked the question: What is a Christian? You would likely be given a myriad of answers along the lines of:**

- **Someone who believes in God?**
- **Someone who goes to church.**
- **A good person - or a “goody too shoes.”**
- **Someone who prays, gives money to charity etc etc etc.**

**And the Media, they have all people on TV/Radio, being represented as “Christian”, despite holding vastly differing views from scriptures!!**

**In that context I think back to my first Baptism Class with the Rev James R. Clarke at Central Baptist Church in June 1988, and these words forever etched on my soul: He said;**

***“Lord of all or not at all....***

***What you will be doing that Sunday evening when you take you Baptismal vows, and are Baptised, is that you are saying to all your family, your friends, your nearest and dearest is:***

***COME WHAT MAY, WHATEVER HAPPENS IN YOUR LIFE,***

## **YOU ARE A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST, AND YOUR LIFE BELONGS TO CHRIST!!**

In other words, if that is not you - you ought not to be thinking of calling yourself a Christian or getting baptised!!

As a Church we are currently embarking on an evaluation of the quality and depth of our Christian lives. I am facilitating a group that is having a look, both inwards and outwardly at “How do we nurture spiritual growth in the life’s of individuals and in the church corporately?” Two of the key words from Paul’s teaching in Philippians and Ephesians are:

- “Progress”, how do we ensure that we are progressing, continually moving forward in our faith? Philippians 1: 25
- “Maturity”, where we ought to be progressing too, is more full maturity, *“Attaining to the full measure of Christ”* Ephesians 4: 13.

To co-incide with this, over the next few months I am going to deliver a series entitled:

### **“The Attributes of a Disciple”**

And today in the first in the series we ask ourselves, **“What does it mean, biblically, to be a Christian?”** I am going to briefly summarise some of the key scriptures around this issue, before focussing on one from Jesus today, in particular.

Now going back to my first Baptismal class, the first thing that Rev Clarke pointed us to was, what does the Bible tell us about what or who we are as Christians? After all, if we are claiming to be a Christian, the Bible is where we derive our understanding on all matters of life and faith, isn’t it?

***“and the DISCIPLES were first called CHRISTIANS at Antioch.”***

So, a Christian based on what the Bible teaches is a **DISCIPLE OF JESUS, A FOLLOWER OF JESUS.** The word Christian is only mentioned two other times in the Bible, Acts 26: 28 and 1 Peter 4: 16 (Please look at these for reference), but it is in the first verse that we find the key to understanding what a REAL Christian is.

The next logical step, is, if a Christian is:

- A Disciple of Jesus

- Which means they are a follower of Jesus.
- Which means they are a “learner” of Jesus.

Is to study, what did Jesus say a Disciple was?

- ❖ **Luke 14: 26 - 27:** “Large crowds were travelling with Jesus, and turning to them he said, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children his brothers and sisters, yes even his own life, he cannot be my disciple” ...v. 33 “In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”
- ❖ **John 8: 31:** *“To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said “If you hold to me teaching you really are my disciples” Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”*
- ❖ **John 13:34 - 35,** *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*
- ❖ **John 15: 5 - 8** *“Apart from me you can do nothing.....This is to me Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”*
- ❖ **Luke 9: 23/Mark 8: 34 - 35** *“Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “If anyone would come after me, he must pick up his cross and follow me”.*
- ❖ **Matthew 28: 19 - 20***“Therefore go and make DISCIPLES of all nations, baptising 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.”*

So what does the Bible teach that a Disciple is:

- John 8: 31 - someone who obeys Jesus teaching and His word.
- John 13: 35 - someone who loves other disciples and all people.
- John 15: 5 & 8 - we must remain in Him, and only if we do, we will bear fruit, the fruits of the spirit, witness and see people becoming Christians.

- **Luke 9: 23 & Mark 8: 34 - 35 - someone who denies themselves for the sake of Christ, picks up their cross daily and follows Jesus.**
- **Matthew 28: 19 - 20: People who will seek to make, not people who merely believe in God, or spectate at church, but DISCIPLES, who will obey everything Jesus has commanded.**

**There is a connection you see, with who we say we are as Christians, as disciples of Jesus, as learners of Jesus and:**

## **WHAT WE DO!**

**In this series I will seek, with God's help, to unpack:**

- **What does this mean?**
- **What does this mean for me?**
- **What does that mean for my life, the priorities which I set?**
- **What, with God's grace, the empowering of His Spirit, will he challenge me to change, to repent of?**

**As some of you know I like to listen to a lot of current affairs programmes, I like to keep up with contemporary issues, politics, what people are saying and thinking. I often listen to Nicky Campbell on Radio 5 Live or The Big Questions and last year he said:**

**“What religion in the world asks its followers to HATE their own family?”**

**And I thought to myself, well Nicky, the religion/belief system/faith that asks its followers to hate their own family - IS THE ONLY FAITH BY WHICH YOU CAN BE SAVED!!! Amen!!**

**SAVED FROM THE WRATH  
OF GOD!**

**SAVED FROM YOUR SIN!**

# **PROVIDED WITH FORGIVENESS, AND ASSURANCE OF ETERNAL LIFE!**

The only faith, which in Jesus Christ, represents the only true sacrifice, to pay for these sins - is Christianity, the Christian faith, being a disciple of Jesus, a true follower of Jesus.

As Jesus says in John 14: 6,

***“I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father EXCEPT THROUGH ME.”***

Luke portrays Peter saying in Acts 4: 12,

***“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven, GIVEN TO MEN, by which men must be saved.”***

Why? Because Jesus, the only begotten Son of God - DIED IN OUR PLACE.

So in our passage today, what does Jesus say about being His disciple, about following Him. He says three things.

He talks about:

- **Priorities**
- **Cost**
- **Authenticity.**

**Luke 14: 25 - 35**

1. **Priorities:**

Jesus says in Luke 14: 26,

***“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and his sisters, yes, even his own life - cannot be my disciple.”***

He turns to the crowd following him, and tells them that **DEVOTION TO HIMSELF MUST BE SO WHOLEHEARTED THAT EVEN ATTACHMENT TO PARENTS AND OTHER MEMBERS OF ONE’S FAMILY - MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO STAND IN THE WAY, OF MAKING JESUS YOUR FIRST PRIORITY.**

The meaning here though of the word “hate” is “love-less”. How do we come to that? Well in Genesis 29: 30 - 31, the word “hate” has the same root as the one used by Jesus,

***“Jehovah saw that Leah was hated”***

But the explanation of “hated” is given in the immediately preceding verse, v. 30,

***“Jacob love Rachel more than Leah.”***

What Jesus is saying that we must put Him, as number 1 priority in our lives - we must love everything else - our property, our material possessions, our dreams, even our families - less than we love Jesus - that is what he says - Devotion to Jesus cannot be anything less than wholehearted, so our priorities must show that Jesus is first in our lives.

2. **Secondly, Cost.** Jesus then goes onto further illustrate the cost of following him.

**v. 27 “And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”**

What then must a person do in order to be considered a true disciple?

- a) **Jesus also teaches this in Luke 9: 23. He must deny himself, that is he must once and for all say NO to his old self, the sinful “I am in charge” attitude. They must deny themselves and give up on all reliance on whatever he is by nature, and depend, through faith, for salvation on God alone.**
- b) **“He must take up his cross” the underlying picture here is that of a condemned man, who is forced to take up and carry his cross to the place of execution. However, what the**

**council does under duress - THE DISCIPLE OF CHRIST DOES, WILLINGLY - in gratitude for being saved - and he must do this on a daily basis.**

- c) **Then he must begin to follow and must keep on following Jesus. Hendriksen the theologian, summarises what Jesus is saying like this:**

**“If anyone wishes to be counted as my follower, he must once and for all say farewell to self, decisively, accept pain and shame and persecution for my sake and in my cause, day in, day out and then must then keep on following me as my disciple. He must also subject himself to my discipline.”**

**Jesus then with two further illustrations helps his followers reflect on the cost, we must deny ourselves, take up our cross, but we must also need to count the cost before embarking on the journey. There is so much in this short passage and time does not permit further exposition of this element but please this week, read and reflect on this element of the passage.**

**3. So PRIORITIES, COST, AND FINALLY JESUS FOCUSES ON AUTHENTICITY**

***“Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again. It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure heap; it is thrown out. He who has ears, let him hear.” Luke 14: 34 - 35.***

**Salt is good, salt is useful for bringing out the best taste, for preserving food, but if it loses its saltiness, it is useless. Is it even worth calling it SALT? What Jesus is teaching in this passage is that discipleship involves wholehearted devotion to him. He is teaching that they must not be merely “nominal” disciples. They should be genuine salt, salt that has not lost its flavour and therefore PURPOSE!!**

**Have you got your priorities right?**

**Are you willing to sacrifice things, to make it cost you to follow Jesus?**

**Will you be authentic, just like real salt?**

**Jesus words are so challenging, and I believe that this series as part of the church’s teaching programme will challenge us - you, me, everyone to re-evaluate their devotion to Christ!**

**A disciple who is not prepared to follow the Master or do what he says is no disciple!! These are not Gary Torbet's words - but the words of Jesus himself!!**

**So in conclusion, what are some of the issues we must reflect on in the light of the passage. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote "The Cost of Discipleship" and he knows - because he was willing to give his life as a martyr at the hand of the Nazis in 1945 - sadly, only a day before the concentration camp was liberated. His words though have helped me and challenged me deeply as I prepared for today's sermon:**

**"ABOVE ALL, IT IS COSTLY BECAUSE  
IT COST GOD THE LIFE OF HIS SON,  
"YE WERE BOUGHT AT A PRICE"  
AND**

**WHAT HAS COST GOD  
CANNOT BE CHEAP FOR US!"**

**"ABOVE ALL, IT IS COSTLY BECAUSE  
IT COST GOD THE LIFE OF HIS SON,  
"YE WERE BOUGHT AT A PRICE"  
AND**

**WHAT HAS COST GOD  
CANNOT BE CHEAP FOR US!"**

**I have repeated this, because I feel it is so central to what God is trying to say to us today!!**

**And he goes onto say:**

**"Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without repentance.**

**Baptism without church discipline.**

**Cheap grace is GRACE WITHOUT DISCIPLESHIP**

**GRACE WITHOUT THE CROSS.”**

**What words of Jesus today; the word of God,**

**“That is living and active sharper than any two edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and sprit.” Hebrews 4: 12.**

**The words of Bonhoeffer, mirror and concur the very words of Jesus.**

### **Application**

- 1) In line with scripture, a “Christian” is a disciple of Jesus. So therefore, we should not be influenced by the rest of society or the media or friends to entertain any other definition of what a Christian is.**
- 2) What does Jesus say a disciple is, someone who is:**
  - A follower and learner of Jesus.**
  - Someone who trusts Jesus sacrifice for their salvation. John 3: 16**
  - Someone who walks in Jesus’ footsteps.**
  - Someone who obeys his commands and holds to the teaching of Jesus.**

**Jesus was calling not for “spectators”, but for RECRUITS. When he called for men and women to follow him, he meant not just to tag along behind out of curiosity. The words of Jesus in the scripture today condemn all half-heartedness.**

**He calls us to total submission, that is:**

- EVERYTHING WE ARE**
  - EVERYTHING WE OWN**
  - MUST BE PUT AT HIS DISPOSAL!!**
- 3) So finally, what does this mean for you and me: well I believe it challenges us to reflect, yes we all have busy lives, we have families, we may have children that God has gifted us, but society encourages to put all of our needs ahead of**



- **COST**
- **AUTHENTICITY**
- **WHERE ARE WE IN RELATION TO THIS?**

**This total devotion is what Jesus asks for in today's passage, it is what he expects and demands - it is what he gave us - should he expect anything else in return.**

**I pray that this week, and as we go through the series, we will evaluate our discipleship, our growth and ask Jesus to give us wisdom also into areas that we need to commit to Him and for His sake.**

**Amen.**

**Gary Torbet**

**Sunday 3 February 2013**

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