



## World Christian Fellowship

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### Disciples- Love God more than anything!

#### Matthew 10:34-39

**Matthew 10:34-39**, *“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. <sup>35</sup>For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; <sup>36</sup>and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ <sup>37</sup>He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. <sup>38</sup>And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. <sup>39</sup>He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.*

Augustine Jebakumar, Missionary in Bihar touched my life more than anyone.

#### **Characteristics of Disciples.**

Do not fear men.

Go public with your faith in Christ.

Love God more than anything or anyone.

Jesus was speaking to His twelve disciples. He was about to send them out to proclaim Him in the cities where He was going to go and preach.

Before they went, He gave them instructions and warnings. His focus clearly expands beyond just the twelve to speak to all of us who would be His ambassadors in this world.

He lets us know the kind of world it is that He sends us out into.

**V 16**, we are being sent as sheep in the midst of wolves.

**V 22**, we will be hated by all men for His sake.

Jesus lets us know that there will be times when His followers will suffer at the hands of men for their connection to Him sometimes being arrested and dragged before the authorities (**V 17-18**).

**V 23**, sometimes driven from one city to another by persecution.

**V 21**, sometimes even put to death.

Jesus commands us to be unafraid.

**V 28**, He tells us not to fear those who can kill our bodies but cannot kill our souls.

**V 29**, He tells us to remember confidently that our heavenly Father watches us and values us greatly.

**V32-33**, He commands us to faithfully profess Him before men. If we do, He will profess us before His Father in heaven. This morning we will look at what it will require of us to follow Him. He clears up any delusions we might have about following Him. Makes sure that we understand in advance that it is not the pathway to the easy life.

Jesus is claiming about Himself in these words. Pretend, for a moment, that you never heard these words before!

You were drawing your very first conclusions about Jesus from what He says in them.

He says, "*Do not think that I came . . .*"

He talks about His entry into this world in a way that is quite remarkable.

He didn't say that He was "born" into this world!

But rather that He "came".

To say that He "came" suggests that He existed before He was in this world.

He makes clear that His "coming" was for a reason.

He says that He came for something that we might not have expected at all.

He is letting us know that He existed before He came into this world. His coming into this world was intentional.

It brings about certain surprising and unexpected results.

**Would ever mere man talk about himself in this way?**

What kind of man would claim to have pre-existed, and to have come into this world from outside of it in the fulfilment of a predetermined purpose?

Look at the kind of demands He makes for Himself.

He demands to be loved by His followers more than they would love even the dearest people in their lives more than father or mother. more than son or daughter. He dares to say that if they don't love Him more than even these, then they are not even worthy of Him.

He says that if they don't love Him so much that they are willing die to self - as expressed in the idea of taking up the cross as an instrument of execution, claiming it as their own, and follow after Him then they are not worthy of Him.

**What mere man would think Himself worthy of the supreme love of our hearts even a greater love than that for our own family? Even over our own lives?**

Consider the kind of centrality He places upon Himself.

He says that "life" itself hinges upon Him.

He claims that the man or woman who willingly let go of life in order to follow Him will find that very life.

Whoever refuses the high demands of following Him and chooses instead to hang on to their own life, will lose the very thing that they seek to hang on to.

- ✓ Only someone who presented Himself as the Son of God would make claims like this!
- ✓ Only He would have the authority to demand so much of us.

The Bible teaches us that the One who spoke these words was, indeed, the "Word" who was in the beginning with God the Father.

**John 1:1-2**, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.<sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God.*

**John 1:9**, *That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.*

**John 1:14**, *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

**John 1:12**, *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:*

Only One who is the Son of God would have the right to say such things. And that's who He is. No wonder He demands so much of those who would follow Him.

### **Why is He saying these things to His disciples?**

He is speaking these words in order to warn them in advance of what it costs to follow Him. He is urging them to count the cost of being one of His followers.

He saw that a great multitude of people were following Him. Jesus was not concerned for popularity with the masses. He was not in a big hurry to gather a great number of followers around Himself.

If He was only interested in having lots of followers, He never would have said to them the things He said!

The Bible tells us that He turned to the multitude following after Him and said.

**Luke 14:26-33**, *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. <sup>27</sup>And whoever*

*does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.<sup>28</sup> For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—<sup>29</sup> lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him,<sup>30</sup> saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish'?<sup>31</sup> Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?<sup>32</sup> Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace.<sup>33</sup> So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.*

Someone might be tempted to read that and say, yes Jesus certainly demands a great deal of those who would be His missionaries, or His preachers, or His evangelists!

But I don't feel called to be any of those things. I just want to be one of His simple, humble, little quiet disciples and then go peacefully to heaven.

Jesus doesn't even give us that kind of an option.

He doesn't say, "Whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My missionary, or My preacher, or My evangelist."

He says that you cannot even BE one of His disciples!

If you do not, from the heart, forsake all that you have, and place Him above all other loves in your life, and bear up your cross and follow Him.

Jesus tells us in advance to "count the cost" before we take up to follow Him. He gives us fair warning.

No one else demands as much as Jesus does of His followers.

But then, no one is who He is.

No one else gives us as much as He gives.

This passage puts me to shame. It reveals that I don't yet love Jesus as much as He demands that I love Him.

I am suspecting that every one of us here this morning feels convicted by His words in the same way.

Let us admit that we are falling short of His demands of love. But let's also agree together to this one life-changing desire. We want Him to change us.

Let us resolve together that we will look to this passage and allow the Holy Spirit to strip away from us the things that we love too much.

Let us resolve together to be taught by the Spirit to set the Lord Jesus apart the supreme love of our lives.

I don't believe He is looking for perfection in our love. He knows us too well to look for that in us. But I do believe that He is expecting from us a whole-hearted willingness to be changed by Him into the people He wants us to be.

We really have no right to claim to be His followers, unless we are willing to be made into a people who love Him above every other love in our lives.

Let us consider, then, the high demand of His love in the key areas of our lives, as that demand is laid out for us in this passage.

As we do, let us ask Him to move us closer to the place we should be.

## **1. Love Jesus more than Peace.**

**V 34**, *“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.*

When I began to follow Jesus many years ago, I sincerely thought that it would mean peace. I fully expected a life of peace and tranquillity.

This explains why we haven't experienced that idyllic life of peace and will not so long as we are on this earth as His representative.

**Do you remember what the angels announced to the world concerning Jesus' birth?**

**Luke 2:14**, *“Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”*

The Old Testament tells us that He will be called "Prince of peace".

**Isaiah 9:6**, *For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name*

*will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

So, what does He mean here, when He tells us not to suppose that He came to bring peace on the earth?

Jesus is speaking in the context in which we are to follow Him in everyday experience in this world. It's true that His coming into this world will result in ultimate peace but that peace will come in the long-term when He returns.

Here, however, He is speaking in the short-term of our experience as His ambassadors to the unsaved people of this world. That experience will not be peaceful.

In fact, He says it will be characterized by conflict.

*"Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword."*

When He speaks of what He "brings", a word is used (ballō) that basically means to 'throw' something. It suggests something "sudden" and "unexpected" and perhaps even a bit intrusive.

When you go out into this world to proclaim Jesus to the people who do not yet know Him or follow Him, don't go out with the notion in your mind that that He had come into this

world to throw 'peace' into the mix. That's not the case at all. Far from it!

He has come to throw something unexpected and unwelcome into the mix a 'sword'.

Jesus coming brings about conflict!

Jesus is not giving His followers justification for taking up the sword against unbelievers.

Sadly, some in church history have misinterpreted His words to suggest the aggressive advancement of His kingdom through the use of violence.

But that's not at all what He means.

When Peter took up a literal sword to defend Him, Jesus rebuked Him.

**Matthew 26:52**, *"Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword"*

Jesus isn't speaking of a literal sword being handed over to His followers. Rather, He is using a sword as a figure of conflict a symbol of that which divides His followers from other people that they would have otherwise been connected to.

## 2. Love Jesus more than Family.

Look at the level to which that "division" extends. He says that His coming brings about division at the most fundamental level of human relationships.

**V 35-37**, *For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law';<sup>36</sup> and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'*<sup>37</sup> *He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.*

This is a very high demand of love!

Jesus quotes from the prophecy of Micah.

**Micah 7:6**, *For son dishonours father, Daughter rises against her mother, Daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; A man's enemies are the men of his own household.*

As you might remember, Jesus experienced this first hand.

Even His own brothers did not believe in Him and opposed Him.

**(John 7:2-9).**

Even His own people thought He was out of His mind and sought to lay hold of Him.

**Mark 3:21**, *But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind."*

Some of you have experienced this first hand as well.  
It's a very painful reality.

These words as describing the closest human relationship of family bond that we can imagine.

We naturally feel a bond of devotion to the father and mother who gave life to us and by implication, our grandfather and grandmother.

We naturally feel a bond of devotion to our sons and our daughters and by implication, their sons, and daughters. We even feel a devotion to these family relationships over any other earthly thing even earth itself.

***"Blood is thicker than the water".***

But we can let our devotion to our family supersede our devotion to Jesus. If we do as Jesus Himself says we are not "worthy" of Him.

In the pagan households of Jesus' day, the life of the family centred around the worship of false gods. Every member of the family had a part in that worship.

**Can you imagine how divisive it was when one of the members became a follower of Jesus Christ?**

Such a person, out of devotion to the Saviour, would have to denounce any relationship to the worship of that false god.

They would have to declare that they are following the true God and in doing so, they would be declaring that the whole family was following a false god.

In many ancient households, setting oneself up as an enemy!  
To follow Jesus in such a situation is to experience the kind of division He is talking about.

This is even true of some who follow Jesus in various cultures of the world today.

When a man or woman comes to Jesus Christ, they are immediately motivated by love to share Him with others in the family.

**Afshin Ziafat** becoming Christian and eventually becoming a pastor story.

A follower of Jesus wants other members of the family to become followers of Jesus. They themselves no longer follow the path of the rest of the family. They want to call their loved ones out of the life of sin to which they are accustomed, and to become devoted to the Saviour as they themselves have become.

This kind of zealous love for the salvation of others often brings about resentment and bitterness and division.

The fact is that the kind of peace that Jesus will ultimately bring about first requires conflict. It requires a decision from us. This decision results in division.

It will even result in division from those who are closest to us and mean the most to us.

Following Jesus will take away our peace. He offers us eternal peace in the long-term, but it will cost us our peace in the short-term. He demands that we love Him more than we love that peace and calls us to decide.

If He holds out His hand to you and says, "Will you follow Me? Then give Me your love for peace, and then follow".

## **Will you obey?**

**Luke 14:26**, *If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life also, he cannot be My disciple"*

## **What do you know?**

I have been obeying the Bible all along!

I can't stand my family!

But of course, Jesus isn't commanding us to "hate" our family members.

What He is telling us is that when it comes to a choice being made.

If we are forced into a position in which we must choose between following Jesus or appeasing the objections of our family, then we must choose Jesus every time.

Our love for Him must be so complete and supreme that it makes any other love look like "hate" even the natural love we would feel toward our father or mother, or son or daughter.

## **Two biblical examples:**

**Matthew 8:21-22**, *Then another of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." <sup>22</sup>But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."*

The father may not be even dead yet, but the man felt a tie to his father that was stronger than his tie to Jesus.

Jesus said something that, to those who place family above all else, sounds unspeakable!

If you are still placing your concern for your father over Me?  
Until you make your love for your father secondary to your love for Me, you cannot be a follower of Mine.  
I am the Lord of life!  
Your father and your family may object but You follow Me.

Following Jesus comes first above all else even above our commitment to our earthly fathers.

**1 Corinthians 7:15-16**, *But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. <sup>16</sup>For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?*

Paul was writing to give them instructions about marriage. He wrote to them about situations in which a man or woman

becomes a follower of Jesus Christ from out of a pagan culture, but their spouse does not.

What happens when the unbelieving spouse refuses to follow Jesus and demands that the believer choose between them or Christ?

The believer is not to try to hang on to an unwilling, unbelieving spouse at all costs. If it comes down to a choice between even a spouse and the Lord, the follower of Jesus is to choose the love of the Lord over even the love of the spouse.

These are hard words, aren't they?

But Jesus is letting us know in advance that He demands to hold the first place in our love even above family relations.

**Matthew 22:34-40**, *But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. <sup>35</sup>Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, <sup>36</sup>“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” <sup>37</sup>Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ <sup>38</sup>This is the first and great commandment. <sup>39</sup>And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ <sup>40</sup>On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”*

Our number one priority is to love God above everything else.

Our first priority is to God.

Jesus sets the terms for discipleship, not us.

We are not at liberty to alter and change His words or His demands.

Jesus says that our love and allegiance and loyalty to Him is to supersede every other relationship.

Jesus is to come first.

### **Charles Spurgeon's wife sad about his distraction.**

Charles Spurgeon before he got married, he had picked up his fiancée to take her to a place where he was going to preach. When they arrived, they were separated by the massive crowd of people. Spurgeon was a bit of a celebrity, even as a 20-year-old. Thousands of people were pushing in to hear him preach. So he sort of pushed his way up to the platform and after the meeting was over he couldn't find her anywhere. He just went over to her house. When he found her there and she was sort of pouting and crying. She said, "Charles, you left me in that crowd all alone and you weren't even concerned where I was."

This is what **Charles Spurgeon** said, "I am sorry, but perhaps what happened was providential. I didn't intend to be impolite

but whenever I see a crowd like that waiting for me to preach, I am overwhelmed with a sense of responsibility, I forgot about you. Now, let's get one thing straight, it will have to be the rule of our marriage that the command of my Master comes first you shall have the second place. **Are you willing as my wife to take a second place while I give the first place to Christ?"**

He loved his wife. He loved her to the death. He never made a God out of her. His God was the true God.

**Jesus demands this in His Church.**

**Revelation 2:1-6**, *"To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: 2'I know your works, your labour, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; 3and you have persevered and have patience, and have laboured for My name's sake and have not become weary. 4Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. 6But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*

Lovelessness is a serious matter to Jesus.

They had abandoned love and loyalty and devotion to Jesus.

Jesus is worth our utmost loyalty and devotion.

If Jesus holds out His hand to you and says, "Will you follow Me? Then to do so, you must love Me more than all else. You must give Me first place over even the love and devotion you have to your closest family relationships and then follow"

**Will you obey Him?**

**Will you love Him that much?**

It's hard to imagine that level of love. But that's what He demands.

I have come to believe that, if we can love Him to the degree He speaks of next, then He will truly have our hearts in every other area.

### **3. Love Jesus more than Self.**

**V 38-39**, *And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. <sup>39</sup>He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.*

In understanding Jesus' words, we should not think of the "cross" in the same way that we are accustomed to thinking of it in the history of Christendom.

We tend to look upon it as a symbol of God's redeeming love and atoning sacrifice. But when Jesus spoke these words, there was not yet any such idea associated with the cross.

In His day, the "cross" would be understood as that wooden construction on which a crucifixion occurred. Crucifixions were something that people in Roman cultures saw often.

They were the most outrageous and most humiliating form of execution imaginable. When a particularly notorious criminal was condemned to be executed by the miserable, inhumane method of crucifixion. As a visible symbol of their shame, they were even made to carry their own cross to the place of execution.

Whenever someone "took up" the cross and began to walk up the hill, everyone knew that they weren't coming back. Taking it up meant death.

That's the way Jesus means for us to understand these words. Whoever does not take up their own cross that is, the instrument of their own death to self and follow after Him then they are not worthy of Him.

A love for one's own life is the hardest love of all for sinful people to place into the hand of Jesus.

Yet, Jesus demands to be loved by us even more than we love our own lives. Our decision to place our love for Him over our love for our own lives is the most determinative decision we will ever make.

Jesus expresses this in words that are the most repeated of His phrases in all the Bible.

He says, "*He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.*"

This very phrase is cited a total of six times in the Gospels. He used it on different occasions.

In Matthew 16:24-27, when Peter tried to convince Him that He would not suffer the cross.

**Matthew 16:24-27**, *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. <sup>25</sup>For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. <sup>26</sup>For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his*

soul?<sup>27</sup> For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

**Luke 9:22-26**, saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day."<sup>23</sup> Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.<sup>24</sup> For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.<sup>25</sup> For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?<sup>26</sup> For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.

**Luke 17:31-33**, "In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back.<sup>32</sup> Remember Lot's wife.<sup>33</sup> Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.

**John 12:23-26**, But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.<sup>24</sup> Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.<sup>25</sup> He who loves his life will lose it, and he who

*hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.* <sup>26</sup>*If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honour.*

Surely, this was a point that Jesus meant to have made clear to those who would be His followers.

He means for it to sink into our hearts deeply. He means by it to show how great our love is to be for Him. It is to be even above our love for our own lives.

We can be sure that He means for us to see, by these words, that if we are made to choose between denying Him and living, or confessing Him and dying, we are to choose to love Him and die.

But I believe it is also meant to be understood in terms of practical every-day experiences.

If we make it our ambition to pursue the advancement of our own brief life on this earth our own pleasure, our own comfort, our own desires. We place that ambition above the cost of following Jesus, then by that very act, we lose the very life we are seeking to hang on to!

We may have an extension of a natural life, and it may be made into a very comfortable life. But we lose eternity.

What a bad exchange!

But if, on the other hand, we make it our ambition to pursue the kingdom of Jesus Christ above all else, and we place our love for our Saviour above the love of even a comfortable life on earth, we gain the very thing we give up - life!

In fact, we gain life eternal!

Whoever lays down a temporal life FOR Jesus, in order to gain life eternal WITH Jesus, has made the wisest possible choice!

In all of this, Jesus shows us how much He demands of us if we would follow Him.

He demands to be the first love of our lives,

- above our own peace,
- above our devotion to family,
- above even above our own lives.

So, it's true - following Jesus is no easy road.

Yet, I suggest that it's not too great a thing to ask of us when we consider what He gave up for us.

Didn't He give up the peace and tranquillity of heaven in order to come to this earth to save us from our sins?

Didn't He experience the distress of having His own Father turn from Him as He bore our sins on the cross - causing Him to cry out, "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*" (**Matthew 27:46**)?

Didn't He love us above His own life to the point of submitting Himself to death on our behalf "*even the death of the cross*" (**Philippians 2:8**)?

When we see who He is and how much He has loved us, is it unreasonable that He would demand that we love Him in the same way?

**How could we not follow such a Saviour, and give Him first place in our heart's love?**

## **Conclusion:**

### **Henry Martyn**

Henry Martyn went to India and spent a lifetime there. Already in India he had done more than his share of missionary service when he announced that he was going to go to Persia because God had laid it upon his heart to translate the New Testament

and the Psalms into the Persian language. By then he was an old man.

They told him that if he stayed in India he would die because of the heat. And then they told him that Persia was hotter than India. But he went, nonetheless. Studied the Persian language. Translated the entire New Testament and the Psalms in nine months. He was told that he couldn't print it or circulate it until he received the Shah's permission.

So, he travelled 800 miles to Tehran, and he was denied permission to see the Shah. He turned around and made a 400-mile trip to find the British ambassador. The ambassador gave him the proper kinds of papers and sent him back to the Shah.

So, he travelled another 400 miles. That makes 1600 miles. He rode this at night on the back of a mule and rested during the studied the Persian language. Translated the entire New Testament and the Psalms in nine months.

He finally arrived and was received by the Shah who gave him permission for the Scriptures to be printed and circulated in Persia.

Ten days later in he died.

But shortly before he had written in his diary this statement: "**I sat and thought with sweet comfort and peace of my God. In solitude my Companion, my Friend, and Comforter.**"

Certainly not a life of ease but a life worth remembering.