

***1 John 3:16 (KJV)***

*Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

Or as the English Standard Version says it, ***1 John 3:16 (ESV)*** *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.*

This echoes what Jesus tells us in ***John 15:12-13 (KJV)*** *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*

Jesus tells us that we should love each other to the point where we would give up our lives for each other. That is a pretty tall order. That doesn't sound like coming to church when it is convenient for us, does it?

That doesn't sound like coming to church just to hear the music and go home with a warm fuzzy feeling, does it?

That sounds more like a commitment, doesn't it?

But that is exactly what our Lord and Saint John are saying, that we should be willing, out of love, to be so committed to Jesus Christ that we would die for each other, that we would be so committed to our Lord that we would sacrifice ourselves for each other.

Being a Christian is not an easy task, particularly when we take it seriously. We have to remember that Jesus tells us ***Matthew 10:38 (KJV)*** *And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.*

*And again in **Matthew 16:24 (KJV)** If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

And again in **Luke 14:27 (KJV)** *And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*

Let's listen to that last saying from Luke, *And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*

If we do not bear our crosses and follow Jesus we cannot be his disciples.

What is mean to be a disciple? What is discipleship? What do you think of when you hear the term disciple?

For openers, let us just say a disciple is a person who is totally committed to Jesus Christ, to God. Let us say that a disciple is a person who has wholly given himself over to our Lord without any reservation or contingency, a person who allows the Holy Spirit to rule and direct their every thought and action.

Discipleship, in other words, is giving up of our "self" in all respects to the will of God.

Discipleship means looking at the long haul not the short term. It might mean that we may be unhappy for a while.

**Luke 14:33 (KJV)** *So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*

We are told that we have to put Jesus, to put God, first in our lives above all else. We cannot hold back anything.

What has happened to our churches today is that we have forgotten what it means to be disciples. What has happened in our churches today is that we have looked the other way when confronted with the declining morals of society and the world. What has happened

to our churches today is that we have become “members of the church” instead of Disciples of Christ.

We often have we been like the old story of the elderly man who used to stand up at each prayer meeting to pray, “Use me, O Lord, use me... in some advisory capacity.”

Being a disciple instead of a member is being willing to make the effort when it ISN'T convenient. God calls us to put Him first, not ourselves.

Lou Holz, the famous football coach pointed out the difference between being merely involved and truly committed to a cause. “The Kamikaze pilot that was able to fly missions was involved – not committed.”

Jesus says it this way **Luke 14:26 (ESV)** *"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.*

Jesus does not want us to be merely involved with His Church. He wants us to be totally dedicated in everything we do.

If we dedicate all that we are and all that we do to God, then our lives totally become a prayer. If we dedicate our very selves to God, then all that we do and all that we say will become a witness to all those that we meet along this life's journey.

Each moment of our life is a gift from God. We can use that gift to satisfy our personal gratification or we can use that gift for the Kingdom. God gives us that free will.

We can be casual Christians, being involved when it convenient for us or we can be committed Christians putting God first always.

If you have read any of the Mitford series, you know the prayer that never fails, “Thy will be done.”

If we live our lives according to the will of God not our self will, we will be blessed beyond all measure. **Matthew 6:25 (KJV)** *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Matthew 6:33 (KJV)* *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

And again in **Luke 6:38 (KJV)** *Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.*

God doesn't want part of us. He wants all of us, our hearts, our souls our minds and our bodies as a Holy Loving gift.

Laid on thine altar, O my Lord, Divine,  
Accept my gift this day, for Jesus' sake;  
I have no jewels to adorn thine shrine,  
No world-famed sacrifice to make;  
And here I bring within my trembling hands  
This will of mine, a thing that seemeth small;  
Yet thou alone canst understand  
That when I yield Thee this, I yield Thee all!

Amen.