

MILE

2

TRANSFORMED – Our Lives Renewed to be Like Christ (a DISCIPLESHIP Journey)

Mile Marker 2 ... “The Call to ‘Follow Jesus’ in Costly Discipleship and the Call to Transformation”

Luke 14:25-35 and Romans 12:1-2

In Mile Marker 1, we took a big picture view of the story of salvation – God’s big STORY that runs throughout the pages of Scripture. Through Jesus, the Good News announces that our stories become a part of this broader STORY. When we place our faith in Christ (*i.e.* responding to Him through our believing in Him, our repentance, our confession of Jesus as Lord and our baptism), we become a part of those who are “saved by GRACE through FAITH,” as Paul puts it in Ephesians 2.

Yet, the story of salvation doesn’t stop at our conversion; just like a physical birth leads from there to a person’s life, so it is with our “new birth” in Christ – we are “born again.” Even as Ephesians 2 celebrates God’s grace and eliminates human works in our salvation, *Paul still takes us in 2:10 to the implication that “we are God’s masterpiece” (workmanship); He has created anew in Christ Jesus for good works.* In other words, there is far more to our lives of faith that extends beyond our initial conversion. This is a theme that the NT announces quite frequently as part of the Good News (*e.g.* see Galatians 2:20 or Romans 6:3-4 where Paul uses the baptism/immersion imagery to suggest the idea of dying and rising to *new life*). Overall, this curriculum is about our **ongoing journey of faith in Christ**. This idea of a “JOURNEY” is a good metaphor for us to consider when it comes to our lives of faith – it will be useful for us over the next several mile markers. (It’s even why we’re using this mile marker imagery because it suggests that we are progressing on a journey.)

For your reflection: when you think of a JOURNEY, what comes to mind?

Use the space below to write down some ways it is a good metaphor for our lives of faith beyond initial conversion. Think of some ways it offers a good point of comparison (i.e. a start, a goal, an ongoing process, etc.).

For Mile Marker 2, we are going to look at this idea of our faith JOURNEYS through two basic “calls” that come *with* the invitation to salvation – **(1) the call to “follow Me (Jesus)” in costly discipleship** and **(2) the call to transformation**. In the end, we should not see these as separate calls, but more as two aspects of our lives of faith, perhaps even as two ways of looking at the same journey of faith. (*NOTE: There are other calls – to holiness, to mission, etc. – but we’re using these two themes of discipleship and transformation as an umbrella under which any others would fit.*) The remainder of the mile markers in this journey will focus on these two basic calls.

The Call to “Follow Jesus” in Costly Discipleship

Especially early on in Jesus’ earthly ministry, we see Him inviting people to “FOLLOW Him” (Matthew 4:18-22; 9:9; Luke 5:1-11 or see John 1:35ff). Those who accepted His invitation became His disciples. It was a common 1st century relationship, a teacher (a.k.a. a “rabbi” or “master”) would lead students who “followed” as learners. On one level, the teaching was about **content** where a basic message or way of life was taught. On another level, it was about **the living out/application** of that content as it was modeled in everyday life, more along the lines of an apprenticeship. In fact, according to Dallas Willard in his book *The Divine Conspiracy*, **the idea of an APPRENTICE is a good way for us to grasp what being a disciple was (and is) all about.** It’s about learning the content, but also living it out by actually walking in the footsteps of the master – carrying-out what the teacher modeled.

Jesus’ first century disciples were such APPRENTICES – they followed the message of Jesus, but also learned to walk in His example, *literally walking behind Him!*

It’s different for us today because we cannot actually walk behind Jesus. And yet, we still have His message/teaching to embrace as well as His model to carry-out. In that way, we too are still called to be His “FOLLOWERS.”

How does seeing ourselves as Jesus’ disciples/apprentices change the way you think about your identity in Christ? What are some other labels that might be used?

What does this language of “following” Jesus suggest about the ACTIVITY of your life that flows out of your identity in Christ ... especially in contrast to a more generic term like “Christian” or “believer?”

Here’s how Dallas Willard describes what it means for us to be Jesus’ 21st century disciples or apprentices (this is such a crucial concept to our understanding of our lives of faith!):

*“I am learning from Jesus to live **my** life as He would live my life if He were I. I am not necessarily learning to do everything He did, but I am learning how to do everything I do in the manner that He did all that He did.”*

How do you respond to this way of thinking about your identity in Christ and discipleship? Reflect on the implications for what it means about your life.

As we think about this call to “follow Jesus,” we want to consider **Luke 14:25-35** where Jesus offers a broader invitation to discipleship. However, a significant part of this message highlights the reminder of what it requires from those who choose to say “yes.” In other words, it emphasizes the “COST” of discipleship (**see also Matthew 16:24-25 = a great discipleship text to memorize!**)

Even before we dig-in to this text, especially in the context of being saved by grace (freely given/received), how do you respond to the idea of discipleship being COSTLY?

READ Luke 14:25-35 ... we'll take some time to reflect on these words below:

Let's start with verses 34-35 where Jesus emphasizes the urgency of these words with the metaphor of salt (the point is trying to claim Jesus without truly following Jesus like salt that is not genuinely salt any longer) and with an emphasis on hearing the message (v. 35b – it's a common way Jesus says "pay attention!").

Otherwise, this text offers **3 "Discipleship DEMANDS" (vv. 26, 27 and 33)**. In each of the three verses, there is language of "cannot be my disciple" – in other words, there is a sense of *disqualification* if we are not willing to embrace following Jesus on His terms, not ours! **Of course, underlying this whole text is the reminder that Jesus is worth it ... as are His benefits!**

	Write down the "DEMAND"	What does that mean practically?
v. 26*		
v. 27**		
v. 33		

* The word "HATE" is a comparative word – not a "strong disdain." Jesus is really asking a question about where He ranks in our lives when compared to others. *Ultimately, when Jesus is in the right place as #1, then all of other relationships will fall into their rightful place and we will be better spouses, parents, siblings, etc.*

** This idea is also part of the text in Matthew 16:24-25. **Again, that is a great discipleship text to memorize as part of this mile marker.**

In verses 28-32, we see two parables that are going to emphasize the same point about "counting the cost" (see v. 28a) – notice the similarities: (1) a scenario ... (2) the idea of "first sitting down" to do some reflection and evaluation (an act of deliberation) ... (3) the results of that deliberation. ***What does that suggest about the seriousness of answering Jesus' call to "follow me?"***

How do these ideas of "counting the cost" and discipleship DEMANDS contrast to the way we frequently reduce "accepting Jesus" into a simple, low-cost response ("cheap grace")?

We can imagine the "cost" for other followers of Jesus around the globe, but what are the "costs" you've experienced because of your discipleship?

The Call to Transformation

Like the call to discipleship, this call to transformation has the same basic end goal: each one of us becoming more and more like Christ. This is really how we best measure our growth spiritually. To go back to Dallas Willard's definition of a disciple, how much am I living my life as Christ would be living my life? In the midst of our responsibilities at home, at work, at church, in the midst of our social lives, etc., how much is my life *CHRIST-LIKE*?! In Him, we are to experience a radical makeover of our lives – every part of who we are from the inside-out made to be more like Him.

Romans 12:1-2 reminds us that this is our proper response to God's mercy and grace. After 11 chapters describing the trouble we're in on our own because of sin and celebrating what the Good News of what God has done to save us, Paul writes these words. **READ Romans 12:1-2.**

Make sure you notice the opening of v. 1 – this is our RESPONSE to God's activity ... not what we are doing to earn His favor, but because we've graciously and freely received it! ***Our journeys of faith are fueled (motivated!) by what God has already done for us in Christ.***

Verse 1 emphasizes whole-life worship – our bodies and lives “offered” to God as living sacrifices, not dying for Christ, but actively living for Him (see Galatians 2:20).

Verse 2 emphasizes this idea of transformation with two basic commands (and a result at the end ... we will be able to grasp better God's good, pleasing and perfect will).

COMMAND #1 “Don't be **CONFORMED**” = refusing to allow our world to shape/mold us ... not just in the “evil” realities, but also the more “neutral” realities that shape us according to the world as opposed to the ways of Christ.

What are some ways you struggle in not being CONFORMED to the pattern of this world?

COMMAND #2 “Be **TRANSFORMED**” (NLT says “Let God transform you ...”) – the Greek word is the same word as our English word for *metamorphosis*; see also 2 Corinthians 3:18.

This is a PRESENT-TENSE verb in the Greek; that means ongoing action ... our TRANSFORMATION journey is a life-long process, not an immediate arrival.

This is a PASSIVE verb; that means it is what is done *to us* not necessarily by us (it's why the NLT appropriately supplies “God” as the active subject) ... as we will see next week, this is the Spirit's work in us.

This is also still an IMPERATIVE verb; that means a command ... we still have responsibility in this partnership (see Philippians 2:12-13!).

What stands out to you about this call to TRANSFORMATION and what it involves? Reflect on the importance of each individual aspect of this command. Which emphasizes what you most need to remember on your TRANSFORMATION journey?