

199409 becomingadisciple moran

Let me first of all clarify one matter. I did play baseball in former days, when I was younger, and when my legs would do what my head said they should do. I played second base.

I tried my hand at shortstop. Tried my hand at third base, and that was no good. I had to look at the ball at least one more hop.

Third base is a hot box, and that was too hot for me, so I stayed at second and stayed at... well, I didn't stay at short, I really stayed at second base. And when I went to Zion Church as pastor, I felt that I wanted the men to know, especially some new converts. There were some men who had just been saved, out of backgrounds that were tough.

And I felt I wanted them to know that a pastor could do more than pray and push pencils, and they got together a fast-pitch softball team. And I said, I can do that. And I could then, and so I did.

I went out and played ball. I played with them about six years. I remember the one fellow who had just gotten saved.

He also played softball, and it really brought us together. But he couldn't understand, you know, he'd never seen me without a tie. I don't know what that says about my personality, but nonetheless, that's the way it was.

I had always had either a tie or always had at least dress slacks on. So when I put on clothes that you play ball in and put on a ball hat, he didn't recognize me. And I was out shagging grounders just before going into some practice and so on.

I heard him whisper real loudly to one of the guys, Is that the preacher? Is that the preacher? He couldn't believe that a preacher would do more than that. I also told my sons, who at that time obviously were much younger than they are now, they know better now, but then they didn't know. Dad was, I mean, Dad was great.

And I told them how I used to play ball. Now mind you, I told them the truth. I used to hold my own all right.

And so they came out to see Dad play. The last game I played, as I remember, I believe it was the last game I played, I had gotten a hit and was on third base. Now only you who understand softball or baseball will appreciate this.

The rest of you, you tune in for the study that we're going to have in just a moment, okay? I was on third base, and a batter hit a dribbler down first baseline. And on third base you have a choice. You either score when they throw to first.

You've got to make up your mind. You've got to listen to the coach and make up your mind

whether you can make it or not. And I said to myself, I can make it.

As my head said to my legs, we can make it. My legs said to my head, you've got to be fooling. And when they fielded the ball and threw to first, I took off from third for home.

My head got out in front of my legs, and somehow my legs just could not catch up. My head was saying to my legs what they were supposed to do, and my legs were saying, we're trying, we're trying. And I thought, in front of my two boys who were watching the game, I was going to have a beautiful slide at home.

One of these close plays where you slide in under the tag and come up, you know, and lift your hat. And I went in head first, rolling. I did make it.

I did score, but I rolled across home plate. And I looked anything, I had anything but finesse. No finesse at all.

And I got up, and in my heart I said, dear Lord, if you give me enough sense, I'll never try this again. And so, gentlemen, I want to tell you, I'll be out watching the game, but you will not make a fool of me out here with these young guys whose legs still do what their heads tell them to do. I hope the old, I hope the guys who, the older I get, there's no such thing as old people anymore, just people who've lived longer.

I hope the people who've lived longer teach them how to play ball. I just lost some young friends, I suppose, by saying that. But I hope, I hope the guys who've been around a little longer teach them how to play softball.

Now, that's all extra. It has nothing to do with the Bible study. What is all of this about discipleship, folks? What is all of this about discipleship? In the last number of years, missionary church and across evangelicalism, across evangelical churches, Baptist churches, Presbyterian churches, Free Methodist churches, Nazarene churches, Evangelical Methodist churches, Evangelical missionary church, the evangelical church, the missionary church, all across evangelicalism in the last 15 years, there has been a strong, strong move in the direction of what we have come to term discipleship.

And I bless that movement. I personally bless with all of my heart. Whoever first began to understand that there was a lot more to serving Jesus than coming to faith, coming to believing.

And we became serious in the missionary church, and you have become serious in the evangelical missionary church, concerning discipleship. There was a long time in my own Christian life when the term disciple and the term believer meant the same thing. And it rather geared us for what we thought, some of us, for what we thought about the Great Commission, about going into all the world and making disciples.

And for me, in my mind, for a long period of time, there were two things that stood out. One

was God said, you better go. And obviously, I think we've all, most of us have come to understand that's not what that, that's not what it says.

The understanding is that we will be going. And as you go, make disciples. There are some things God, really, it should not be necessary for God to demand that we do.

And so in the original, the idea is, as you go, make disciples. And in my mind, the second thing was, as you go, get people converted. Well, obviously, that is involved, but a lot more than that is involved.

The whole matter of making disciples involves much more than making believers or bringing people to faith. It hasn't been all that long ago that I was in a meeting, and a man for whom I have a lot of respect. To this day, I have a lot of respect.

But we were talking in one of these board meetings where we were solving all the problems of the world. We were talking about believing and believers and disciples. And I voiced, along with a couple of others, I voiced that I felt there was a difference, a marked difference, between a believer and a disciple.

And the man for whom, to this day, I still have a lot of respect, rather rebuked me. He didn't mean to be rebuking me, actually. He just was correcting me lest I would lead people astray.

And he made it well known that believer and disciple means the same thing. Well, I just want to tell you this morning that I still believe. I personally still believe that there is a vast difference between a believer and a disciple.

Becoming a true believer in Jesus does not automatically make one a true disciple of Jesus. A true disciple must first be a believer. That is obvious.

But to become a believer, coming to faith, coming to acceptance in faith of all that Calvary has provided for us, is a tremendous step, obviously, and the first step in coming into relationship with the Lord Jesus. But becoming a disciple is much more than that. In fact, we can use that term disciple, whether referring to a believer or not, although I don't want to press this, but in John chapter 2, the record says Jesus took some of his disciples, and so they were already called disciples.

He took some of his disciples to the marriage in Cana of Galilee. It speaks of his disciples. If we don't keep the timing correct, we will think that all 12 were involved, and actually only Andrew and Philip and Nathanael and Peter and John were involved at this particular time.

But he went to the marriage in Cana of Galilee, and they saw him do this miracle, and it said the disciples put their trust in him. I personally believe that they'd already come to faith, and the miracle confirmed their believing, confirmed their faith. But in John chapter 8 and verse 31, on the other hand, Jesus spoke to many who had put their faith in him, and they had become believers, and Jesus makes this all-important statement to them.

If you read the context, the statement was desperately needed. He says, to the Jews who had believed in him, Jesus said, If you hold my teaching, you are really my disciples. So there is a sense in which coming to faith, or coming to a point of believing, puts us in position where we may now start the long process, or process, as you say.

I'm trying to learn your words. Schedule and such things as that. Please forgive me if I just keep it American, because I can't think double-barreled.

The whole process, or process, of being a disciple, believing takes place. How long does it take to come to faith? That long. When faith touches the promises, and faith believes in Jesus, the miracle takes place.

How long does it take to become a disciple? How long? There is no end, is there? Anyone who is here this morning saying, well, I have now arrived, you have just ceased to be a disciple. For the whole matter is an ongoing process from here until Jesus comes. And so I want to just share with you this morning, from the context which was read a few moments ago, and referring to a couple of other places where Jesus speaks of discipleship, with all of our discipleship programs, and I am assuming that your church, maybe, or possibly many of our churches at least, have instituted, they've begun discipleship programs, or ministries involving discipleship.

And I am very grateful, so long as they don't just remain programs, so long as it is not just another type of thing that people sort of go through. For this whole matter of becoming a disciple of Jesus involves much more than enrolling in the program in your church. There are three areas of willingness that are absolutely necessary if we are to become, as believers, disciples of Jesus.

There must be a willingness to learn. There must be a willingness to lose. And there must be a willingness to love.

Or you can go through all the programs, apart from any one of those areas. You can go through all the programs you want to, and never really become a disciple of the Lord Jesus. A disciple of Christ must show, number one, a willingness to learn.

But what does the word disciple mean? Learner, that's right, absolutely. So this isn't really all that theologically involved, folks. When I say a disciple must be a learner, and the learning process takes a lifetime, I'm not really so theologically bent on that.

It's just, it's the meaning of the term. Disciple, pupil, learner, one who is in the process of learning. Learning what? Well, learning all that is involved in discipleship, but learning most of all about the teacher, primarily.

I repeat again, in this whole matter of believing in Jesus, believing to salvation takes place in a moment. I mean, at least it comes to fruition in a moment. It may, building, coming to faith may take a long time for some, but it finally reaches a point where faith believes.

You either are or aren't. And faith takes hold, and faith says, I can, I will, I do believe that Jesus saves me now. When it comes to discipleship, there's a lot of time, and a lot of effort, and a lot of striving involved in discipleship.

It takes time if one is going to be a learner. Obviously, one thing, it takes study, doesn't it? And what are we talking, what are we going to study? Theology books. No, well, that doesn't hurt if you get the right ones.

But you study the book, the Word of God itself. And so I'm going to back up. This is so simple, I almost say, Lord, shall we go through it? Yes, I think we should go through it again, because I'm surprised how many of God's people don't read the book.

They don't have a regular time of spending with the Word. I was in a district not long ago. I won't tell you whether it was in Canada.

Well, it was in the United States. Might have been true here, too, I don't know. But it was in the United States.

I was in a district. We were sitting around a group of pastors. And the district superintendent asked the pastors, How do you spend time with your wives in prayer and in the study of the Word? You know what I found out? Every one of those pastors confessed they don't spend much time praying with their wives.

I was rather surprised. I didn't feel like giving them big guilt stuff, because all of us know it is not easy to establish that. I mean, here sits my wife.

There's no use for me to stand here and try to make you believe we've just solved all the problems to this. When schedules are full, it is tough. It is a tough thing.

And it takes a lot of effort. And it takes a lot of, sometimes, ingenuity. And I thought to myself, if pastors find this difficult, I wonder about our people, too.

So, I'm just going to talk to you, folks. So you just keep looking this way. And just let Jesus say to you what He wants to say to you.

You cannot be a disciple. You cannot be a learner. You cannot be a pupil.

You cannot be a follower. A learning follower of Jesus. Without taking some time.

Some type of planning. To spend, number one, alone with the Word. And number two, with your family.

And those who are involved, who are the closest to you. And husbands, you ought to take the lead. You really should.

And again, please, believe me when I say I don't like making people feel guilty. I don't like it

when people try to make me feel guilty. I really don't respond to that very well at all.

So I'm not here trying to do that. I'm just saying, if Jesus wants to talk to you, just listen to Him. And don't feel guilty.

Just straighten it out. And so, husbands, you're the leader in your home. That's what the book says.

That's what the Bible says. You want to be a disciple? You want to be a learner? You want to be a true pupil of the Lord? Not just a believer, but a learning believer? Then it will take time. It takes time in prayer as well.

It takes time to be alone with Jesus. You can't be a pupil without spending some time with your teacher. I know a preacher who betrayed himself on one occasion.

And I think maybe all of us would have to confess guilt at this point. All of us who stand behind a pulpit periodically. I think, personally, one of the greatest marks of a disciple is getting rid of all of our prejudiced ideas about what we think God ought to be doing and what we think the Bible ought to say.

Some discipleship programs are tremendous at helping you build your military, your spiritually military arsenal to defend your pet ideas. Some discipleship programs are, you know, your 12 favorite verses. That's all that some people know, the 12 favorite verses that they learned in their discipleship program and it built up their little arsenal for all these little ideas that we have.

The pastor, the preacher got up and announced his subject. And he said, I had an awful time. He said, it wasn't hard getting the message.

He said, he got the message all together and got all the points all lined up. But he said, I had an awful time finding a scripture to back up what I wanted to say. And I thought, dear Lord, help me, because I think I've stood there too sometimes.

And I think, I never said that. I never had the nerve to say that to people, you know, right up in front of them. I never had them, but I did it.

I got my ideas about how I think God ought to do things. And so I just go and I find the scriptures that come the closest. That's not being a disciple, is it? That's not being a learner.

A learner simply goes to the Word and reads it as it is and takes it as it is and tries to adjust his or her life to fit what the Word of God says, what it really says. And in the whole process of becoming a disciple, there is a principle that is very, very important, and that is this. Matthew 10, 24, Luke 6, 40, for those of you who are writing down notes.

Jesus lays down the clear principle involving a learner and a master. He says that a student is not above his teacher, and a servant is not above his master. But here's what I want us to get.

Jesus says it is enough for the student to be like his teacher and the servant to be like his master. And over in Luke, Luke adds this. Everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.

When I was in Bethel College, Reverend S.I. Emory was the statesman. Any of you remember S.I. Emory? You will appreciate then. Only one.

That betrays you. S.I. Emory was a man's preacher. Ladies didn't care for him too much because he was a military man, and he preached like this, and he had a gravelly voice.

And you thought he was mad at the world half the time, and I think half the time he was. And he used to say, Say, I don't care about your ideas, what you think and what he thinks. I don't know what the book says.

And a whole bunch of us wanted to be like S.I. Emory, but we couldn't get our voice down like his. We wanted to be like our teacher because we admired, we appreciated. And I spent a year under Q.J. Everest.

I had the privilege of working with Dr. Q.J. Everest. It was an intern program. Dr. Everest had great big still does, great big farmer hands, big fingers.

He used to point down across that pulpit, and all 500 of us would duck, sitting in the congregation at Gospel Center Church. He told me one time, he says, Don't you ever make fun of that finger. He said, That finger's put a whole lot of people under conviction.

And I felt I wanted to be like Q.J. Everest. This was when I was just coming out of Bethel College. I went down to North Manchester.

I was supposed to be the pastor at North Manchester. I didn't know how you were supposed to do it anyway. And the only people I'd watched are people I'd watched.

And Q.J. Everest used to have a way when he'd get into his preaching, he'd put his hands, and he had a way of doing it. I tried to get it. I never could get it.

He used to bring his hands back, and he'd put them on his hips, and he'd rock back and forth when he'd preach. And I went down to North Manchester, and I put my hands on my hips, and I rocked back and forth. I tried to preach like Q.J. Everest.

I was trying to be like my teacher. I found out it doesn't work inhumanly. I mean, you can be like Jesus, and you're always safe.

Try to be like Q.J. Everest, and you've got a real problem. And finally the Lord said, John, why don't you just be who you are, and let Q.J. Everest be who he is, and let us, I, Emory, be who he is. You just be who you are, and I think you and I'll get along a whole lot better.

And so that's the way it finally ended up. Who is the real teacher, folk? Jesus is the master. He's the master teacher.

And it's enough, Jesus said, to be like your teacher. We ought to be striving to be like Jesus. And it's much more, folk.

It involves much more to be like Jesus than to be like Q.J. Everest. Much more. It has to do with spirit.

It has to do with commitment. And it has to do with reacting sometimes against your grain, because Jesus is the teacher. The song says, O to be like thee, O to be like thee, blessed Redeemer, pure as thou art, come in thy sweetness, come in thy fullness, and stamp thine own image deep on my heart.

So number one has to do with learning. And I want to say that process never stops. Until Jesus comes, until we're in a glorified body, we ought to always be striving to be better disciples, learners, pupils.

But that means we have to have a teachable spirit. And I think one of the saddest, one of the saddest things that can happen to a Christian, one of the saddest, is when a person gets to the place where he feels that his young pastor, or older pastor for that matter, has nothing more to teach me. I've learned it.

And there are some people who kind of get the feeling, you know, that God has really put me here to teach him. And there are, and I think there is something to be said for that. But usually the people who are the best teachers, those who have made the most lasting impact on my life, are not those who set out to do it.

They're those who just lived before me, and they earned the right to once in a while speak to me very directly about how I was living. And I welcomed it, because they'd earned the right. They'd earned my confidence.

I have a little problem. Now this may be my problem. I'm not saying, you know, I'm right and everybody else is wrong.

I'm just saying I do have a problem with people who get messages from God. They don't even know me at all. Never have met me.

I don't know them. I don't have the slightest clue how they're living. Don't have the slightest clue.

And they come, and they have messages straight from God for me. And I'm supposed to take it. Just believe it.

I'm going to tell you, folk, if I had accepted every message that ever came in my life, I would be one paranoid person. It's enough to be like the Master, is what Jesus says. It's enough to be like the Master, like the Teacher.

And it is enough, I believe, blessed is the person who has a few people who has won his or her

confidence enough that they can come to that person and say, in my case, John, God has been talking to me about you. I believe I have a message for you. And my heart is open to take it because I know, number one, they love me, they're concerned, and they want my best.

My wife is one of those. I'll tell you, blessed is the wife. Blessed is the wife, or blessed is the man who has a wife who believes in him, so that when she... Now, you look at that little smile down there, and you think, oh, she would never do anything like that.

Let's just let him believe it, honey. Just let him believe it. Now, there are times when she says, John, John, but I know she loves me, I know she would not undercut me, I know she would not do anything to really hurt me in my ministry or in just who I am.

She desperately wants me to believe in myself. She has trouble getting me to do that sometimes. That's number one.

A learner, a learner. A disciple, secondly, a disciple of Christ must show a willingness to lose. To lose.

Not be a loser. I don't believe, folk, I just don't believe that Christians are losers. Christians are winners.

If there's ever a winner in the world, it's a Christian. But it's through the winner. It's through Christ.

But we must be willing to lose ourselves. In Luke's Gospel, he says, anyone, in verse 27, chapter 14, verse 27, anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. You can call that person whatever you want to, you can't call him my disciple.

He cannot be my disciple. Verse 33, any of you who does not give up everything he has, what? cannot be my disciple. You can call him whatever you want to, but he cannot be my disciple.

Those are the words of Jesus. And in the context, then he gives two illustrations that rebukes me in my own heart, because sometimes I have tried to just push people into a total yieldedness and coming under the lordship of Jesus. I've tried to just work them in.

You know what the Lord said? I'm going to give every one of you time to count the cost. Because if you don't count the cost, you probably won't give your all anyway. And he gave two illustrations.

He said the person is going to build a tower. What does he do? He sits down, and he counts the cost. And he weighs the pros and the cons.

And he settles in his mind so that he doesn't lay the foundation. And then he can't finish, and he's embarrassed. I mean, it's a rather practical, silly little illustration.

But what Jesus is saying is this whole matter of coming to discipleship, the whole matter of

really losing ourselves in Jesus, is not sort of a flippy little thing that we do at camp meeting time because everybody says we ought to. We ought to count the cost. And I think one of the reasons that we have problems with people who say, I've been at the altar 12 times.

I've been there over 14 times. I've been down at that altar every camp meeting. And I always, I never, never, never have been able to come to commitment.

Maybe, folks, maybe you've never, ever, really counted the cost. It will cost you everything if you're going to follow Jesus as a disciple. Let me lower my voice just a little bit on that because that kind of bombs its way out, doesn't it? It will cost you everything.

If a person does not, Jesus said, if he's not willing to give up everything he has, he cannot be my disciple. Here's another illustration. It says a military leader looks out, he sees an army coming to attack.

He's going to use some sense, he's going to count the cost to see whether he can handle that army or maybe it'd be a whole lot more sense to make peace. When it comes to Jesus, folks, it's a whole lot better to make peace with Jesus. This idea of having war with the Lord all the time, it makes for a long, long, hard life.

The cost is too high. You might better just make peace with the Lord. Come to terms with the Lord and give yourself.

And he uses the whole idea of the cross. What does it mean to bear the cross of Jesus? I think we have, sometimes at least, I think we have rather short-changed what the cross really means. We talk about the hard things that we go through and we're bearing our cross.

And there is something to be said for that. Tough times in life, we bear the cross. We bear our cross.

It's our cross to bear. And yet, folks, in the Scriptures, the cross, when the cross is spoken of, it's not talking just about hard times. If that be true, the whole world has hard times.

Rwanda, you'll never go, probably, you will never go through what Rwanda people are going through right now, but has very little with bearing the cross of Jesus. The cross was constructed in that day only for one reason. What was it? Death.

Somebody was going to die on that cross. Somebody. It was a mode of capital punishment in that day.

Usually criminals. Usually. Jesus' cross was not for a criminal.

They thought He was a criminal. But His cross was different. But it did mean death.

And so when the Scriptures speak of the cross, Christian friend, please hear me, and I speak to my own heart, because it's a whole lot easier for me to stand here and say this across this pulpit

than it is to actually see it worked out in my life. I just want you to know that. And so I assume that it's a whole lot easier for you to nod while I'm saying this than it is to work it out in your life as well.

When it comes to the matter of the cross of Christ, it has to do with dying. It has to do with doing away with all that you used to be. Here's the way Paul says it in Galatians 2.20, I have been crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but it's Christ who's living in me. In Romans chapter 6, the whole idea of baptism. We immersionists who make such a big to-do about how we baptize people.

Please don't misunderstand me. I'm working toward a point. I personally am an immersionist.

I don't think God is as concerned about the mode as I am and as I suppose some of you are. But I'll tell you one thing, He is very concerned about what that mode stands for. We are buried with Him by baptism into death, Romans says, Paul says in Romans, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

But the dying precedes the living. And sometimes we are so intent on putting them all the way under the water that we forget what it stands for. It stands for dying, people.

It stands for dying with Jesus. The old person that I once was, the old man, all that I was, is done away with. And a new man comes into being.

We rise to walk in newness of life. But it has to do with dying. There's a song.

A songwriter put it this way, Lord, we don't sing it anymore. I haven't heard it sung. I think the last person I heard sing it was my wife and she sang it a long time ago.

Lord, let me die to selfish desires. Kindle in me the Pentecost fires. Dead to the world and sin may I be filled with Thy love and living in Thee.

Emptied of self, with holy love filled, let every voice within me be stilled. I think that's the issue. Christians, we've got all these voices on the inside clamoring for our attention.

Let every voice within me be stilled until I hear Thee whisper to me, dead to the world but living in Thee. Minister said of G. Campbell Morgan, after G. Campbell Morgan had made a preaching visit to this country, he said that man with one sermon destroyed 40 years of my sermons. Well, you talk about keeping your self-esteem high.

How would you like to have a guy come along and in one sermon just blast everything you'd ever preached for 40 years? Wouldn't that be something? I'm talking to preachers now, obviously, and Sunday school teachers. He said that man, G. Campbell Morgan, had destroyed 40 years of my sermons with one sermon. He said I had been preaching on the duty of sacrifice, telling that we should deny ourselves of things in our homes.

In our home, he said, we had often gone without things so we might give to Christ. But he preached that what we needed most to give up was not things but self. Self.

And we'd given up everything but self, this preacher says. We were proud of what we gave up. It was hard to give up self for crucifixion.

I want to just say to us this morning, if we want to be His disciples, if we really want to bear His cross, we must consent to an inner dying, an inner crucifixion, that really allows Jesus to fully live in us, unhindered as much as possible. Unhindered. I don't want to be unreal, but I do want to be true to the Word of God as I understand it at least.

There must come in our lives a willingness to let everything that would hinder God from working out His plan in our lives die. How does that happen? I think Paul makes it about as clear and as simple as I know how to make it. He says you count yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin.

You reckon yourself to be dead. You can't do it, but you count yourself. You simply begin to live like a person who's died to the world and died to that that would hinder God's will in your life, and begin to live like you're alive to Jesus.

Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Count yourselves that way. Act that way.

That's not hypocrisy, not if you're sincere in it. So we give ourselves totally. Another song says, Let me lose myself and find it, Lord, in Thee.

May all self be slain, my friends see only Thee. Though it cost me grief and pain, I'll find my life again. If I lose myself, I'll find it, Lord, in Thee.

And that's very biblical, isn't it? Now I know this is not exciting preaching, and I know it's not exciting truth, but I'll tell you something. In the final analysis, there's nothing more exciting than being alive in Jesus, truly alive in Jesus, but death must precede life. The crucifixion in the life of Jesus, the crucifixion preceded the resurrection.

In baptism, that becomes a symbol to us. Going down into the waters precedes coming out of the waters. So we die with Christ, and we rise to walk in newness of life.

So a disciple must be willing to learn, and he must be willing to lose, not to become a loser. The only way, the contradiction, not the contradiction, the, what word do I want? The seeming contradiction of the whole thing is you have to lose to win when it comes to Jesus. You have to give in order to receive.

You must die to live. Jesus died for the world. You die to the world.

Jesus died for your sin. You die to your sin. He died for you.

We die to self to live. And that's losing. That's losing our self, truly taking our hands off.

And in our society, the toughest thing for Westerners to do is take your hands off of ourselves, we who are so much in control. And we love this idea of control. Anybody who's not in control, we'd rather, we don't think that highly of them.

And it's very difficult for us who are so proud of our self-control to be spirit-controlled. Very difficult to be really, truly spirit-controlled. I think.

Now one more thought, and I'm almost finished. Disciple of Christ must show a willingness to learn, a willingness to lose, and a willingness to love. I say a willingness to love.

John 13, 35, we read this, All men will know that you are my disciples, my disciples, not just believers. All men will know that you are my disciples, how? You remember that? If you love one another. I mean, it sounds so simple, we talk about it, but we flip that off the end of our tongue, folk.

We've talked about love so much that I don't think we know what we're talking about sometimes. And I'm saying, here I stand, and I'm talking about it again this morning, it's so easy for me to stand here and say, if you're going to be a disciple of Jesus, we must love one another. It's a whole lot easier to say that than do it, isn't it? Celsus.

Celsus. I think I mentioned this the other day. A non-believer of an early day was so surprised, and Celsus was the one who wrote, these Christians, he said, wait, I don't understand these Christians.

They love each other before they even become acquainted. And I have said since then, the miracle is we love each other after we become acquainted. I don't want to oversimplify, but do you know, folk, what I believe would solve a lot of our church problems and our board fights and our church splits and some of the stuff, I don't know how much you're going through of this here, so, you know, nobody's told me, you know, given me kind of an inside track here so that I kind of know what to preach about.

I just know that people are people everywhere. You Canadians are, I told my wife coming up here, these Canadians are made of good stock. I believe that.

We work with Canadian missionaries and Canadian missionaries are made of good stuff. But I still know that we're all made really of the same stuff. So that probably in your church, people who are made of good stock, they fight with each other every once in a while, don't they? And we're all right.

I mean, all of us are right. If some, if some of us could understand when we're wrong, our problems would be pretty well cut in half, but I know when I'm right. I refuse to argue.

I've told my wife, I refuse to argue when I know I'm right. Drives her crazy because she knows

she's right. You know what I'm convinced of, folk? I don't want to oversimplify, but I am convinced that most of our petty problems in the churches, in the family, in the neighborhood, for that matter, but I'm thinking especially of churches and among Christians.

Most of our petty problems would be solved if we would truly be willing to love. If we would be willing to love. So simple to blame God.

Well, He just never filled my heart with that kind of love. Let me tell you something, folk. Love is a decision.

I love my wife this morning. I do. Say, you have lots of feeling for her? I have feeling, lots of feeling for her.

Sometimes more than others. I've got lots of feeling for her, but the feeling is what she's interested in. She wants to know that I have in fact made up my mind that I'm going to love her all the rest of my life no matter how I feel.

That's what she wants and that's what she's got. I don't mind just telling the world. When we were first married, they told me, they, some people told me, just keep them a little off balance.

Just keep them a little off balance. They need that. Nonsense.

I don't believe that at all, folk. I don't believe that at all. I've told her, honey, top to bottom, head to foot, I'm yours, please just understand it.

Hook, line, sinker, you got me. But that's a decision. And when it comes to love, for God, folk, God gives the capacity to love.

He pours, by the Spirit of God, He pours His love into our hearts, but to exercise that love, that's your decision. You can have the Spirit of God and you can give yourself to the Spirit of God and you can come down here and just cry every meeting if you want to. During the rest of this camp, you can just come down here and just cry all you want to, but until you make up your mind that you're going to love that guy that you don't really care for in your church or those guys or whoever they are, it's not going to work.

I'm going to tell you now, it doesn't work that way. You say, oh, it didn't work for me that way. The Lord just filled me up and it just worked automatically.

No, it didn't. No, it didn't. I mean, it may have seemed that way to you, folk, but any person who knows how things work on the inside, you finally decided you're going to cooperate with God and you allowed Him to pour His love through you and you allowed Him to help you to exercise that love.

They loved one another before they were acquainted, so said Celsus. Celsus. They loved one another.

I asked Reverend S.I. Emery one time about this very thought. I was in my first pastorate. He came for meetings.

S.I. Emery was a man that I had to get used to. He wasn't one to sit and talk and jaw a lot. He just never did that.

And I never understand it to this day. He didn't enhance himself to me by that type of attitude, but that's just the way he was. When he ate meal, when he was finished, back in his chair and he looked at my wife and he said, Thank you for the meal.

Got up, and I said, Well, he's getting up. I might as well get up. I mean, he was at our house, at our table.

And he got up and he walked to the closet where we'd hung his coat. I thought, Well, I guess he wants his coat. So I went to the closet, got his coat, helped him put on his coat.

He passed just a couple of words and out he went. He'd come fired up to preach that night. Come back to eat the next day and he'd sit there and make a little talk while he was at the table.

My wife and I talked to each other a lot. And when he was finished, he'd look at her and he'd say, Thank you for the meal. And he'd stand up, start for the door, and I took the signal.

I stood up, we walked. So he was not one to just waste a lot of time. So I thought, Here's a good guy to ask about love.

And I said, Brother Emery, what about this whole business of love? Does a person always feel love? He said, Brother Moran, if I'm always dependent on how I feel, there are some times I don't know if I love anybody. That was a tremendous relief to me to know that. But it amazingly didn't shock me that much with his personality.

I looked and I said, I suppose that's so, brother. I mean, he's just kind of a very matter-of-fact type of person. I don't know how some of you, well, God knows what he's doing.

He gave him the wife that he did, and she got along with him fine the whole, all her life. I do think there is something to be said for this whole business. You can love anybody you want to.

Would somebody just go like this? I just want to know that you're with me. Folk, when it comes, I'm talking about your church now. I'm talking about the person in your church that gives you the most trouble.

Maybe it's the pastor. I just love pastors because I am one at heart, and I was one. And I was a young pastor one time too, and I love these guys.

I told you the other day, I've prayed sincerely. I mean, I'm not joking. I've prayed sincerely that the people at North Manchester would forget some of the stuff I said.

I said them sincerely, but they loved me. I just knew they loved me. They made up their minds they would love me.

And so I'm just asking you, make up your mind to love that person. Why don't you pick out the one that gives you the most trouble and start praying for them every day in love. Don't pray judgment on them.

The Lord says, that belongs to me. Recompense, that type of recompense belongs to me. You pray that God will bless them, God will reward them.

Say, but you don't know what they did to me. No, I know that. I don't know what they did to you.

It's okay that I don't know what they did to you. God does. But don't complain and tell God all about it.

He already knows. Just ask God to bless them, help them. And if they need conviction, conviction is a wonderful thing too, but ask God's blessing.

For you'll never, never, never have this type of discipleship without love, without true love. Now, there's one section that I've saved to last because it's very tough for some people. Jesus said, and our superintendent read it with such force.

I thought while he was reading it, don't make it too tough on me while you're reading this section. You heard him read, did you not? Anyone, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and his mother, his wife and children and his brothers and sisters, even his own life, talk about paranoia, if he doesn't hate himself and everybody else that we say you ought to love. He can't be my disciple.

I think we have to understand the Eastern mind, we have to understand the Eastern way of putting things. That word hate is a strong word. No question, it's a strong word.

But it has to do with comparison. I think one of the missionaries prayed the other day, or when they testified the other day, was it Nick? I think it was Nick who the other day was standing here and he called attention to that. It has to do with, it has to do with prioritizing or it has to do with comparison.

But it doesn't make it any easier. It doesn't make it any easier. The idea is you love God so much more than you love your father and your mother and your brother and your sister.

You love God so much more that in contrast it's like hating your father and hating your mother and hating your brother and hating your sister. You cannot, folks, you just simply cannot interpret that as a straight out hate. Jesus, the same Jesus, said we're to what? Love our enemies.

What kind of a Jesus is this? He says we're to love our enemies and hate our own father and

mother and brother and sister. He's not talking about the idea of going around with your teeth clenched and hating your relatives. But the idea is you love God so, and that doesn't make it any easier, you see.

You love God so much that in comparison and contrast it's like hating. Mark down Matthew chapter 10, verse 37. Maybe that will help clear it up.

Because Jesus makes a statement there which I think clarifies anyone who loves father and mother more than me cannot be my disciple, is what he says. So the idea is how much do you love God and how much do you love others? And I pause to say this. Again, it's so easy for me to stand here and say we must love God with all our heart and all our soul and all our mind and all our strength.

It's so easy for me to stand here and say that in comparison with living a life that demonstrates it. To love God, folk, changes people. It radically changes us.

Changes our whole outlook. And it does change how we look at father and mother and brother and sister. In contrast, because we are zeroed in on one person and that is the Godhead.

Triune Godhead. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And it has to do with love.

So I close with that thought because I think it's probably the most important thought. First, we must learn to love. I'm sorry, we must learn.

We must be willing to learn. Secondly, we must be willing to lose. And thirdly, we must be willing to love.

To live a life that is driven by love. The most important commandment in the Bible, Jesus said. Do you remember it? I just quoted it a moment ago.

A lawyer came to Jesus one day and said, Master, what is the most important commandment of all? And he said, the most important commandment is this. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. And the second is likened to it.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself. So you don't go around hating yourself either. Not really.

You love others as you love yourself. But you love God more. On these two commandments, he says, hang all of the Law and the Prophets.

There is no other commandment greater than these. I close with this illustration. My father was a Roman Catholic.

He wanted me to be a priest. At one point in his life, he would have been very happy if I had been a priest. Later on, he said, I'm glad you are what you are because at least you're happy

and I'm not.

My father liked Bishop Sheen. I have to tell you honestly, I rather liked Bishop Sheen. I think Bishop Sheen had some good things to say.

I'm not half as mad at some Catholics as people think I ought to be. In fact, I think there are some Catholics putting a whole lot of Protestants to a lot of shame in our day when it comes to real spiritual life. You can all say amen and nod to that.

I mean, I would have said it anyway. I think there are some Catholics, some Roman Catholics. My father comes from an Irish Catholic background.

You can't get him any tougher than that. And there are some Roman Catholics who are experiencing the new birth and the power of the Spirit in our day. You may agree or disagree with some of the ways it manifests itself, but they're coming to life in Jesus, some of them.

And some of the things that Roman Catholics believe, I'll tell you, I'd line up with them a whole lot quicker than I would some liberal Protestants that I'm aware of. But anyway, my father asked me to listen to Bishop Sheen with him one time. Bishop Sheen came on the television.

And I would like to be able to mimic Bishop Sheen because he had a way about him that I thought was captivating. And my father said, John, Bishop Sheen, he was in the other room, television was on. He said, John, Bishop Sheen is on.

He said, you can listen to Bishop Sheen, can't you? I said, sure. And I walked in and I sat down and I listened to his sermon. He was talking about the greatest commandment of all.

He gave a nice talk. The one thing he didn't tell, he didn't tell us how to get that love. That I was a little disappointed in.

But he talked about the fact that we need to love, to love. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. And then he got to the end of his little sermon.

And only as Bishop Sheen can, he made this statement. He said, love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and all your strength. And love your neighbor as yourself.

And then just go out there and live like you want to. And my first reaction was, oh, he just wrecked a good sermon. You know what, folk? I got to thinking about that afterwards and I have thought, my wife and I talked about it.

I said, if we love God with all our hearts, I'm saying if we do. I say again, it's a whole lot easier to talk about this than it is to do it. If we love God with all our hearts and all our souls and all our minds and all our strength and we really honestly love our neighbor, all of them as ourselves, we can afford to live like we want to.

Because love, love will garrison all of our actions. You cannot love your wife and sleep with somebody else's wife at the same time. Don't talk to me about that.

It can't happen. But I have these feelings. I'm not talking about feelings.

I'm talking about commitment. Love is commitment. Love is decision.

And when you sleep with someone else's wife, you've broken that commitment of love. You can't do that. You cannot gossip about your neighbor and love that person at the same time.

Because you've broken that commitment. You can't love God and play fast and loose with His commandments at the same time. Because you've just, by that, broken that commitment of love.

Love is a decision. And we must be willing to love if we're going to be His disciples. So let's have discipleship, folk.

Let's have discipleship classes. Let's have discipleship programs. But, in the whole process, let's continue to strive to become true disciples.

That's a lifetime.