

Luke 22:24-38 Principles of Discipleship

There's an old saying that you should never meet your heroes, because when you meet them, you find out that they are less than what you expected them to be. Sometimes we hold people in high esteem because we don't really know them very well. If we got to know them, we might be rather disappointed.

We may have the idea that Jesus' disciples were all spiritual heroes/giants. Of course, they did go on to "turn the world upside down" (Acts 17:6) after the resurrection, but before the resurrection, they displayed some real weaknesses. One of them was a disloyal unbeliever, one repeatedly denied that he even knew Jesus, and others show evidence of self-centered arrogance. All of them abandoned Jesus in his hour of need. So they were anything but spiritual giants at this point.

In this section of Luke, Jesus and the disciples had just finished their Passover meal, the Last Supper. As they were reclining at the table, several topics of conversation came up. So I think we can picture this as after supper conversation.

This passage tells us a lot about discipleship. Every follower of Christ is a disciple, so we must take these lessons to heart. We may be more like the disciples here than we care to admit.

Let's take a look at the text and note some important principles of Christian discipleship.

- I. .24-30 Discipleship requires humble service.
 - A. Disciples should *not* be concerned about status and position.
 - .24 The disciples disputed over who would be the greatest. The word "strife" literally means "love of strife/contention" (φιλονεικία).
 1. The disciples apparently enjoyed arguing with each other. Some people think they were arguing over their seating arrangements at the table. Status and position were a very important part of that culture, and the disciples were concerned about gaining position for themselves.
 2. Even after three years of following Jesus and listening to all his messages about humility and love for others, they still seem to be rather self-centered and arrogant. They are still striving for status and position, even though Jesus has taught them that Christians do not seek status and position.

Luke 9:48 ... *the least among you all will be great.*

Luke 20:46 “*Beware of the scribes, who ... love ... the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, ...*”

3. By arguing about being the greatest—by concerning themselves with status and position—these disciples are betraying Jesus’ basic message. So in a certain sense, many of the disciples betrayed Jesus. They rejected his basic message.

B. .25-26 Disciples must be humble servants.

Jesus used the dispute as an occasion to teach them a lesson about humble service.

1. .25 Worldly leaders abuse their authority.

a) To “exercise lordship” (κυριεύουσιν) was to have total authority over someone. It refers to domination or oppression.

b) Both the Roman government and the Jewish authorities exercised absolute authority and control over the people. This was normal and routine; that was the culture.

c) .25end Some of these authorities were “called benefactors” (εὐεργέτης) – a doer of good.

(1) Wealthy, powerful people obtained and maintained their position/status in society by doing good, i.e., by giving money to various causes. You advanced in that society by giving generously to the right people. You bought people’s loyalty.

(2) When you received a gift, you were then obligated to be loyal to the giver of the gift, even if he were a dictator or tyrant.

(3) These wealthy, powerful people may indeed be tyrants and dictators. But the people needed their money, so they submitted to their lordship.

2. Disciples must not follow this pattern.

- a) .26 Jesus said, literally, “but ye not so.” Disciples are not supposed to exercise that kind of tyrannical, overbearing, harsh authority. They must not buy people’s loyalty. They should not use their money or power to gain or maintain status or high position.

App: That kind of an attitude may be appropriate in the military, but it’s not suitable for Christian leaders.

The church needs leaders, but not dictators and tyrants. Arrogance and self-centeredness should have no place in the church. Historically, the church has had plenty of tyrants and dictators; we don’t need any more. The church needs humble servants.

So we don’t follow the pattern of the world in the church.

- b) .26 For disciples of Jesus, the greatest must be the younger and the leader must be the servant. Younger people in that culture had little authority and were held in little respect. Younger people served the older people. They were the least likely to rule over others.
- c) .26end “he that doth serve” (διακονος) – same root word as “deacon” – one serving at a meal, a position of humble service.

Quote: The form of leadership appropriate to Jesus’ community, then, is one that is unconcerned with [gaining] status but itself reflects the humility of table servants and of those who occupy the bottom rung of social power and privilege, the young.¹

That’s the kind of attitude Christian disciples must have—humility and willingness to serve.

3. .27 Disciples must follow the pattern Jesus set.

- a) .27end Notice the “but I…” In contrast to those who lord it over others, Jesus served others. Jesus was the leader, their “lord,” yet he was their servant. That’s the kind of leadership that we must use.

¹ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 769.

- b) Jesus did not come to be served but to serve. Even though he was greater than the disciples, he humbly served them. Greatness for Jesus' disciples is found in humble service.
- c) In John 13, we find that Jesus demonstrated his humble service by washing the disciples' feet. He was serving them, even though he was their Lord.
- d) The disciples should follow Jesus' example in serving others, not in seeking positions of authority or power.

App: Christian leadership amounts to humble service. Anyone contemplating Christian ministry should adopt this attitude, that greatness is found in serving others. Disciples of Christ serve others humbly without regard for status or position.

- C. .28-29 Disciples will have a place in Jesus' coming kingdom.
 - 1. Jesus is well-aware of the weaknesses and failures of his disciples, yet he still promises that they will be part of his future glorious kingdom.
 - 2. .28 They had been loyal to him throughout his "temptations," i.e., trials/ordeals. Some of them had been traveling with Jesus for about three years. Many of Jesus' disciples had left him (cf. John 6), but the 12 disciples, other than Judas, had maintained their loyalty through thick and thin. They had endured/persevered with him through all the problems they faced.
 - 3. .29 He would grant them a kingdom
 - a) He would "appoint (διατίθημι) a kingdom" to them.
 - b) .30a They would eat at his table in the kingdom. It was considered to be a great privilege to eat at the table of the king. This also speaks of the joy and privilege the disciples will experience in the kingdom.
 - c) .30b They would judge the twelve tribes of Israel.
 - (1) That's an important statement because Israel was a divided kingdom—north and south.

- (2) Further, the 10 northern tribes had been assimilated into the neighboring nations over the previous 7 centuries. They are sometimes known as the “10 lost tribes” of Israel.
 - (3) So when Jesus promises that the disciples will judge the 12 tribes of Israel, it implies that the nation of Israel would experience a restoration of some kind.
 - (4) The disciples would have a significant role ruling over the 12 tribes. They will have authority in the coming kingdom.
- d) When would this happen? In the Millennium, after the 2nd Coming. I don’t see any sense in which this is happening right now, in the church. The kingdom in that sense is still future.
 - e) And it further suggests that God still has a plan for the Jews, for Israel as a nation. Some teach that the church has replaced Israel, but Jesus seems to be saying here in that in the kingdom, Israel will be reconstituted and the tribes will once again be recognized.

Trans: In spite of the disciples’ arrogance and ignorance, Jesus would reward them for their loyalty in the kingdom.

The Bible promises that all who follow Jesus will rule and reign with him in his kingdom. Jesus will reward those who follow him and follow his example of humble leadership.

If you have any kind of leadership position in the church, remember that your primary responsibility is that of humble service. You are there to serve God by serving his people. We don’t seek status and position.

So many times today, we see those in high places of leadership in the church acting like they expect the people to serve them. But that is opposite of what Jesus is teaching here. Leaders in the church are humble servants.

II. 31-34 Disciples who fail may repent and return to productive service.

Another part of this post-Last Supper conversation happened between Jesus and Peter. It’s not clear if the other disciples heard this or if this was a private conversation. It seems to me more like a private conversation between the two of them.

A. .31 Disciples may encounter Satanic attack.

1. Notice that Jesus uses Peter's original name—Simon. Jesus gave him the name Peter. Simon is who he was before he met Jesus. Is this change intentional? I think it is. Perhaps he's implying that Peter is about to do something out of character for someone who claims to be a follower of Christ.
2. Satan would attack Peter—"to sift you as wheat."
 - a) For whatever reason, Jesus did not prevent this Satanic attack. He obviously could have prevented it, but he chose not to. He allowed Peter to experience this tremendous attack and the resulting spiritual failure.
 - b) Satan "desired to have you" – the word (ἐξαιτέω) means "to demand, to beg." It seems to show that Satan asked permission to do this. He can do only what God allows him to do. Satan is on a leash; he's restricted in what he can do. We see this same sort of thing in Job. Satan desired it, and God permitted it.
 - c) What was this sifting? To sift something, you would shake it violently in a sieve. So sifting implies vigorous shaking. Peter would endure a severe trial or testing. Satan wants to upset Peter so that he becomes unfaithful.
 - d) An interesting detail here is that the word "you" in vs. 31 is plural, but the "thee" in vs. 32 is singular. So the implication here is that Peter and the other disciples would face a severe trial, a vigorous shaking. That would happen in just a few hours from this point.
 - e) So Satan was attacking Judas, Peter, and the other disciples.

B. .32 Disciples can be assured of Jesus' intercession for them.

1. One of Jesus' main responsibilities is to intercede for his people, and Jesus assures Peter that he will do this. While Satan is the accuser, Jesus is the intercessor and advocate.

Heb 7:25

2. .32 Peter would have a hard time, but he would survive. His faith would not fail him. Peter denied Jesus, but that denial was actually a lie. He lied to protect himself. He never genuinely lost faith in Jesus even though he denied him. I.e., he didn't become an apostate. He failed spiritually temporarily.
3. If Jesus were praying here that Peter would not *deny* him, then his prayer failed. But he's not praying for that; he's praying that Peter would continue on in faithfulness in spite of the great trial he would soon endure.
4. .32c He would be "converted" (ἐπιστρέφω), lit. "to turn again, to return." Jesus knew that after this upcoming failure, Peter would return to his commitment to Christ. He would repent of his denial. He did that not long after the resurrection.

Quote: Peter's true faith and perseverance would be revealed in his repentance, not in his sinlessness.²

App: That's the big difference between a true believer and a hypocrite. True Christians repent when they sin. Hypocrites hide their sin or ignore it.

5. .32end He would strengthen the other disciples. Peter would continue as the leader of the disciples in spite of the fact that he denied the Lord. And we read in Acts how Peter fulfilled this prophecy.

App: We don't excuse our sin and failures, but we do rejoice in the fact that, when we fail, we can repent and return to faithfulness. Even a person who has committed a significant spiritual failure can still repent and resume faithfully serving God.

Don't worry that God can't or won't forgive you. If you humbly and sincerely repent, God will forgive your sin. 1 John 1:9

- C. .33 Disciples should not over-estimate their spiritual strength.

² Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 553.

1. Peter shows a bit of arrogance if not bravado here. He thought that he was strong enough to withstand the coming trial successfully. He was ready to go to prison and death for Jesus. I.e., Satan would not be successful in his plot to sift Peter. Peter thinks that he's stronger than Satan.
2. Jesus had just told him what was about to happen, but Peter thinks he knows better; he would never deny the Lord; *he denied that he would deny the Lord*. So counting this denial, he denied Jesus four times.

App: I doubt that any of us know what it would be like to have Satan directly attack us like he did Peter. We may suffer temptations and failures, but that's mostly because of our own personal weaknesses, not from a direct attack from Satan.

Normally, our problems don't come from Satanic attack. James tells us that we are led astray and tempted by our own inner desires. Satan is our adversary, but our biggest problem is ourselves.

If we do give in to pressure and temptation, even if we deny Jesus, we can still experience forgiveness and restoration. No matter what we've done, if we sincerely repent, God will forgive.

If we ever are under satanic attack, what do we do? Two major things:

- 1) Remember what did Jesus do when tempted by the devil—He quoted Scripture—"it is written." So we put on the whole armor of God and stand against the wiles of the devil. We use the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."
- 2) "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). We use every available resource to prevent the devil from getting a foothold in our lives.

D. .34 Disciples may fail under certain conditions.

Peter claimed that he was ready to go to prison and death for the Lord, yet in a pressurized situation, he denied that he even knew Jesus. The most outspoken follower of Jesus denied him.

App: Before we are too hard on Peter, we might ask ourselves what we might do in the same conditions. If your life were at risk, would you affirm that you are a Christian? If confessing Christ were a matter of life and death, what would you do?

You might think that you'd never deny the Lord, but given the right conditions, you might.

1Co 10:12 *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

Pr 16:18 *Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.*

Don't assume that you would be able to withstand a strong satanic attack. Any of us might give in to temptation under the right conditions. That's why we must watch and pray.

Trans: Peter would deny the Lord, but that would not be the end of Peter. He would ultimately return to the Lord and be a source of strength for other believers.

App: Even if you give in to temptation, it doesn't mean that you are no longer of use to God. This great sin didn't disqualify Peter for continued service. If we humbly repent, we can still be of use to God.

III. .35-38 Disciples must be prepared for changing conditions.

Jesus implies here that things are about to change drastically for the disciples. Jesus would no longer be with them. They will have to prepare themselves to face adversity, opposition, and even violence. Jesus will be going to his death, and his disciples must understand that they too will experience hostility from Jesus' enemies.

A. .35 Disciples must be prepared for hostility and opposition.

1. Previously, Jesus had sent out his disciples without support, yet they lacked nothing (cf. 9:3; 10:4). People welcomed them into their homes and provided for them.
2. .36 In light of what is about to happen, Jesus advises his disciples to prepare themselves for a crisis.
 - a) "but now" – things are about to change dramatically.
 - b) Take a money belt and bag. "Purse" is a money bag or wallet, and "scrip" is a leather bag, like a knapsack.
 - c) Get a sword. In fact, if you have to sell your garment to buy one, do it.
 - d) Why would they need a sword?

- (1) It's obviously *not* for the purpose of mounting a political rebellion/insurrection. He's not telling his disciples to arm themselves to engage in violent resistance.
- (2) Remember that Peter used a sword to injure a member of the mob who came out to arrest him (22:50). Jesus never advocated violent action on his behalf.
- (3) A sword can be used to defend oneself. The necessity of a defensive weapon showed that they would be under threat.
- (4) Some think that Jesus was speaking symbolically or metaphorically. He was urging them to be prepared for opposition and persecution. They must arm themselves with perseverance to withstand the coming persecution.

B. .37 Hostility and opposition comes because of Jesus.

1. What has been written about Jesus must be fulfilled.

Jesus said this kind of thing many times—the scriptural prophecies concerning him must be fulfilled/accomplished (τελεσθῆναι). Everything that's about to happen are part of God's sovereign will; this is all predestined; it cannot be stopped.

Quote: Luke wanted his readers to have no doubt concerning Jesus' death. The death of God's Son was divinely decreed from the beginning.³

2. .37b “he was reckoned/numbered among the transgressors.” This is a quote from Isaiah 53:12. So Jesus himself shows us that this great passage refers to himself. This is perhaps the clearest and fullest OT description of Jesus' sacrificial death.
3. .37end “the things concerning me have an end” – i.e., a goal, and end point, a fulfillment. Everything is moving toward a goal—Jesus' death on the cross.

³ Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 556.

4. So it's because of Jesus and the disciples' loyalty to him that they'd be facing opposition and hostility. So they need to be prepared for that.
- C. .38 Disciples sometimes fail to understand.
1. When they said, "here are two swords," it seems to me that they are failing to understand the importance of what Jesus is saying. Their circumstances are about to change dramatically, and it seems like they are saying "We have two swords, so we are ready to go."
 2. .38b Jesus says, "It is enough."
 - a) That signifies that Jesus is done speaking about this topic, so he ends the conversation.
 - b) It suggests that the disciples didn't quite understand what Jesus had been saying to them. He may have been speaking ironically or sarcastically.
 - c) Of course, the disciples were not ready for what was about to happen.

This passage does not paint a very heroic picture of the disciples. While Jesus was trying to explain the meaning of his imminent death, they were quarreling with one another over who would be greatest. Jesus has to teach them a lesson about humble service. The leader of the disciples, Peter, disagrees with the Lord over what was about to happen. And then the disciples seem to misunderstand what Jesus is trying to tell them about the crisis that is about to unfold. They are not very good examples for us to follow at this point.

The disciples may not have understood all of this at the time, but we should. We should take to heart these principles of discipleship.

We should *not* be seeking high positions of authority for ourselves. If we have positions of authority, we should not be tyrants or dictators. Christian leaders must serve others like Jesus did, with humility and compassion.

In the church, greatness is a measure of service. If you want to be great, serve others humbly.

Like Peter, we may fail and fall spiritually. But when we do, we can repent and be restored to a place of faithful service again.

The Christian life demands perseverance in the face of hostility. We will face opposition, and we should be ready for it.

Let's be humble servants. Let's repent when we fail. And let's persevere when facing opposition. That's what Jesus expects from his disciples.