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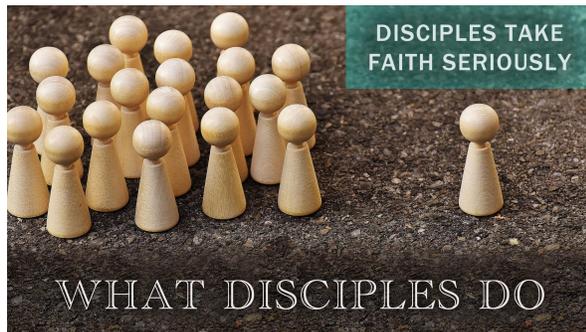
Title: What Disciples Do: Disciples Take Faith Seriously

Preaching: Danny Gulden, Lead Pastor, Promise Road Campus

Text: [Luke 14:25-33](#)

Email: [Danny Gulden](#)

[Watch the service](#)



Several years ago, following a new member class, a man stayed behind to ask me a question. He said, I've been visiting this church for several months, and I have the same question I have every time I have engaged with a community of faith: "What is it you want me to do?"

So, I started to explain the pretty simple process for joining the church. He said, "No, that's not what I mean, I've got that. What I mean is that if I commit to follow Jesus and do so as part of this community, what do I need to do? What does my life need to look like?"

I loved his question then and I still love his question today. "What do I need to do?"

We are starting a new series today called *What Disciples Do*, and we are going to wrestle with that very question. The word "disciples" in the title has a double meaning. On one hand, as part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), what do disciples at Geist Christian Church do? What does a life of faith look like? More broadly, what does it look like for us to live out the call of Jesus to "follow me."

Christians are often identified by what they believe. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus seemed to care more about what his followers did rather than what his followers believed. A better way to say it is that beliefs are important, but if they don't lead to a life consistent with the life and teachings of Jesus, then what we say we believe does not matter all that much.

This reminds me of two well known quotes:

"Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words," by St. Francis of Assisi.

"I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ," by Mahatma Gandhi.

What disciples do matters.

We began with the idea that disciples take their faith seriously. A young person once said, “If all my religion is going to change is my weekend schedule, then I am not interested. There are threats to the flourishing of Christianity, threats such as indifference, abuses of power, Christian nationalism, abusive and toxic theologies, but this young person points out another threat. If all that being a part of a church does is sometimes alter our weekend schedule, well then what is the point?

Please hear me as well when I say we take our faith seriously. This is not me telling you that if you aren’t physically in church every Sunday, then something is wrong with your faith. That’s not what I’m saying. What I am talking about is taking seriously the idea of developing an authentic faith. When people and the church take faith seriously, it impacts every part of our lives:

How we spend our time.

How we work.

How we spend our money.

How we treat family, friends, and strangers.

How we treat the poor.

How we treat the environment.

How we offer forgiveness.

It affects our character, our ethics, our values.

In other words, disciples take faith seriously. Jesus wants us to know this, but frankly, he is not very good at marketing. He is like that friend that tells you a difficult truth without any regard for making it more tenable to hear.

In Luke’s Gospel, we pick up the Gospel as Jesus is on the road to Jerusalem. He has been healing, teaching, and bringing liberation to people and communities. Large crowds are traveling with him, and he turns to them and speaks. This is what he says:

²⁶ “Whoever comes to me and doesn’t hate father and mother, spouse and children, and brothers and sisters—yes, even one’s own life—cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever doesn’t carry their own cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

²⁸ “If one of you wanted to build a tower, wouldn’t you first sit down and calculate the cost, to determine whether you have enough money to complete it?²⁹ Otherwise, when you have laid the foundation but couldn’t finish the tower, all who see it will begin to belittle you. ³⁰ They will say, ‘Here’s the person who began construction and couldn’t complete it!’” (Luke 14:25-30 CEB).

I had the good fortune to travel this week to New Orleans for a clergy gathering on wellness, put on by the Pension Fund of the Christian Church. As I was waiting on my flight from New Orleans, I walked by the Delta Sky Lounge. Several months ago, I received an offer from American Express to upgrade my

credit card from the regular SkyMiles to the reserve. I was reading the benefits, including access anytime I travel to the Delta Sky Lounge. Then I read further down and I get to the cost—a lot of money in an annual fee. The cost was too much for me.

Jesus was not very good at marketing. American Express at least had the good sense to list the benefits before the cost.

Jesus is going to get to the benefits of discipleship, of being his follower, but before he does, he gets to the cost of discipleship. The cost of taking our faith seriously. The things one might have to give up to live an authentic life of faith.

And what I didn't share yet is how he closes this section of teaching:

“In the same way, none of you who are unwilling to give up all of your possessions, can be my disciple” (Luke 14:33 CEB).

Chapter 15 will start to get into the benefits of discipleship, but before it does, Jesus teaches about the cost of discipleship, the cost of taking one's faith seriously. If our lives are going to bear witness to the God made known through the life of Jesus, it may very well cost us something.

Perhaps the most difficult for us to grasp is the call to carry your own cross. Carry your own cross. Can you imagine being in that crowd that day and hearing that and wondering, what exactly is he talking about? Carry your own cross? We think we at least have an idea of what it means because we know where this goes. But in the crowd that day, they didn't know that. They didn't know that Jesus would be forced to carry what was a symbol of execution by an empire through a crowd before being put to death. The rejection of Jesus. The suffering of Jesus. Carrying a cross, bearing a cross, following Jesus requires risk and sacrifice. That's serious

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor who was imprisoned for his active resistance to Nazism in Germany in the 1940s. He was put to death in 1945. He inspired and continues to inspire many. He wrote a book entitled *The Cost of Discipleship*, which is still a core work of Christian life.

Here is what he says about taking faith seriously: “It is only because he became like us that we can become like him” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer).

Jesus became like you and me, so that we can become more like him.

I have come to believe that at times, the church hasn't taken faith seriously enough. The church has not equipped people to take their faith seriously. We haven't been upfront about the cost, and in doing so, we haven't always enabled people to know the fullness of life that comes with an authentic faith.

We've said, “All you have to do is to alter your weekend schedule.” That's shortchanges us. That shortchanges God.

Jesus calls us to take our faith seriously. And when we do, there most likely will be a cost. But whatever the cost, the gain is so much greater. It will change us and if we believe the Gospels, change the world.

When people and the church take faith seriously, it changes everything:

How we spend our time.

How we work.

How we spend our money.

How we treat family, friends, and strangers.

How we treat the poor.

How we treat the environment.

How we offer forgiveness.

It affects our character, our ethics, our values.

Let us pray.