

## My Discipleship with the Lord

Written by Joel McNabb

Saturday, 11 July 2009 15:14 -

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I have loved the Lord for most of my life, being raised a PK, (preacher's kid, for those who may not know the term). Church was a big part of my life, and my father pastored in various places across the United States. When he was asked to move to another place, we moved, and made the best of every situation, never knowing what was in store for us. My brothers and I would make new friends and go to new schools. It all seemed to be just a normal way of life. As a child, when we were not in church, besides playing and doing what other children would do, we would play church; but we meant it: singing, preaching, healing and all the things we would do in church. We even used crutches, one would play sick and the others would lay hands him and pray and he would throw the crutches down and shout to the Lord, "THANK YOU JESUS!!!!" When my brother and I started school, my youngest brother, being too young to go, stayed with mother and followed her around preaching to her, using anything he could find as a pulpit. It all seemed to us just a normal way of life.

I didn't know much else growing up. We were poor, but never hungry. Mother made sure we had clothes, food and everything we needed to live in this world. All we knew was that the Lord would take care of all of our needs. My mother and father were serving the Lord, and we were along for the ride. Their devotion to God and His will in their lives is what will be in my memory forever as a child. From time to time my father would work a secular job, mostly when he was pastoring at a small church, but his work for the Lord always came first. Many times when the church wanted him to go, he would leave us for a weekend or maybe more, for conferences or revivals; whatever he was called on to do, he would do. He believed the Lord would make a way for him and the family, and the Lord always did. Like I have said, it all seemed to me to be a normal life. But it wasn't normal at all: this was a life of discipleship. I was not aware of it at the time, but this was my first encounter with discipleship: not just as a Christian or a believer, but as someone who had given his entire life to God and Jesus. No matter what: friend, family, church, or job, nothing came between him trying to do the Lord's will.

A ruler came to Jesus and asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said, "Thou knowest the commandments" and he gave five of them. The ruler said he had kept them since he was a young boy. Jesus said that there was still something he was missing. He told the ruler, "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." This was a problem for the ruler, because he had a lot of wealth and did not want to give it up.

When Jesus saw this, he made a comment that seemed a little hard to understand: "For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." His followers that were standing there knew this would be very difficult and asked, "Who then can be saved?" Good question, if he were talking about salvation, but he was not. The

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way of holiness and salvation is not so hard that a camel, loaded with a full load of merchandise, could not pass through the needle gate of the city. "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isa. 35:8). Salvation is for "Whosoever will." The ruler had kept the commandments of God all his life, but the things he possessed were too hard to give up to follow Jesus. You may ask yourself, "Do I have to sell all to be a follower of Christ?" **Only if you want to be a disciple.** If you want to keep the commandments and just be a Christian, this requirement may not be for you. The ruler did all that, yet he was not willing to go all the way for Jesus. The answer Jesus gave was not to all; it was to the ruler. Jesus knew his heart, and knew the ruler would have difficulty in giving all of his "life" to follow Him.

I am stressing being a follower for a reason. Most Christians feel they are followers now, not really seeing a difference. But there is a great difference here. Going to church once a week or more does not make you a follower. It is a matter of being willing to do or to go; whatever He says. If the ruler had been willing and had said "Yes", Jesus may not have asked him to sell all to follow. Peter hearing all this said to Jesus, "We have left all, and followed thee." In Matt.8:14, Peter still had a house and family, (because Jesus healed Peter's mother in-law), but in his heart he was willing to give it all to follow Jesus.

This passage in Luke 18, from which I have taken my text, has been an inspiration to me. Things may look impossible with man, but Jesus showed that all things are possible with God. He told his disciples in verse 29, "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting." I would like you to take note here, in this present world, and in the world to come. It is our free will to give everything to God letting Him rule our life, no matter what. He will never leave us or forsake us, if we are willing to let Him take care of us. As Jesus said, "Not my will but thine be done."

"And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them. If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:25-33).

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It is about counting the cost. What will it cost you? To follow Jesus and be his disciple means to be willing to give up all, that this life doesn't mean more to you than what He wants. The price is high, but the reward is far above all cost or price that could be paid. Jesus asked his disciples, "Whom do ye say that I am?" Peter famously remarked, "Thou art the Christ of God". Jesus told them, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:23-26).

He was telling them to count the cost, and what it would cost to follow Him. We are supposed to be strangers and pilgrims here in this world, for the things of this world will pass away. Matt. 6:20-21 says, "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Nothing on this earth will be worth anything when it is all said and done. "And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Cor. 7:31). We have to use this world and what is in it to further the will of the heavenly Father on this earth. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His word shall never pass away. We must buy the truth and sell it not, counting what it will cost us – the price for the high calling of God.

This subject has weighed heavily on me the past few years, as I have heard the call of God on my life. The price has been great, but I have counted the cost. Even as a child, I always knew that one day I would be used of God in some way. For the past thirty years I have been a minister of the gospel of Christ. I have had my battles with this life just as every man or woman who lives in this earthly vessel. I have been on my knees numerous times asking God to forgive me for falling into the snares of the devil, and I believe He has heard my cry for repentance, as He heard King David. I know without a doubt that I am forgiven of my sins by the mercies of God and that Jesus is still sitting on the mercy seat at the right hand of the Father.

I was sent by God to Oklahoma in 2006 to work with the people that our group had there. When I was asked to go, there was no hesitation in my thoughts; I just said, "Yes, I will go." There was no thought of the cost; I knew that God would work all the details out as He had always done. My wife of twenty five years was taken aback at my quick response. I knew that there was something that God wanted me to do and that I was going to do it. It was my plan to stay in New England until I could work out the details with the family, and move when the Lord was ready for me to go. The company that I was working for needed me to finish some of the jobs I was doing, and my wife was scheduled to undergo surgery on her feet. My youngest daughter's graduation from high school also needed my attention. I made sure that all that was cared for before I

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went. It took me over six months to finally get moved to Oklahoma, but I went.

I had hoped that my wife would sell the house by the following year, and our daughter would head to college. Then my wife would be free to come to Oklahoma to be with me and help me in my ministry. This did not happen, even though the Lord blessed me with work and in my ministry; my wife could not believe that I was sent by God. It has been the greatest burden that I have had to bare in my whole life. I had hoped that she would be with me and that we would carry the gospel of the kingdom of God together. The time passed and so did her faith in me and the work that was set before me. The hope that she would come here kept getting dimmer and dimmer. Soon there was no doubt she would not be with me here. Now she has decided to file for divorce, against my wishes, for I know how God hates divorce. I did not want this, and I am cut to the bone, but it is not in my hands now.

It has been a burden for me and her. I know in her heart of hearts that she loves me; there has never been a question of that. I also know that perfect love casteth out fear and that I love her and want her to be with me still. We all have the free will that God has given us, and we have to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. She has to be willing to serve the Lord on her own; I can not make her serve the Lord or do what I want. It is her choice, and I will respect her choice.

Now I will say to Jesus, as Peter did in Matthew, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" And I will trust in Jesus' promise, "And everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

Whatever God has in store for me, I will try to do it. I want to be in a condition that I can be used of Him. The Lord is my life. and it is my desire to do whatever it take to draw closer to Him. My wife and I used to sing a song together and I think that is one of the things I'll miss the most; her angelic voice. This is now my theme song and my desire to be the clay in the potter's hand, pliable to be a vessel of honor in the house of God. As you read this song look into your heart of hearts and ask yourself this question, "Am I a disciple of Christ, will I do whatever it takes?"

*There's a voice calling me*

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*from an old rugged tree  
And it whispers draw closer to me  
Leave this world far behind,  
There are new heights to climb,  
And a new place in me you will find.*

*Take my houses and lands,  
Change my dreams and all my plans,  
For I'm placing my whole life in your hands;  
Let the disappointments come,  
Lonely days without the sun,  
If through sorrow more like you I become.*

*Take the dearest things from me  
If that's how it must be  
To draw me closer to thee.  
And if you call me today  
to a land far away,  
Lord, I'll go in Your will obey*

*For whatever it takes to draw closer to you Lord,  
That's what I'll be willing to do;  
For whatever it takes to be more like you,  
That's what I'll be willing to do.*

We are coming to the day of the Lord and the valley of great decision in Joel 3:14. What will be your choice? Not everyone is called to be a disciple; it is a way of life that you chose after you are called. When Jesus called his disciples, they walked away from everything and followed him. Will you be willing to do the same?

May the Lord give us grace to make all the right choices in our walk with the Master. May the Lord bless you and keep you is my prayer. I also desire your prayers in my walk with the Lord as I follow Him.

Saints from the People of Truth in Paden, Okla. participate in the Paden Gospel and Bluegrass singing on February 6<sup>th</sup>. Paden hosts the singing every other week at the auditorium.