

Holy Limitations:
Discipleship is daily surrender met with heavenly grace.
Brittany Mann

Limitations:

- Definition—Limitation: “a limiting condition; restrictive weakness, lack of capacity, or an inability.”
- Temporary, permanent, sustained and overcome
- We have two choices when we face them: rebel or surrender.

The call to discipleship is the call to:

1. Submit in all things
2. Willingly accept limitations on our lives, *even when it goes against our plans and preferences*
3. Believe that God’s grace sustains us and forms us into who God created us to be in Christ

Scripture: Matthew 16:24-26

Context: Jesus calls his disciples to challenge their temptation to see only the things of man rather than the things of God when the mission isn’t what we would expect or prefer.

Three Commands

1. “Deny Yourself”
 - The word used for “deny” is the same word used for Peter’s denial of Christ. It is to renounce or deny a person.
 - Jesus is calling his disciples to renounce themselves as Lord of their own lives, a shift of allegiance from self to Christ.
 - We can only do this when we are walking in the Holy Spirit

“To say yes to Jesus's invitation is to say no to a thousand other things. As the monks used to say, ‘Every choice is a renunciation.’ To say yes to Jesus is to say no to living by my own definition of good and evil, to spending my time and money however I want, to the hyperindividualism, antiauthoritarianism, and full-tilt hedonistic pursuit of our day. It's a thousand tiny deaths that all lead up to one massive life. It's not a futile grasping for control, but the freedom of yielding to Love. It's saying to Jesus, Whatever, wherever, whenever, I'm yours.” John Mark Comer

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you” (Romans 8:9-11).

Application questions: Am I content with the life the Lord has given me today, or am I discontent with longing for a better life tomorrow? Where does my heart allegiance truly lie? What does it look like to accept limitations in my life as an act of submission to God?

2. “Take Up Your Cross”
 - Jesus called his disciples to deny their plans, hopes, and dreams about the Messiah and learn to see Jesus’ mission through the lens of suffering and death. They had to learn that to share in his glory meant sharing in the cross.

- To take up our cross as a disciple is to accept that the journey toward holiness and Christlikeness is one through hardship.

“The good life isn't the absence of heartache; it's the presence of God, by grace, in the midst of it. Our hope in the midst of hardship is that Jesus doesn't just work things out for our good - he *is* our good.” Ruth Chou Simons

Application Questions: Is there anything you do that feels outside of the realm of discipleship? What is your attitude toward limitations and challenges due to the work God has called you to do? Does suffering bring doubt or trust?

3. “Follow Me”

- We were created to follow only One, our Triune God.
- Why should we follow Christ?
 - He is worth our allegiance and acceptance.
 - He is worthy of our sacrifice and our suffering.
 - In Christ, that which weakens us actually strengthens us, and what limits us transforms us into who we truly are, who we were created to be, and who will shine forth the glory of Christ for eternity.
- The way of the cross looks like loss to the world, but to those of us who trust in Jesus, we know that to lose our life is to gain our true eternal life. A life that more accurately reflects our true selves as image bearers and co-heirs with Jesus.

“Count it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let that steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing.” “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.”
James 1:3-4; 17

“Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him” (Philippians 3:7-9a).

“Give up yourself, and you will find your true self. Lose your life, and you will save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favorite wishes every day, and death of your whole body in the end: submit with every fiber of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him, everything else thrown in.” C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Application Questions: What is it in your life that feels limiting to you right now? If you were to frame this limitation into these three commands, these three invitations from Jesus to abundant life, how would that change the way you feel about them? If life is less about polishing ourselves up into a shinier version of us and more about being formed into the likeness of Christ, how might your limitations be used toward that purpose? And what is your attitude toward the limitations God allows in your life? Are you going to fight tooth and nail to make your life look the way **you** want it to? Or are you going to submit to the work of the Spirit within you, who desires to transform you into His image?

Challenge: Set aside time to reflect on Jesus' commands for discipleship. List out everything in your life that is limiting you. Beside each of these, write out how the Lord may use them to truly bless you with true life in Him.