



## The Cost of Discipleship: Surrendering ALL

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Roundtable: Followership

### *Abstract*

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As Christian leaders to change the world, we are called to a higher standard and to be the voice for the silent. Part of being a disciple of Christ is knowing how to die to our flesh, pick up our cross following the path God has provided, and genuinely surrender to the ways of the Lord. This paper provides an exegetical study of Matthew 10 and covers the meaning of discipleship. This paper examines servant leadership and transformational leadership, for as a disciple of Christ, we as Christian leaders must know how to serve and be the hands and feet of Jesus.

Keywords: servant leadership, Matthew 10, discipleship, transformational leadership, followership, answering the call

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To some people, discipleship is just a word, but to a Christian leader, it means the willingness to sacrifice everything by dying to your flesh and self-wants and putting the needs of others ahead of yourself. In *A Fragile Stone*, Card (2003) told the story of Simon Peter. The semiotics portrayed bring the story to life as it paints a vivid image of keeping your eyes on Christ. The cost of discipleship is about letting go of self and being open to what Christ is calling you to do. There are moments as Christians we may be caught in the middle of a chaotic storm and find ourselves asking Jesus for help. Peter found himself this way when he was out to sea, and a storm came raging in. At 3 o'clock in the morning, Jesus appeared to them walking on water. This frightened the disciples, but Jesus let the disciples know it was him. Peter began to question if it was Jesus, so he asked the Lord to call him to walk on water if it was him. Without hesitation, Jesus told Peter, "Come." Peter stepped out of the boat and began to walk to Jesus; as he took his eyes off Christ, he began to sink. Jesus told Peter he lacked in faith and asked Peter why he doubted who he was. When Peter stepped back into the boat, the raging sea and wind ceased (Card, 2003).

According to Card (2003), “The lesson is that Peter needed to sink in order to take the next step of faith in Jesus. Because walking on the water does not ultimately increase our faith, only sinking does” (p. 53)! The cost of discipleship is learning from the sinking points and being able to walk in humility from life experiences. “Those who ask for miracles and receive them soon forget. But those who suffer for Christ’s sake never forget” (Card, 2003, p. 53). The story of Simon Peter brings the image to life and makes it a reality. For in our spiritual journeys, we all walk and sink. According to Card,

We all cry out, “Go away from me, I’m a sinful person!” and in the next breath shout, “Come and save me!” Most of all, we all struggle with the perceived realities of the fallen world over against the unseen certainty of the kingdom (p. 55).

The uncertainty of where and what God is asking is often a complicated situation. The story of Simon Peter sets the stage for the exegetical study of Mathew 10. It dives deep into the instructions of service for the 12 disciples and elaborates on the meaning of discipleship. Later, this paper applies a practical application of a girl who has hit rock bottom. God is transforming her from a caterpillar into this beautiful butterfly by using transformational and servant leadership.

### **The Cost of Discipleship**

Matthew 10 elaborates on what it takes to be a disciple of Christ. For the road ahead of the 12 disciples was not going to be easy; there would be pain, and endurance would win the race. Matthew 10:12-13 (*New American Standard Bible [NASB], 1995*) reads, “As you enter the house, give it your greeting. If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if it not worthy, take back your blessing of peace.” As Christian leaders, there will be moments when not everyone is deserving of your leadership. Or there will be people who will come and try to steal your joy. Not everyone should be allowed to enter your bubble; some are not worthy and do not need to know of your calling, and some will try to destroy the blessing God has gifted you with. Matthew 10:14 (*NASB, 1995*) reads, “Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet.” When being a disciple, it is significant to know when to shake off the dust and move forward, rather than dwell on those who do not accept the blessing you are willing to give.

Matthew 10:16 (*NASB, 1995*) reads, “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as dove.” As Christian leaders, it is our job to be bold for our followers as God will send us out into the midst of chaos. We are to lead our followers to excellence, but there will always be wolves within the pack to come to steal, kill, and destroy. John 10:10 (*NASB, 1995*) reads, “The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” Being a disciple of Christ is knowing how to lead others to victory.

Matthew 10:19-20 (NASB, 1995) reads,

Do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given to you in that hour what you are to say. For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

There will be moments while being a disciple of Christ that God will take us out of our comfort zone. At those moments, the words may not be there, but when we are to speak, the words will be provided. For we are no longer speaking what we want to speak, but we are cautiously speaking and being led by the Holy Spirit. Matthew 10:22 (NASB, 1995) reads, "You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved." The cost of discipleship is surrendering your flesh and realizing nothing else matters except being in the center of God's will. The hardest part is dying to your flesh, picking up your cross, and following Jesus with every inch of your soul. People will often frown upon you, but you must realize these people are not rejecting you but rejecting the gift of salvation.

### **Becoming Like Christ**

The meaning of discipleship is knowing when to lead and when to follow. A disciple is never ranked higher than their teacher and is not meant to be a slave above their master (Matt. 10:24). Matthew 10:25 (NASB, 1995) reads, "It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master." As Christian leaders, we are to be the image of Christ not only in our leadership but as a follower of Christ. Matthew 10:27 tells the reader to speak in the light what is heard in the darkness. For what is whispered in your ear, to go to the top of the mountain and shout it from above. Proverbs 18:21 (NASB, 1995) reads, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit." When being like Christ, disciples must speak what they want to come to pass, for there is life and death in the power of the tongue. As Christian leaders to change the world, one must trust the process and speak what they want to come to pass. Matthew 10:28 (NASB, 1995) reads, "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Part of becoming like Christ is surrounding yourself with positive people who feed the Spirit's fruit, not destroy the mind with negativity.

### **Characterize Christ Perfectly**

The cost of discipleship is truly understanding who you are in the image of Christ. There is something so precious about Matthew 10:31 (NASB, 1995): "So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows." When picking up your cross and putting the full armor of Christ on, the disciple must know they are valued and loved by their heavenly father. As Christian leaders to change the world, we are called to a higher standard. We must not deny Christ, for it says in Matthew 10:33 (NASB, 1995), "But

whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven." A disciple of Christ will be cautious about what they do and say, for eyes are watching them. Their actions will speak louder than their words, and the image of Christ will represent their life, character, and where they are going.

### **Surrendering ALL**

The last few scriptures in Matthew 10 bring value to the cost of discipleship as it tells the reader to understand what it means to be a disciple fully. The true meaning of discipleship is to love Christ more than you love your own family. Being a disciple is letting go of self and serving people with no strings attached. It is loving those who hurt you, even when you would like to give them a piece of your mind. Matthew 10:36 (NASB, 1995) reads, "and A Man's Enemies will be the members of His Household." The closest people to you are those who will be against you. Not everyone deserves to be in your circle, and your circle is precious to God. Matthew 10:37-39 (NASB, 1995) reads,

He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

Surrendering ALL is one of the hardest things any Christian will do, but surrendering is worth the sacrifice. Being a disciple is a relationship between you and Jesus and whether you are willing to die to yourself or continue to be out of the will of God. Discipleship is not easy, but the sacrifice comes with rewards. Matthew 10:42 (NASB, 1995) reads, "And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward." The tiniest sacrifice is enormous in the eyes of Christ.

### **From a Caterpillar to a Beautiful Butterfly**

What does it take to serve those who hurt you, to pick up your cross, and follow Jesus? Why must one endure so much and hit rock bottom? As Disciples of Christ, we hit rock bottom and realize who we are in Christ. The year 2020 was a bust for most of the nation. The nation was attacked by a pandemic, people lost their jobs, the economy suffered, mental illness occurred, and, for some, they fought their battles. For a girl who once had it all together, she realized how strong she indeed was not only in 2020 but throughout her entire life. In 2020, I found myself sitting in front of an attorney filing for divorce. Marriage is to last a lifetime, but a week before Thanksgiving 2019, my husband and I separated – he was seeing someone else. My heart was shattered and broken in a way it had never been before. That year was a year of growth, as I often

found myself in tears, wondering where life went wrong. There were tons of red flags in the beginning, but I was so smitten by him that these signs were a blur.

Accepting Christ at the age of 10, I was angrier at myself than my husband, for I listened to my emotions rather than to the voice of God. How a caterpillar transforms into a beautiful butterfly resembles our walk with Christ. We often stumble along the rough surfaces as Christians, then God has grace and mercy and transforms us into his beautiful butterfly, for he has chosen us by name. Habakkuk 3:19 (*New King James Version [NKJV]*, 2014) reads, "The Lord God is my strength; he will make my feet like hinds' feet and make me to walk on my high places." God wants to take us to higher ground and has a purpose for our lives, but we must be willing to surrender everything we have. James 4:8 (*NKJV*, 2014) reads, "Draw near to thee, and I will draw near to you." Jesus is already holding his hand out to us; he is just waiting for us to take hold. Jesus whispers in our ear, "Just trust me."

### **Having a Servant Heart**

A servant leader will stand apart from the rest of the leaders (Jung, 2018). According to Jung (2018), "The servant leader also empowers and develops followers, and is an advocate for their success" (p. 26). Servant leaders will equip their followers for success and walk them through the process of what a servant leader is to do. According to Engstrom (1976), if an organization is unwilling to prepare, it is already setting itself up for failure. Servant leaders will go the extra mile and love others even when people are unlovable. Loving others is being a true disciple of Christ, because Christ loves us when we are unlovable. Peterson (2006) wrote, "I want to attend to the way that the form of Scripture is also the form of our lives" (p. 38). The cost of discipleship includes not being afraid to represent Christ and living out the scripture in front of the world.

### **Transformational Leadership**

When evaluating who you are becoming in Christ, you must realize you no longer belong to the ways of the world, but you have been transformed by the renewing of your mind (Rom. 12:2). Northouse (2019) wrote, "Transformational leaders set out to empower followers and nurture them in change. They attempt to raise the consciousness in individuals and to get them to transcend their self-interests for the sake of others" (p. 177). Transformational leaders lead by example and would not ask their followers to do anything they are unwilling to do. Following are key points for transformational leadership:

- Strong role models
- Determined
- Dreamers have a vision in mind
- Understand the culture

- Build trust with their followers
- Intuitive
- Encouragers (Northouse, 2019)

When looking at the characteristics of servant leadership and transformational leadership, not everyone is born to serve. Being a disciple of Christ is dying to your flesh and putting others first – before your own needs. Serving others is not for everyone. As a disciple of Christ, you must let go of the old and be transformed into the new. It is truly a transformational process. We die to our flesh and allow God to have his way in our lives. Jesus takes a human caterpillar and transforms it into this beautiful human butterfly. And when they are ready, Jesus will send them out into the world to be a shepherd for the lost sheep.

### **Hearing the Voice of God**

The question may come to mind, How do I hear the voice of God? Hearing Jesus does not always come naturally. There are moments when we think it is the Father’s voice, but it is Satan trying to take us off course. Life often throws curve balls; distraction comes; and Satan always comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). In *Whisper: How to Hear the Voice of God*, Batterson (2020) elaborated on a seven-word prayer and explained to not say the prayer until you are ready to radically change your life. This means being ready to truly hear the voice of God. The seven-word prayer is “Speak Lord for your servant is listening” (Batterson, 2020, p.3). God speaks to us in different ways: by reading scripture, through prayer, in our dreams, through godly council, in a song, and many others.

For me, I had been praying about going to work at Native American Christian Academy for nearly 2 years. I sought godly council, and my grandmother Ruth Grimm used to sponsor the school when it was called Sun Valley Indian School. Yearly, she would raise money and send school supplies. At the young age of 18, I knew God called me to the mission field; I just did not know what this looked like. In March 2022, I found myself applying to be the Principal at Native American Christian Academy in Sun Valley, Arizona. I knew it was time for me to spread my wings and fly after putting in the hard work to earn a Doctor of Strategic Leadership at Regent University in Virginia Beach. I knew letting go was going to be hard, but I also knew Jesus had big plans for my life. I did not know what the journey was going to involve.

I began to sell everything I owned. My finances were extremely low as I was barely making rent. I was trying to figure out the logical side, but faith without works is nothing. People donated items for me to sell to raise money. I only took what would fit in my SUV, along with my dog Biscuit – a Chocolate Labrador Retriever. I moved in with a friend for a couple of weeks. My church had a going-away party for me, where they gave me almost \$3,000 to travel cross country. On May 10, 2022, I hit the road and

cried like a baby – I was entering the unknown. I *stood* on Habakkuk 3:19, which talks about how God will make your feet like hinds' feet, and he will take you to higher ground. To go to higher ground, God wants us to let go of what we know.

### **Suffering Amid the Storm**

When I arrived at the Native American Christian Academy, I was welcomed with open arms. The students helped me unload my car and played with Biscuit. I immediately ran to everyone to meet them instead of unpacking. I played soccer with the kids, mingled with the adults, and was at peace where God had brought me. I was still scared of the unknown, but I knew this was where God wanted me.

Within hours, people began to show their true colors – there was a lot of fighting among the staff. I was full of energy and excited to be there. But after a month, there was some controversy with me being there, and I was told I was not a good fit – I did not belong. I was asked to leave and given 7 days to leave the reservation.

I was at a loss for words, hurt, and confused. I often wondered, *Did I hear the voice of God?* My brain went in a million different directions. Where was I supposed to be? I had no money. I had earned my doctorate from Regent University in Virginia Beach, Virginia, and Virginia had become home to me. But I had also lived in Roswell, New Mexico, before that, which was about 6 hours away. I moved to Roswell and stayed with friends for a couple of months. My finances were extremely low. I needed a job immediately. The world does not stop when life happens. I accepted a job at Mesa Middle School, where I taught computer science – even though it was not my specialty. However, I grew as an educator and became resilient. The students learned there was a teacher who cared about their education.

### **October 3, 2022**

On Monday, October 3, 2022, at 8:00 p.m., I went to play basketball with a guy I met on the website Facebook Dating. I was lonely and looking for a friend to hang out with. We played basketball and talked until close to 1 a.m. We both lost track of time, engaged in conversation, and enchanted in each other's company. Over the next 8 months, this meeting turned into a friendship and became serious. I grew to love him, and he grew to love me. On June 17, 2023, we said, "I do" on the same court we met on to shoot hoops on October 3. I finished the school year at Mesa Middle School. In May 2023, God gave me my dream job at New Mexico Military Institute where I am the Associate Professor for the School of Communication. I teach Public Speaking, Intercultural Communication, and Photojournalism and am in charge of the Speech and Debate Contest and the Yearbook. I am happily married, living my best life.

## **Ephesians 4:1-6**

In the book of Ephesians, Paul told the church, we all are called and have a purpose. When finding your destiny, you have to learn to step out in faith, trust the process, and trust your creator. When enduring hard seasons, it is often hard to see Jesus amid the chaos. I would not be living out my dream as a professor, if I did not take the risk to travel across the country when everyone thought I was crazy. I was following the voice of God. Following the voice of God comes with sacrifice, dying to our flesh, and, sometimes, experiencing loss; then, God renews your mind, builds your confidence, and takes you to a deeper understanding of truly knowing who he is and teaching you to know who he is. Following the voice of God is a transformational journey. In this journey, you truly understand how precious you are in the eyes of the King.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the cost of discipleship is learning to let go of yourself, pick up your cross, and follow Jesus. No one is perfect. Sometimes hitting rock bottom is the best thing. When we hit rock bottom, we find our identity in Christ. Jesus can take the broken pieces and build us back up more robust than we were yesterday. Servant leaders must die to themselves so that they can be transformed into the image of Christ. Discipleship comes with a cost. It is not easy, and not everyone will agree with you. Some of the people closest to you will tear you down. It is significant to surround yourself with people who support your calling, rather than tear you down.

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## **Author's Biography**

Dr. Jamie McKinney Wright has been teaching in academia since 2013. She has excelled in the career path she has chosen. Dr. McKinney Wright is an Associate Professor, with the speech faculty for New Mexico Military Institute, where she teaches Public Speaking, Intercultural Communication, and Photojournalism and is in charge of the Ruppert-Burton Speech Contest and The Bronco Legacy Yearbook. She is resilient, loved by her students and colleagues, and always goes the extra mile. She earned her Doctor of Strategic Leadership degree in May 2021 from Regent University in Virginia Beach, Virginia, where she was a Doctoral Fellow for the School of Communication. She is a 2017 graduate from Eastern New Mexico University where she obtained a Master of Arts in Communication. In 2012, she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology from West Virginia University of Parkersburg, West Virginia.

She has been extremely successful not only in her academic career but in her personal life as well. She loves to do research and edit scholarly papers and books for colleagues and former students. She enjoys spending time with her husband, Chris, and her two chocolate Labs – Biscuit and Beau Jangles. For fun, Jamie enjoys running marathons, traveling the world, serving in the community, attending sporting events, gardening,

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attending church, serving at church events, and spending time with friends and family. She has a love for the educational system, a passion for helping students thrive in and out of the classroom, and for mentoring students on the career path they have chosen. She is one of a kind and the best in my eyes. Even in her darkest hours, her hope was found in Jesus. Jesus has been her guide and continues to lead her on the path on which he has called her.

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