

I. Introduction

A. Matthew 16:24-28

1. Context

- a. Jesus identified as the Christ, the Son of the Living God
- b. Jesus is building a Kingdom that nothing will withstand or conquer.
- c. Jesus reveals that the means of all this is through suffering, death, and then resurrection.

2. Do we actually take Jesus seriously?

- a. Deny, lose (let go), gain everything but miss the heart of Jesus, what gain is worth more than following Jesus? The way I live my life answers that question.
- b. What does this look like?

B. Paul as an example of Matthew 16

- 1. We are all imitators... our nature
- 2. 1 Corinthians 11:1 } Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

II. Imitation of Christ

A. Paul's testimony (Acts 26:12-18)

1. Acts 26:16-18

- a. What you've already seen and what you will see
- b. Open Jew and Gentile eyes (darkness to light; Satan to God; forgiveness and sanctification)

2. Paul's testimony expresses his assignment.

3. *Serving God is not a matter of location, it's a matter of obedience.

B. Paul's obedience (Acts 26:19-23)

1. Acts 26:22

- a. To this day, sustained by help from God
- b. Faith and trust in God for outcome of assignment

2. Paul's obedience points to his confidence.

C. Paul's challenge (Acts 26:24-29)

1. Acts 26:29

- a. Perseverance and endurance in mission
- b. Salvation and obedience (faithfulness)
- c. *Imitation of Christ (and His methods) or imitation of the powers and principalities (and their methods)

2. Paul's challenge reveals his passion

D. Paul's consequences (Acts 26:30-32)

1. Acts 26:32

2. Disobedience or delayed obedience or even partial obedience would have resulted in his freedom.

E. *Nik Ripken

1. Meeting with a group of believers in China

2. He told them how the harvest in China has encouraged believers worldwide.
3. He was taken aside by a home church leader on his numbers.
4. He said, "Probably two-thirds of the people you mentioned regularly attend a house church. Most of those people have been baptized. Most of those people contribute financially to the work of a house church." He paused before continuing: "But we do not consider church members to be true followers of Jesus until they have led other people to Christ and until they have helped plant more house churches."
5. The often high cost of obedience
 - a. Costly obedience is not limited to a season or state of life. Not limited to singles, married, or empty-nesters. Can happen in the inner-city, overseas, or right where you are now. God asks us to obey everywhere, to live lives of sacrifice and mission.
 - b. There is a power of "no" to good things that keep us from obedience. Soccer games, church events, and game nights with friends may at times prevent us from seeing and serving God on mission.
6. Paul's consequences identify the cost of following Jesus.

III. Application to me

A. Questions in light of Paul's example

1. Does my life look like "following Jesus" as He defines it? See Matthew 16
2. Does my testimony reflect obedience to my assignment?
3. Is there passion and confidence in my lived life for Jesus?
4. Has there been a cost to following Jesus or am I the exception?

B. Communion