

Story

Sharing the Story – Matthew 10.32-42

Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

'Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn

“a man against his father,

a daughter against her mother,

a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law –

a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.”

'Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

'Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.'

Matthew 10.32-42, NIV

OK so this is quite a long Bible passage but it's good to read The Bible. Take time to ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you before you read this. Then have quiet and read it carefully. Sounds obvious but in a room full of sound you can't hear everyone speaking but in the quiet you can speak and hear back from people about you..

This bit of Jesus teaching is action-packed, exciting, scary and full of gold nuggets about the Christian life. Let's take some time to study this together..

1. Consider your faith. Think about situations where you may find it difficult to stand up and be a Christian. Read verses 32 and 33. Can you truly say that you have this kind of strong faith that you're willing to stand no matter what?

Write down your struggles about representing for Jesus, ask God right now to help you overcome, to stand up and to help you – write down any ideas about overcoming.

You see, there are many Christians in our churches – but Jesus didn't die to create Christians in a cosy environment, he came and chose you and me to be his disciples. That's a bigger word. What does it mean to you to be a disciple as opposed to a Christian or a religious person. How like this are you? How can you change?

There was an old movie called Back to the Future. In the movie the star comes home and finds that his parents don't recognise him (because the past was changed). Imagine for a moment that you come home one day and your parent or whoever looks after you – just doesn't recognise or accept you? The Bible says that is what Jesus will do to those who don't stand for him. Jesus isn't being harsh or unfair, he's saying you're with me or you're not.

2. Read verses 34 to 36..

These verses are very challenging because Jesus is telling you and me that the gospel message will set people against each other, will cause problems and division. You see, sometimes I think we forget that the gospel message will alienate people, it will upset people especially in a world where people deny there is such a thing as absolute truth.

So how can we share the gospel, live the gospel in these kinds of environment?

Why do you think Jesus said these things in verses 34 to 36, have you experienced problems, can you see how the gospel could cause division?

In verse 37 onwards we start to hear why Jesus has said these things.. Jesus is saying you have to put me first no matter what. You know what'll happen? People won't understand, they will criticise you, leave you, tell you that you're weird, hate you even. And all because you will be putting Jesus first in your life.

One time after I became a Christian, God used me in loads of ways and I was well busy. My old friends didn't understand me, they told me, 'you do too much' but I wasn't over-working, I was just doing what God had called me to do with passion. But they got annoyed when I didn't (and don't) always hang out with them. But that's a price worth paying.

3. There was an old dance music song with a riff that says, 'Who loves you and who do you love?'. What do you love – talking about, doing, what makes you come alive and excited?

Is this more important to you than doing the will of God?

You see, this is an essential to moving on in the kingdom of God. God is asking all of us – am I (God) more important than anything else in your life? If God truly is and you mean it, God will honour that in your life. But if you can't say that then God won't be able to use you as much as someone else.

Here's an example – David Beckham used to be out there on the practice ground at Old Trafford before the other players. He'd leave after them. That is commitment. You see there are lots of very committed people out there – but committed to the wrong things (not God). At the same time there are many Christians that do the right thing (worship God) but aren't committed enough. If Christians showed half the passion of other groups, worked together in unity and with the power of God added, we'd be unstoppable.

4. Carrying your cross. Jesus knew that one day he would physically carry his cross to his place of crucifixion so this was no idle boast. There is a cost to being a disciple of Jesus. It is a cost worth paying though the evil one will tell you it isn't. For Jesus, the cost was death, humiliation, alienation, hate, injury. But that most valuable act has paid for you and me to have the opportunity to be with Jesus for eternity. The cost that Jesus paid was also paid back in the fact that he rose again having fulfilled his mission – and went back to be with God. Now he waits in heaven, eager to see his people again – both in Israel and his church.

What have you had to give up and suffer for the sake of Jesus? How? Why?

What is the best way to live a full and rewarding life, according to Jesus in verse 39?

5. Read verses 40 to 42 once again.

In these verses, Jesus is talking about ACTION. This is an unpopular word in some churches that like to be nice and religious and separate from the world. In other churches action has been taken to mean simply praying or having services, worshipping God through music. But this is not enough – and it sure isn't what Jesus meant.

List the actions that Jesus expects from us below.. what does he mean?

Let me summarise what Jesus says. First up, he starts with people. He says if people accept the message of Christ from you, they accept Jesus and accepting Jesus is accepting God. Second, whoever receives and accepts a prophet gets the reward that prophet brings. So if the prophet brings a word from God, you will be blessed with that. If (like some churches) you don't accept prophecy or limit prophecy, you won't get the blessing of the word from God. Thirdly, Jesus says that if you accept a good person into your world, you'll get the benefits of that good person. This isn't rocket science and Jesus means this on different levels – we get benefit physically, emotionally and spiritually. Finally, Jesus encourages us to love other people and help them, especially children and young people.

How are you living and sharing the message of Jesus in verses 40-42?

BONUS FEATURE!

How do some churches limit God in regard to prophecy? Well some people believe prophecy only comes through a preacher. This is Biblically incorrect, we see in Ephesians 4.11-12 for one example, that there are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers etc. So these are different giftings. Some people have more than one, but all God's people have one gift (1 Corinthians 12.7)

Other times, churches suppress prophecy and don't accept prophecy. The Bible warns us in at least 2 places against this. In 1 Thessalonians 5.19-22 we read, 'Don't suppress the Spirit, and don't stifle those who have a word from the Master. On the other hand, don't be gullible. Check out everything, and keep only what's good. Throw out anything tainted with evil.' So we shouldn't limit the Spirit and shouldn't block people who are prophets. We also learn from Proverbs that people without vision (prophecy) perish. Where God's Word, plans are repressed, churches are throttled and God's work frustrated.

Thirdly, some people accept prophecy too readily. We need to heed the Bible's warning in 1 Thessalonians that we shouldn't be gullible and should test prophecy. How do we do that? Well, first, does it line up with The Bible or Biblical principles? If not, chuck it out. Second, put it to the test. If a prophet says, 'You will meet a beautiful woman next week and get married' and it doesn't happen, then start asking questions!

Finally, people forget that prophecy comes in a variety of different ways – through direct words from a person, from the Bible, from a story or testimony, from a worship song. Stop restricting God, period.