

Hanging Out With Jesus: How To Be An Outrageously Successful Disciple

Unedited Transcript

John 13:31-38, Luke 22:31-38

Good morning, men! Welcome to Man in the Mirror's Men's Bible Study, where we always have room for one more man. So let's go ahead and do a shout out. We've given a shout out to this group before, but it's time to give them another one. They call themselves MALES, Men Altering Lives Every day Spiritually. You have to work at that to make it happen, but they did! They're from the First United Methodist Church in Millville, NJ and their leader is Dave Maxwell. I wonder if you would join me in giving a warm shout out to MALES up there in Millville? One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, we're really glad to have you with us!

So the series that we're doing is called Hanging Out With Jesus, and today I want to talk about how you can be an outrageously successful disciple. A few months ago Ed was invited to be part of a small support group with six other men, all of whom have Parkinson's disease or something similar. It wasn't long before Ed began handing out copies of *Is Christianity For You?* To each of these men. One of those men grabbed the oars and is beginning to ask the kinds of questions that an eager new disciple would ask. Meanwhile, Ed's wife for the last two years has been living in the health care facility, a wing of the retirement home where they are. He still lives in their apartment. The social director asked Ed, when a new man had to move his wife also into the healthcare center, if Ed would meet with this man to sort of show him the ropes and give him an idea of what he should expect. Last week, Ed met with this new man for about an hour and a half to help calm him, reassure him, and encourage him. Then, he said I recorded Charles Stanley on Sunday and it's exactly what this man needs, so I'm going to invite him over to my apartment and watch this Charles Stanley sermon with him because it's just exactly what he needs. Last week, here at the Bible Study, one of the first time visitors was a healthcare professional because Ed likes to say encouraging things to the support staff and to the healthcare professionals that are coming and going from the retirement center. One of those men sat here as a guest last Friday morning. Ed is my father-in-law and he is eighty nine years old. Ed Cole is an outrageously successful disciple, you see?

So we're on the final night before Jesus is to be crucified, Thursday night. In the last lesson we talked about how Jesus has called you to greatness. Jesus has called all of us to greatness. In fact, he said you will do greater things. But then in our last lesson, he redefined what greatness looks like, that the greatest will be like the least, and the leader will be like the servant of all. I am not here to be served, but to serve and he calls us to follow in his footsteps. This text that we're going to look at today helps give us the strategy for how we're going to pull that greatness off.

The Situation That Called This Text Into Existence

You should be at John 13. First, we're going to talk about the situation that called this text into existence. Let's read the verse, John 13. The verse that we begin with for the week... you know, we're going through these Bible stories one by one, and it actually begins at verse 31:

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial

³¹ When he was gone (referring to Judas after the betrayal), Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. ³² If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

So basically, Jesus is saying hey, the time for my glorification has come, my crucifixion is tomorrow.

³³ "My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

So he's going to be with the Father. They'll follow him later. Then, the passage I wanted to focus on this week:

³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you can successfully defend the inerrancy of scripture...

All men will know you are my disciples if you can explain soteriology, the doctrine of salvation.

All men will know you are my disciples if you are filled with the Holy Spirit.

All men will know you are my disciples if you can explain Christology, the nature of the person and the works of Jesus.

All of these things are important! The things that I just told you about are the essence of what you want to know as a Christian, but Jesus didn't say that. He said all men will know you are my disciples if you love one another. Notice that there are three repetitions of this phrase love one another in these two short verses. The new command I give you, love one another. As I have loved you, love one another. All men know you are my disciples if you love one another. And in scripture, when something is repeated three times, this is the maximum emphasis that the Spirit has lead the Bible writers to give, a triple repetition of some kind. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty. Love one another, love one another, love one another.

Now, he says a new command I give you, so what is it that makes the command new? Well, he gives the answer right there. He says a new command I give to you: as I have loved you, so you must also love one another. So Jesus has loved us with this everlasting love, and we'll get to this a little bit more in a moment, but Jesus has loved us with a demonstration of God's love by coming to Earth to die the sacrificial death in our place for our sins. That's what's new about this command, because you can find in Leviticus love your neighbor as yourself. That's the second greatest commandment in the old covenant, but in the new covenant it's made different because we're to love by the example that Jesus has given us.

What is the situation that has called this text into existence? Jesus has a plan to deploy these disciples to take his Gospel to the whole world. Jesus understand that for his strategy to be successful, he's going to have to give them a principal that will give them the highest degree of penetration into the market place to which he's sending them. That operative principal is love one another. What's obviously going on in this passage? You read it, a new command I give to you: love one another, exactly as I have loved you,

love one another, all men will know you are my disciples if you love one another. What's obvious to me in this passage is that Jesus wants the whole world to know that these men are his disciples. What's obvious here is that all men will know you are my disciples if you love one another, is that Jesus wants people to know that you're his disciples! Jesus wants the whole world to know that those of us meeting here and in these small groups are disciples, that's what he wants the world to know! Why does he want them to know it? Because he's going to use us! We are the ones, we are the workforce, we are the army that are going to let the people know! We are the ones who are going to spread the Gospel, we are the ones! If you saw Zero Dark Thirty, the guy comes in and he starts dressing down his people that are looking for bin Laden, he said that do you understand? There is no other secret group, you're it! That's what Jesus wants us to see! We're it! How is it then that the whole world is going to know that we are his disciples? It's if we love one another, that's how they're going to know! Love is our weapon!

There are other texts that talk about the love of Christ. Now these three remain: faith, hope and love. 1 Corinthians 13 says what? And the greatest of these is love. Romans 13:8-10 basically say that all of the commandments are summed up in this one command, love your neighbor as yourself. If you do this one thing, if you keep this one command, you will find that you are keeping all of the others. Galatians 5:14, all of the laws summed up in this one command, love your neighbor as yourself. Galatians 5:6, the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. So why is love one another so important? It's the Big Idea today: **We are never more irresistible in this world than when we love others without reservation.** You can win the debate on the inerrancy of scripture and not win the disciple. Also, you can love to your death the person who does not know Christ and they may not become a disciple. But, Jesus wants us to understand even though everybody has their free will, they can resist. You resist, I resist! I am a new creation in Christ, as are you, but sin is always crouching at my door. So I find this principle at work in me, maybe you do, too. When I do sin or am tempted to sin, I tend to try to fix it in my own strength. I have little sin management systems because I feel like because I am a Christian I shouldn't be a sinner, and therefore I'm going to overcome that, and that's not the Gospel. The Gospel is that I am a sinner, I will always be a sinner, I cannot manage my sin, Christ died for my sin, he paid the penalty for my sin and it's not my righteousness that will ever redeem me from my sin, it's Jesus! But you see the little mind games at play?

Love is how you can become an outrageously successful disciple. You want to be an outrageously successful disciple? Of course you do! Here's the strategy: it's love one another. That's how people are going to know you are a disciple. It's the foundation of Jesus' discipleship strategy, his plan. Love one another. I always teach guys don't be angry at men because they aren't more spiritual. Why? Number one, they will perceive that and they're not going to respond to you if you're angry at them. The other is Ephesians 2, we all once were by nature objects of wrath, but because of his great love for us, God who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in our transgressions and sins. It is by grace that we have been saved. So how do we extend this grace to others? Not by being angry, but by loving them.

How Has Jesus Loved Us?

If that's true we need to answer a couple of questions. The first one is how is it that Jesus has loved us? Number one, he's loved us sacrificially and saved us from our sins by his atoning death on the cross. Now, why does Jesus want all men to know that we are his disciples? He wants the whole world to know that we are his disciples because his strategy is that his disciples make disciples. He doesn't have anybody else to do it. Do you understand this? He doesn't have anybody else, he has no other plan. Jesus is counting on us. It wasn't risky because of Holy Spirit, but he basically took twelve men, built into

their lives, and said look, the fate of the world is on you! And he's still doing that today! The fate of the world is on us. Actually, it's on him, but he's using us, he's asking us to be faithful.

It's in the definition of the word disciple. You can't be a disciple without making disciples, because Jesus told his disciples to go and make disciples. So if you're going to be a disciple, in the definition is making disciples. You're not a disciple unless you're making disciples. Jesus wants us all to do this, and the way we can do this the most irresistibly, the most powerfully, is simply by loving one another. That's the main thing.

He saved us by sacrificing his life for us, and as I've just been expounding here a little bit, he has given you a purpose for your life. He has given you a mission for your life, go and make disciples. And the third thing is that he's given us an example we can follow of how to do this; to be a servant, to wash each other's feet, to love one another. How else does Jesus love us? He disciplines us when we go astray to bring us back to him. Sometimes, love is a spanking. Any parent knows this. The Big Idea today is this: **We are never more irresistible in this world than when we love others without reservation.**

How Can We Love Others Like Jesus Loved us?

The second question that needs to be answered, first how has he loved us and then how can we love others like Jesus has loved us? If it is true that it's obvious (I think it should be obvious) that the reason Jesus wants us to love one another is so that the world will understand that we are his disciples, then we can love others by making disciples!

Last November, I took my wife to Cedar Key. One weekend a year in November, they open the Cedar Key's national wild life refuge. Some of the locals charter their boats and we caught one and ferried the three miles out to the island. After we roamed through the lighthouse, I suggested to Patsy that we go down to the beach and so we started down towards the foot path. At the head of the pathway was a sign that said watch out for poisonous snakes. Well that was the end of the trip for Patsy, but she could tell I really wanted to see the beach, so she encouraged me to go on, so I did. I was rewarded with this pristine, unmolested, white ribbon of sand that had these beautifully salted driftwoods. It was great! When I came back up, she had cornered a park ranger and she had asked the question what's the story with these poisonous snakes? The park ranger was explaining to her as I overheard that apparently a long time ago, some unknown persons had dropped off some poisonous snakes on the island, discarded them. The north end of this island is a bird sanctuary and breeding grounds, and so these poisonous snakes found their way up to the breeding grounds and lived under the nests. In fact, they call them the white snakes, because they live under the bird nests where these predators wait for a little bird to fall out of its nest. They have a steady dependable food supply in this way. As such they have proliferated here at the north end of this little island. I think the analogy to human life is extraordinary! Because we have people all over our community who are falling out of their nests, and there are predators who are seizing upon that and taking advantage of them.

A question for you: if you really wanted to be an outrageously successful disciple, if you really wanted to make a difference, which would be better? To catch these birds or people that are falling out of their nests, or to build better nests? Which would be a better choice? Which would make more of a difference? To catch the birds or people as they are falling to the ground, or to teach them how to build better nests? Well, it's a false dilemma now, isn't it? It's not an either or choice, you do both! Depending on your gifts! Depending on your calling! Some of you are called to help catch the prisoners and you're involved in prison ministry. Some of you are involved in catching the addicts, and so you're involved with

AA and NA. And helping addicts and alcoholics, and helping teenage girls that get pregnant, helping teenage boys that get them pregnant, helping prisoners; this is discipleship! When we love them, it's irresistible! In fact, anybody who has ever tried to change the mind of somebody else, you know that you can't do that! You can't change anyone's mind, even when you know it's the best thing for them! You know it's in their best interest, you know that their life would be so much better if they would just listen! Through your defense of the inerrancy of scripture! Or your understanding of soteriology! Or your understanding of Christology! Look at me! Theology! And yet, if all we did was catch the ones that were falling out of the nest and did nothing to build better nests, then twenty years from now there would be just as many people falling out of their nests. So we need to take the sick model disciples, the sick model people, and we need to help them. We need to take the well model people and equip them to go make disciples. I don't know if you're sick model, I don't know if you're well model, but if you need somebody to catch you, today's the day to say so! Today's the day! But if you're well model, today's the day to look for somebody that you can catch! Or look for somebody who's also well model but if they don't get help, they're going to be sick model! That's why Jesus wants the whole world to know that you're his disciples, so that they can have a place to go. **We are never more irresistible in this world than when we love others without reservation.** When we are loving people! Not in spite of the fact that they fell out of the nest but because they fell out of the nest! So how can we love others like Jesus loved us? We can make disciples. The place that's most important for you to make disciples: family first! Disciple your own family first!

My wife is very good friends with a woman who married later in life to a man who had been married before and had a son. In 2005 at about 11 years of age, they brought this son to live with them, but he was a huge disappointment. He couldn't get his act together. He would get A's on his midterms and two weeks later he would be getting D's and F's. What his father didn't know is that he had already become addicted to drugs before he arrived in 2005 and he was doing his best to hide this, but couldn't hide it all the time. So he was constantly getting into trouble and his father was constantly having to rescue him. The boy wanted to quit high school and go sow his wild oats, the prodigal, and he did. He left and even though his father pleaded with him finish high school, just like my father pleaded with me and in the same way I ignored my dad, this young man ignored his dad. He moved to Indiana. I went to the Army which was good. If you've got to get rid of a young kid, send him into the military, but don't let him do what this boy did. This boy went up to Indiana where he lived like a rock star on a ghetto budget. Father's words. Cocaine lead to heroine, and one day he took a car without permission, I guess you would say stole the car. He was driving with a friend under the influence and he had an accident and he killed someone. But he had not really learned his lesson, he actually didn't show up for his court date and became a fugitive for about a week. He now is in prison in Indiana, the soonest he could get out would be 2020, and so Louis with his wife went to visit his son after two years of anguish, suffering. He had written a few letters, but the situation was so out of control that Louis just said that I started to shut down emotionally. I was writing him but that went down to a small trickle. Then, they went to see him. Little skinny boy, oily hair, scared to death. They looked at him, listened to him as he reflected on his "crappy little life". Then this is what Louis said to his son. I'm sorry I wasn't there for you, the way you needed to have me there. I didn't protect you. You're my most prized possession, John, you're my only son. I would do anything for you. As they were leaving the prison, the Holy Spirit prompted Louis to move to Indiana, to be near his son. He said I can't help my son, I can't disciple my son! I can't help my son turn his life around by sending him a few letters and visiting him once or twice a year. But if I move to Indiana, I can see him twenty six times a year! For seven years, he added it up and I forget what the number was, but he said I'll have 130 something chances to build into his life so that when he gets out he'll know that someone has loved him without reservation. That's the Big Idea today! **We are never**

more irresistible in this world than when we love others without reservation. How is it that God wants you to respond today? Let's pray!

Closing Prayer

Our Father in heaven, we come to you humbly. We see that you do want the whole world to know that we're your disciples, and that loving one another is the most irresistible way that we can do that. So Father, help us each to identify the people in our lives that need that irresistible love. Maybe we're the ones that need that irresistible love, but I pray that you would help each of us to figure out how we should respond, and that you would be glorified in those decisions. We make our prayer in the name of Jesus, amen!