

# Teaching to Obey Christ

## *The Path of Discipleship:*

Matthew 28:18-20, John 14:15-18

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A couple weeks ago I had a day when several things went wrong. My cell phone charger fell apart; a door broke; and the clock, radio and charging outlet in our Toyota went dead. Gary Collins fixed the door, but I thought I could handle the car issue. It had to be a fuse. “Replacing fuses is a simple thing. I’ve done it before; I can do it now,” I thought. I even have a fuse kit, with various fuses, a tester, and fuse-puller. I was ready to go, except for one thing. I could not find the fuse box. I looked carefully for the box, but could not find it. I went on the computer, but there was conflicting testimony. Some friends suggested I check the owner’s manual or call the parts and service department at the local dealer. I called the dealer and he told me where it was, but I had looked there before and did not see anything. He insisted it was where he said and told me to check my owner’s manual. Sure enough a diagram in the manual showed that the box of fuses was located where he said. However, I used a mirror and a flashlight to look under the dashboard and still could not see it. I found the situation *confusing*. I was about to offer someone else the opportunity to *refuse*, but I thought again, “It has to be there. I just need to somehow get my head under the dash with the flashlight.” In biting cold temperatures, I awkwardly wrenched myself under the steering column and dashboard, hoping that I could

eventually free myself whatever I discovered. Up under the dashboard was the box. Now would the lid pull off or break if I yanked on it. It gave way and came off without any plastic parts busting. Unfortunately, the same was not true of the fuse box in the engine compartment that had a spare fuse. When I pull its lid off, a plastic tab went sailing through the air. I grabbed my fuse puller, but it wouldn't grab the fuse, and there was little room for pulling. I tried my finger nails, but the fuse wouldn't budge. Before I went under the dash, I had carefully identified in the owner's manual diagram which fuse needed replacing, so that I wouldn't have to repeat the contortions to both free and reinsert myself under the dashboard. However, I had to do it anyway. I got a jeweler's screwdriver to pry the fuse out. When the fuse budged and came out, I was elated. "Yes, this bugger didn't defeat me!" It is interesting how auto mechanics or maintenance can get so personal. With real satisfaction I took the same amperage fuse from my kit and tried to insert it. I tried and I tried, and I tried. What's wrong? I further wrenched myself under the dash and moved the flashlight which I had aimed by leaning it against the linkage to the brake pedal. The fuse was the same amperage and color, but it wouldn't go in. The fuse seemed too big. Its prongs looked wider than the slot. Once again I went through a myriad of contortions as I extracted my body, so I that could compare the fuse I pulled with the one I tried to put in. They were different. My Toyota uses mini-fuses. No wonder the fuse puller wouldn't work! My kit was no good. That is when I broke the lid on the fuse box in the engine compartment retrieving the spare fuse it provided. There was satisfaction when the fuse slipped in, the lid snapped on and the clock and radio worked. And I was relieved later when I retrieved the flashlight under the brake pedal after backing up only a few inches.

Who would have thought a simple job would be so physically demanding and emotionally taxing? I think it is because of my lack of experience. I do not feel particularly

gifted or confident with mechanical things. I am certainly out of my comfort zone. Jesus taught that about discipleship. He knew living by God's wisdom in a world of deception and rebellion would be difficult and demanding. He knew you would be tested and stretched and forced way out of your comfort zone. Jesus knew if you put anything or anyone, including yourself, ahead of God, you'd shrink back. At times Jesus had a lot of fans, but Jesus was not sent to make fans. He was making followers. The Bible says:

*Great crowds were following Jesus. He turned around and said to them, "If you want to be my follower you must love me more than your own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters — yes, more than your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. And you cannot be my disciple if you do not carry your own cross and follow me. But don't begin until you count the cost."* (Luke 14:25-28, NLT)

Jesus knew that any disciple of his would be severely tested. Perhaps, you think Jesus was giving people the option of being 1<sup>st</sup> class believers who were his followers or disciples and 2<sup>nd</sup> class believers who were fans that admired him. Jesus had no interest in fans. He came to redeem and restore humanity as believing and obedient children of God. **When you hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, you either become a disciple or remain an unbelieving, rebellious sinner. The sheep follow the shepherd; the goats rebel.** Jesus commanded the Twelve:

*Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.* (Matthew 28:18-20, NIV)

My call as your pastor is help you become Jesus' disciple. It is to obey Christ myself and teach you to obey everything Jesus Christ commanded of the Twelve. The Twelve were told:

*Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you.* (Matthew 28:20, NLT)

Teaching obedience is a very different calling than teaching stories about God. Think about how you teach children to obey. You give them commands or assignments. You then instruct,

encourage, warn, correct, reward and reprove in accord with their behavior. You discipline when necessary. Children must learn the commands of their parents, the actions required to fulfill them, and the habits necessary to sustain those actions. Disciples must learn those same things: Jesus' commands, the actions they require, and the habits necessary to fulfill the commands.

Now if I felt so anxious and defeated that I was tempted to give up and pay somebody else to put a simple fuse in my Toyota, how tempted are we to lose faith and give up trying to carry out many of Christ's commands. Jesus said:

***If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever.*** (John 14:15-16, NIV)

I needed instruction and encouragement for my simple task. Jesus promises the same for you if you love him and obey what he commands. He promises that God will provide you another Counselor other than the physical presence of Jesus. The Counselor Jesus promised often works through other believers to encourage and instruct us. I believe the Counselor wants to speak to us through Betty Cofer. Bill and Betty Cofer and their two children worship with us weekly at 11 o'clock. Betty was born in Kenya Africa. She met and married Bill in Wisconsin. They moved to Rochester where Betty works at the clinic. Last spring, Bill became sick with leukemia. She is battling her husband's illness as a disciple of Jesus. I'd like you to hear her journey so far.

BETTY SPEAKS.