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Encouragement for Today

“The Joy of Being a Disciple”

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http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/speaker_micca.htm

Key Verse:

Matthew 16:24, “Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” (NKJ)

Devotion:

We used to spend our Tuesday nights at the school where my eldest son played on the Junior High Basketball team. We usually sat among the other proud parents to cheer for our boys as they strived for victory each week. However, this Tuesday night was different. Instead of watching the game, the moms were busy organizing a list of foods to bring to Jimmy’s house. Jimmy was the dad of one of the boys who played on our team. He was dying from diabetes.

“I’ll drop my dish off tomorrow when I visit Jimmy.” I explained to the group. To my surprise, one of the moms replied with disapproval, “You’re not going to talk about all that religious stuff are you?”

“That’s the last thing they need right now,” another mom added.

Suddenly, what was already hard for me to do just became harder. After hearing their reactions to the idea of me visiting Jimmy, I hardly wanted to go anymore. To be honest, I struggled with staying home or obeying God because I wanted to be accepted by these women. Still, the Holy Spirit was persistent and I knew what I had to do, regardless of what the others thought.

I’ll never forget the day I met Jimmy. Both of his legs had been amputated, and most of his fingers, too. Stunned and helpless, I whispered to the Lord under my breath, “Oh, God, how can I minister to this man when I don’t know what he’s been through?”

Do you know that our Father has a way of showing up to do what we can’t? That is just what He did in this situation.

As Jimmy and I talked, first about our boys, second about the basketball team, and then about the Lord, it was apparent that Jimmy knew the Father. While this news thrilled my heart, I knew there was more. It wasn’t much longer into our conversation before I discovered the real trouble with Jimmy. He was afraid to die.

It was then that the Lord began to bring Bible stories to my mind where He had sent an angel to one of His children in distress saying, “Fear not, for God is with you!” Together, Jimmy and I began to recall as many of those stories as we could. I saw peace return to his face, and Jimmy’s blue eyes began to sparkle as hope filled his heart. I knew the visit was over and it was time to leave. Jimmy thanked me for coming and his eyes followed me to the door.

After I left there that day, my joy was so full that it outweighed the cost of those disapproving moms at the basketball game. There was fruit.

It was at Jimmy’s funeral that Juanita shared his last moments with me. She told me that every now and then Jimmy would wake up wide-eyed from his sleep and call out, “I’m Afraid!” Juanita would pat him gently and remind him of God’s promise. “Don’t be afraid, Jimmy, God is with you.” Then he would sleep again. Juanita shared that this went on for a while, until Jimmy opened his eyes one last time and stared at the ceiling. She asked, “Jimmy, are you afraid?” Jimmy whispered, “No, I’m not afraid. I’m just looking at the angels.”

“Oh, that’s wonderful!” I responded. Then Juanita said something that sent goose bumps all over me, and somehow I knew the Lord was speaking to me through her. She said, “IF”—“If you hadn’t come that day. I wouldn’t have known how to comfort Jimmy during his last moments.”

“‘IF...anyone desires to take up your cross and follow me...to go where I say go, and do what I say to do, you can be my disciple,’ declares the Lord.” (Matthew 16:24, NKJ)

Sometimes there’s a cost, but, oh, how the joy outweighs the cost. Jesus says, “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” (John 15:11, NJK)

To be God’s disciple and experience the joy of Jesus, we must be willing to take up our cross and follow Him. As we obey the leading of our Father and go where He sends us, we are guaranteed the same promise that God made to Jimmy: “Fear not, child, for God is with you!”

My Prayer for Today:

Dear Lord, thank You for the privilege of serving You. Help me not to fear but to be a bold witness for You with my life, my words and my actions. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Application Steps:

Is there something God has been asking you to do but fear has kept you from it? If you want to grow spiritually and experience the joy of obedience, step out in faith and watch God do incredible things with your life.

Reflection Points:

What keeps you from being God’s disciple...fear, comfort, apathy, laziness?

What gifts has God given you to use for the sake of building His kingdom?

Are you living in complete obedience to all God has called you to do?

What do you need to let go of in order to live fully for God?

Power Verses:

Deuteronomy 30:19, “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.” (NKJ)

Matthew 10:30, “He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.” (NKJ)

Luke 14:33, So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.” (NKJ)

Acts 9:36, “At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did.” (NKJ)

Additional Resources:

[Becoming a Woman Who Listens to God](http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_becomingAWoman.htm), by Sharon Jaynes
http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_becomingAWoman.htm

[What Happens When Women Walk in Faith](http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_whatHappens.htm), by Lysa TerKeurst
http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_whatHappens.htm

[Message of the Month Club](#)

<http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/resourceMessage.htm>