

**D-Up: A Series on Discipleship**

**Discipleship is Life**

**Romans 12:1-2**

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**Text Introduction:** This morning I am continuing our series on discipleship. We are calling this series of messages “D-Up!” The “D” stands for discipleship.

We have focused on our initial decision to follow Christ, on baptism and the importance of the church to help us grow as disciples. We next focused on daily reading of the Word, prayer, stewardship, and sharing our faith.

In the last three weeks, we have talked about outcomes of discipleship. We have talked about disciples keeping God’s commands, loving one another, and serving one another. That list of outcomes, one might conclude, includes many other things.

So, I want to challenge you this morning with a summary type message on the outcomes of discipleship. Discipleship is life. That is, discipleship encompasses every part of your life. For this lesson, we turn to an important passage of Scripture—Romans 12:1-2. This is one of those passages that everyone ought to know.

**Text:** Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

**Introduction:** Perhaps you have seen a t-shirt or bumper sticker that says, “Baseball is life.” Sometimes, the extra line will be added, “The rest is just details.” Sometimes instead of baseball, other words will be attached to this same slogan. Football. Golf. Fishing. Shopping. I suppose you could put almost any word there.

Really? Is baseball life?

As believers in Jesus, we better live in such a way that we can say, “Jesus is Life.” Or, as we have been talking about for several months, “Discipleship is Life.” “Following Jesus is My Life” should be the motto of our lives.

Romans is a remarkable book. I heard someone say that the letter to the Romans is the greatest and most complete theological statement on salvation ever written. I would have a hard time arguing against that assessment. In the letter to the Romans, we read why we need salvation, how salvation was accomplished for us, and what we ought to do as a result of being saved. When we arrive at Romans 12:1-2, we are most definitely talking about what we should do as a result of being saved—of being a disciple of Jesus.

Follow along in these two verses and examine several things with me today.

### The Reason that Discipleship Must Be Life

The reason that discipleship must be life is summed up by two words...

- Therefore

The final five chapters beginning in chapter 12 deal with the practical aspects of our life once we have made that decision to be Christ followers. Paul begins this practical section with a succinct statement of what our life as Christ followers should be. But, he begins with the word “therefore.” The practical is based on the theological treatise that comes before these words. We obviously don’t have time to study this rich theology today, but let’s just remind ourselves of some of the major aspects of Paul’s argument.

- Romans 5:6-11
- Romans 6:20-23
- Romans 8:1

- Logical—You may not see this exact word, but the idea is there. It is the Greek word *logikos*. This is logical. On the basis of what God has done for us in Christ, our logical, our reasonable, response is to present ourselves as a sacrifice to Him.

### The Requirements for Discipleship to Be Life

- Resist Conformity to the world’s standards.

The world’s standards are changing and will continue to change. So, we have to resist that. We have to resist conforming to this world. This world is not the friend of the one who wants to be a disciple of Jesus.

- Refuse anything less than total transformation.

John Ortberg in his book *The Life You’ve Always Wanted* says that there are two things that generally happen instead of transformation:

- (1) People give up on transformation—A person might try for a while, but then conclude that he/she will have to live with some imperfection in life.
- (2) People settle for Pseudo-transformation. A person changes a little bit, then accepts that as he/she compares himself/herself to other Christians. Over time, we lower the bar of what is meant by authentic Christianity.

The key to both resisting conformity to the world and total transformation is to continue to renew the mind. How do we do this? Remember what we have studied! Abide in Christ by abiding in worship, in His Word, and in prayer.

### The Result when Discipleship is Life

- Greater and Continual Transformation

Transformation is a process, but we must be continually changing. This is why we say discipleship is life. Transformation will be the ongoing process of your life. Transformation will be a life-long process.

### **So What?**

I want to tell you a story that I think drives this point home so very well.

Henry Ironsides, a pastor of another generation tells this story about himself:

When I was a boy, I felt it was both a duty and a privilege to help my widowed mother make ends meet by finding employment in vacation time, on Saturdays and other times when I did not have to be in school. For quite a while I worked for a Scottish shoemaker, or "cobbler," as he preferred to be called, a man named Dan Mackay. He was a forthright Christian and his little shop was a real testimony for Christ in the neighborhood. The walls were literally covered with Bible texts and pictures, generally taken from old-fashioned Scripture Sheet Almanacs, so that look where one would, he found the Word of God staring him in the face.

On the little counter in front of the bench on which the owner of the shop sat, was a Bible, generally open, and a pile of gospel tracts. No package went out of that shop without a printed message wrapped inside. And whenever opportunity offered, the customers were spoken to kindly and tactfully about the importance of being born again and the blessedness of knowing that the soul is saved through faith in Christ. Many came back to ask for more literature or to inquire more particularly as to how they might find peace with God, with the blessed results that men and women were saved, frequently right in the shoe shop.

It was my chief responsibility to pound leather for shoe soles. A piece of cowhide would be cut then soaked in water. I had a flat piece of iron over my knees and, with a flat-headed hammer, I pounded these soles until they were hard and dry. It seemed an endless operation to me, and I wearied of it many times.

What made my task worse was the fact that, a block away, there was another shop that I passed going and coming to or from my home, and in it sat a jolly, godless cobbler who gathered the boys of the neighborhood about him and regaled them with lewd tales that made him dreaded by respectable parents as a menace to the community. Yet, somehow, he seemed to thrive and that perhaps to a greater extent than my employer, Mackay. As I looked in his window, I often noticed that he never pounded the soles at all, but took them from the water, nailed them on, damp as they were, and with the water splashing from them as he drove each nail in.

One day I ventured inside, something I had been warned never to do. Timidly, I said, "I notice you put the soles on while still wet. Are they just as good as if they were pounded?" He gave me a wicked leer as he answered, "They come back all the quicker this way, my boy!"

"Feeling I had learned something, I related the instance to my boss and suggested that I was perhaps wasting time in drying out the leather so carefully. Mr. Mackay stopped his work and opened his Bible to the passage that reads, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of god."

"Harry," he said, "I do not cobble shoes just for the four bits and six bits (50c or 75c) that I get from my customers. I am doing this for the glory of God. I expect to see every shoe I have ever repaired in a big pile at the judgment seat of Christ, and I do not want the Lord to say to me in that day, 'Dan, this was a poor job. You did not do your best here.' I want Him to be able to say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'"

Then he went on to explain that just as some men are called to preach, so he was called to fix shoes, and that only as he did this well would his testimony count for God. It was a lesson I have never been able to forget. Often when I have been tempted to carelessness, and to slipshod effort, I have thought of dear, devoted Dan Mackay, and it has stirred me up to seek to do all as for Him who died to redeem me.

H. A. Ironside, Illustrations of Bible Truth, Moody Press, 1945, pp. 37-39.

What do you do? Whatever you do is under the Lordship of Christ. All that you do is part of your discipleship? Employee/Employer? Student? Husband/Wife? Parent/Child?

As a Christian, as someone who follows Christ, there should be nothing outside the realm of His control. There can be no habit, no activity, no attitude, no "anything" that is outside our relationship with Him.

We hear that lesson in Eugene Petersen's *The Message* paraphrase of Romans 12:1-2. "So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you."

I urge you to present yourselves to God, Paul said. To whom or what are you presenting yourself? The answer to that question determines your discipleship.