

The Cost of Discipleship

Luke 14: 25-33

I am certainly thankful for the free gift of salvation. Christ paid our sin debt, reconciling us to God in salvation. This gift is freely available to all who receive it by faith. Salvation is free, but our service to the Lord is costly. If we are unwilling to pay the price to follow the Lord, we will accomplish little in service to Him. It has been said, “There is very little blessing or reward in serving the Lord conveniently.”ⁱ Another questioned, “Considering God's investment in us, what is He getting in return?”ⁱⁱ

Our opening verse reveals that a great multitude had followed the Lord and He began to teach them concerning discipleship. His first statement likely hindered many in their pursuit of Him. In fact, this passage is very challenging for any disciple of Christ. It reveals the cost we are expected to pay if we are committed to following the Lord. Many are happy to receive the benefits associated with salvation, but few are willing to make the necessary sacrifices to follow the Lord in obedient discipleship.

I want to examine the [criteria](#) Jesus reveals regarding those who determine to follow Him. Let's consider: [The Cost of Discipleship](#). Notice:

I. The Contrast Exposed (26) – *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.* This statement would have been hard to receive. I am sure that many continue to struggle with it today. Before we become critical, let's consider what the Lord is saying. He reveals a great contrast.

A. The Difficulty – Many consider the statement made of Jesus and focus solely on the word “hate.” Now, I will agree that is a very strong word in our English language. Many who heard these words likely accused Jesus of teaching contrary to Scripture and even contradicting Himself. The law commanded all to love their families, honoring their father and mother. Jesus taught that hatred and anger were dangerous, being likened to murder. We must understand the approach Jesus takes here. He is not teaching contrary to Scripture or contradicting His prior teachings. He is revealing an exaggerated contrast. He implies our love for Him must be so strong and abiding, that when compared to other loves, those pale in comparison. In a parable in the preceding verses, when compelled to come to the great supper, one needed to prove the oxen he had purchased and another had just taken a wife. These were more important than following Jesus. Our love for Christ must exceed the love we have for anyone or anything!

B. The Discernment – Jesus reveals that our love for Him must exceed love for all others or we cannot be His disciple. This is a convicting thought. I don't question the love many of you have for the Lord. Your love is evident to see. However, can we honestly say we love the Lord more than anyone or anything? Is He the priority in our lives? I think we all would have to agree that our love for the Lord could increase. He must be our priority and the passion of our hearts if we are to follow Him in a way that honors and pleases Him!

II. The Cross Expected (27) – *And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.* Here Jesus shares another requirement for those who may have heard this for the first time. We discussed this in our previous study, but let's quickly consider it again.

A. The Sacrifice – *And whosoever doth not bear his cross...cannot be my disciple.* Again we are reminded of the responsibility to bear our cross. Jesus doesn't speak of a few sacrifices made along the way or mere inconveniences. This requires much more than simply bearing a burden or two along the way. We must be willing to die to the desires of the flesh daily as we serve the Lord. If we are unwilling to deny the flesh its desires, we cannot love the Lord as He demands and deserves. Bearing ones cross is essential in discipleship!

B. The Submission – *And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.* While it isn't likely that one would bear their cross without following the Lord, it is possible. Jesus declares that we must seek after Him if we are to be His disciple. *Eph.6:6-7 – Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; ^[7] With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.* Our lives are void and empty apart from Christ. This principle does not change following salvation. We are positioned in Christ, but to enjoy victory and communion, we must follow Him consistently!

III. The Cost Examined (28-30) – These verses deal with the cost involved in being a disciple of Christ. Consider:

A. The Calculation (28) – *For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?* Jesus used a simple illustration to relay a profound truth. No man would endeavor to build a tower, or other construction project, without first sitting down to count the cost and ensure he had sufficient funds to complete the project. He wanted them to understand the cost involved in following Him. He urged all who would follow Him

to first count the cost and see if they were willing to pay the price to fulfill their ambition. He was not interested in those who started, but failed to endure.

- I would urge you to count the cost today as well. I would never discourage anyone from being obedient to the Lord's desire for their life, but you must be willing to follow the Lord obediently, wherever He leads. Many started well, with good intentions, but didn't take the time to count the cost and were unwilling to see their endeavor through for the Lord.

B. The Termination (29a) – *Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish*

it... Those who failed to calculate the cost ran the risk of getting the foundation laid, and lack sufficient funds to complete the project. The foundation was sure, but the project was never fulfilled. Such endeavors were often left unfinished. What started well, with great anticipation and promise, was abandoned for the weeds to consume. Rather than being a building of great use, they became eyesores with no value.

- Serving the Lord is a serious endeavor that requires commitment. I encourage you to pray earnestly before making a public profession regarding service. Many see what they perceive as the glamor of service, but they fail to count the cost. They lack the faith and fortitude to see their work through. One of my greatest fears prior to announcing my call to preach was failure. I never want to be remembered as one who announced my call but failed to see it through. If the Lord calls you to it, He will see you through it. If you are unwilling to abide faithful, there is no need to begin any endeavor. Remain faithful to the call you have received until the Lord places you in another area of service.

C. The Humiliation (29b-30) – *Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him,* ^[30] *Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.* Those

who fail to see their work fulfilled for the Lord open themselves up to mockery and ridicule. Granted some may never notice your accomplishments for the Lord, but you can rest assured they will notice your failures. Sadly the Christian pathway we journey upon is filled with those who started well, but their work now sits abandoned, overgrown with weeds, decaying from being unfinished and lack of attention.

- We must be aware that our failures do not reflect solely upon us. We belong to the church and identify with this local body of believers. Our failure to remain faithful also brings reproach to the good name of the Lord. There is nothing more scrutinized than the church. We must do all we can to abide faithful to following the Lord so as to be a good representation of the church and the Savior we serve!

IV. The Consideration Encouraged (31-33) – Jesus uses a final illustration to encourage faithfulness regarding discipleship. Notice:

A. The Foresight (31) – *Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?* Much like the builder, a king would not consider going into battle without proper planning and preparation. He has to consider the enemy he will face while preparing his troops to be successful in battle. A wise king would never engage in battle unprepared or ill advised.

- We face a determined adversary. He seeks to defeat all who strive to serve the Lord. If you are determined to follow Christ, you will meet the enemy in battle. We must prepare for that encounter ahead of time if we are to experience victory.

B. The Failure (32) – *Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.* The armies of an unprepared king faced the possibility of being required to surrender before they ever engaged the enemy in battle. This would be similar to the mockery faced by the unsuccessful builder, but the implications were greater. The king's people and kingdom were at stake. Failure to plan on his part would result in defeat for all.

- There is no reason for the church or any disciple of Christ to live in defeat. He has already secured the victory, but we must be properly prepared to engage the enemy. Many have been defeated spiritually because they were unprepared for battle. We too must realize that our ego isn't the only thing at stake. The eternal destinies of countless souls hang in the balance. Failure and abandonment are not an option. We must prepare for the enemy, and be willing to face him, clothed in the armor of God.

C. The Fortitude (33) – *So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.* Jesus makes a summary statement regarding the cost of discipleship. We must be willing to forsake all to follow Him. If there is anyone or anything that stands in our way of serving the Lord, we must forsake that to follow Him. That is easy enough to understand, but quite difficult to practice. There is a great need for committed disciples in our day. There are many who have yet to be saved, living apart from Christ and destined for hell. There are young, immature believers who need someone to come alongside them and disciple them in Christ. Are we willing to heed the call of our Lord and follow Him?

Conclusion: Many who heard these words failed to heed them. As Jesus stood condemned of His accusers, facing crucifixion, only a handful stood with Him. In comparison to the world's population, only a few remain faithful today. Are you among those who have counted the cost and decided to follow Jesus? If you are part of the church, that is what's expected. If you are struggling to follow, come to the Lord and confess your needs and concerns. Seek His help and strength to follow Him. If you are unsaved, come to Christ by faith and be saved today!

ⁱ Complete Book of Zingers, The

ⁱⁱ Ibid