

Counting the Cost of Discipleship

A. In Luke chapter 14, Jesus gave the ground rules for becoming one of His disciples. In verses 25-33, said that a person who desires to become His follower needs to calculate the cost.

1. This means that before making the lifelong commitment of becoming a Christian, you must evaluate yourself and see if you are willing to pay the price and take the commitment seriously.
2. There is no one who cannot afford to pay the price, but there are many who are not willing to pay such a high price.

B. Jesus gave us His life and *He* expects our lives in return. We are to present ourselves as a "living sacrifice ... which is our reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1).

1. The greatest and most important of all the commandments is to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, and mind" (Matt. 22:36-37).
 - a. It is important to understand that even good moral people will be lost if they do not love God first above all else.
 - b. We must love Him so much that we will allow nothing to interfere with our putting Him first in our lives.

(1) The disciples "left all" in order to follow Jesus (Luke 5:11).

(2) We are called upon to do the same in our hearts and may be called upon to do so literally.

(a) Nothing, including our physical possessions, is to become more important to us than God.

(b) Indeed, we become simply "stewards" of all we possess and we are accountable to God for our use of the blessings which *He* has given us (1 Peter 4:10).

2. There will be much that you will learn and come to understand as you study and grow. From the very beginning, however, you need to be willing to surrender your will to His, and be committed to follow and obey truth-whatever it takes and wherever it may lead you.
 - a. Your love for the Lord will be the driving force that will empower you to "keep the commandments" (John 14:15).
 - b. This "is why John could say that though following the commandments of God will be challenging, "they are not grievous" (1 John 5:3).

C. Exodus 19:4-8 gives an example of the type of faith you need to have in the Lord from the start, even before you come to know everything that the Lord expects of you.

1. God reminded the children of Israel what *He* had done for them, how *He* had redeemed them from Egyptian bondage and saved them by bearing them upon "eagle's wings."
2. Then God set before them the wonderful blessings He had in store for them (see vv. 5-6, and notice similarity to 1 Peter 2:5-9) if they would simply obey His voice and keep His covenant.
3. Then, even before the people knew what the specific laws were, they demonstrated their faith and trust in God by committing themselves to obey God's laws: "And all the people answered and said, *all* that Jehovah hath spoken *we will do*" (Ex. 19:8).
4. Likewise, we must first come to appreciate the Lord Jesus and all that *He* has done for us, and become convicted of our sins and therefore our need for salvation.

- a. Once we truly come to desire the wonderful promises of God in our life, we then demonstrate our faith and trust in God by "confessing Christ as Lord" (Rom. 10:9-10).
 - b. Someone has said "unless He is Lord of all *He* is not Lord at all"
5. When one accepts Christ as His Lord, he is stating that he is willing to do *whatever the Lord asks, even before he has had the opportunity to learn every detail of what a future life of service to God may involve.*
- a. Jesus made this clear when *He* gave the great commission. *He* ordered *His* followers to go into all the world and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and *Holy* Ghost. Then *He* continued by saying, "*teaching them to observe whatsoever [have commanded you and I, [will be with you always, even into the ends of the age*" (Matt. 28:18-20).
 - b. Notice that a lot of teaching must come after you become a Christian, but the commitment to surrender your will to His and do whatever *He* asks as you learn the Lord's will for your life, comes *before* you make the decision to become a Christian.
6. We cannot make your decisions for you or do your thinking for you, nor do we wish to. Difficult issues will have to be studied out and wrestled with as you fulfill your lifelong commitment to the Lordship of Jesus.
- D. Some general principles should be understood in the very beginning. Our commitment to the Lord can be divided up into three general areas:
- 1. A commitment to a personal relationship with God.
 - 2. A commitment to the family of God, His church, and
 - 3. A commitment to the lost people in the world who do not know Jesus.

E. These basic responsibilities are clear in the Scriptures and your willingness to be faithful to these responsibilities is a part of "counting the cost of discipleship" that Jesus referred to in Luke 14. With these thoughts in mind, let's look at some scriptures dealing with these three areas of commitment.

I. Commitment to a Personal Relationship with God

A. Obviously, you cannot have a relationship with someone with whom you do not communicate!

A Christian needs to schedule regular times for communicating with God.

- 1. A personal study of God's Word is how you can maintain a personal relationship with your Creator.

Let God speak to you daily through His Word, either by study (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 2:15), or meditation (Ps. 1:2).

- 2. Prayer is the way we express our feelings, thoughts and needs to the Heavenly Father (1 Peter 5:7; Col. 4:2).
 - a. It is essential that you talk with God daily once you become one of His children (1 Thess. 5:17).
 - b. It would be good to set aside a special time for prayer along with your Bible study.

B. A daily offering of your life and resources to the cause of Christ is part of your relationship with Him (Rom. 12:1). Here are a few examples:

- 1. Your time (Eph. 5:15).
- 2. Your money (Matt. 6:19; 2 Cor. 8:2-5; 9:6-7).

3. Your thoughts (Phil. 4:8).
4. Your supreme love (Matt. 22:37-38; 2 Cor. 5:14-15).

C. Dealing with sin in your everyday life is part of the commitment.

1. We are to die to sin at the point of baptism (Rom. 6:3,6,11).
2. We are to continue to die daily to our sinful tendencies (Gal. 5:24). This is a part of our growth in Christ and our sanctification before God. This is serious business, because Heb. 12:14 tells us that "without sanctification no man shall see the Lord."
3. Gal. 5:17-21; Col. 3:2-17; Eph. 4:20 - 5:14. These passages all list various sins that are not to be a part of the Christian's life.
 - a. Identify the specific sins in these lists that apply to you.
 - b. You need to learn to "abhor (hate) evil" (Rom. 12:9) and put away "all filthiness and overflow of wickedness" (Jas. 1:21).

D. Our commitment to God should include not only repentance of specific sins, but the laying aside of anything that hinders our service to God (Heb. 12:1).

1. Based on his knowledge of your life, discuss with the one teaching you any potential problems he thinks you may develop.
2. For example, with a student it may be cheating; with a professional person it may be materialism; with a model it may be immodest dress; with spouses, a husband may not love as he should, and a wife may not have the submissive "meek and quiet spirit" that she should.

E. Our primary purpose in life is to become like Christ (Rom. 8:29; 1 In. 2:6; Lk. 6:40). A daily relationship with God is essential in fulfilling this purpose.

II. Commitment to the Family of God, the local church

A. All Christians are equally important, therefore every Christian must be involved and willing to do his part (1 Cor. 12:12-27).

1. The Lord's work isn't to be done by just the "leaders" (Eph. 4:12,15-16).
2. We all need to develop deep relationships within the body. Our best friends should be Christians since we are "members of one another" (Rom. 12:5,10; Eph. 4:25; see handout on the "one another passages" for more detail on this point).
3. It is important that you understand your responsibilities to the assemblies of the saints (Heb. 10:23-25). For example, you need to attend every time you can, participate wholeheartedly, and use the opportunity to strengthen your relationships with your brothers and sisters.

B. Since we cannot condone false doctrine, we cannot worship and abide in the "apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42) by worshipping with just any "church" (2 John 9-11).

1. Why? Consider Mark 7:6-8; Gal. 1:6-10).
2. In practice this means that, wherever you go, you must find faithful brothers and sisters to worship and work with. This is important to remember when traveling or if you move to another location.
3. You need to understand clearly that God's word is the standard for our lives. Any past doctrine, belief, or practice which is not in harmony with God's Word needs to be changed. To continue in error once you have "come to a knowledge of the truth" is to cut yourself off from God's grace (Heb. 10:26).

4. You need to understand clearly what the Bible teaches about salvation and how that relates to our situation today. Based on Matt. 7:22-23, explain in your own words who is a Christian and who is not, and give some Biblical and modern day examples.

C. Our relationship with Elders must be one where we submit to their guidance in they watch for our souls.

1. Elders are our leaders and we should respect and obey them in matters of judgment (Heb. 13:17).
2. Do not receive an accusation against an elder unless there are two or three witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19).
3. We are not to "drag our leaders through the mud." It is a very serious thing to speak evil of an elder, especially if it is done falsely. Consider your words carefully when speaking about anyone, especially our elders, deacons, evangelists and Bible class teachers, etc.

D. Your marriage and dating relationships are very important in God's sight.

1. If you are single, it is imperative that you *only* consider marrying a fellow Christian who will help you get to heaven and with whom you will be able to share the things that are most important to you in this life (Gen. 6:2,5-6; Deut. 7:2-4; Neh. 13:23-27; 2 Cor. 6:4)
 - a. This implies that you must be extremely careful whom you date and not allow yourself to become romantically involved with someone who is not a Christian or who is carnal (1 Cor. 15:33; see lesson on "Dating and Preparation for Marriage").
 - b. All relationships must be kept pure as a Christian (for more on this, see the lessons on "sexual purity").
 - c. If, at present, you have a non-Christian girlfriend or boyfriend, try to get her / him in contact with other Christians who will help you bring her/him to Christ.
2. If you are married and your mate is not a Christian, you should try to "sanctify the mate" by leading him or her to Christ (1 Cor. 7:14-16; 1 Peter 3:1).

III. Commitment to the Lord: Those Who Do Not Know Christ

A. Jesus came to the earth for the purpose of seeking and saving the lost. Therefore, as His disciples, saving the lost should be one of the primary purposes of our Christian life as well.

1. This was Jesus' last command to His apostles (Matt. 28:18-20).
2. We cannot belong to Christ without belonging to the cause of Christ.
3. Individually, we have the same mission as the Christians in the first century. Each must do his share in the spreading of the gospel throughout the entire world (Mk. 16:15)!
4. The proclamation of the gospel is to be a natural outgrowth of your walk with Christ. It is a part of the fruits you are to bear on a daily basis (Acts 8:1,4; Col. 1:28-29).
 - a. There is time to study and grow and be trained, but there will come a time when you ought to be a teacher (Heb. 5:12).
 - b. In the meantime, take advantage of opportunities to share what Christ has done for you in a positive way, and to do what you can to lead others to someone who can teach them.
 - c. Your brothers and sisters will teach you in this area and help you overcome fears you might have. We have classes and small group weekly Bible studies that will help train you to be effective in bringing the lost to Christ.

B. Each of us is to represent Christ to others (2 Cor. 3:2). We would not want to be a bad reflection on Christ or misrepresent Him in anything we do or say. For example:

1. We need to dress modestly (1 Tim. 2:9).
2. Avoid "obscenity, and coarse joking, which are out of place" (Eph. 4:29; 5:4).
3. *Anything* that would discredit the Lord or His church should be avoided (1 Cor. 9:23; 2 Cor. 6:3-4).

A. Obeying the gospel will require substantial changes in your life.

1. A believer is to "*repent* and be baptized" (Acts 2:38). One is to "repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance" (Acts 26:20).
2. Only you know for sure the changes that you need to make to demonstrate true repentance.

B. Whatever your sins may be, true repentance demands that a "turning away" from these take place. Being completely honest with yourself and making a commitment to turn from these things now is what it means to "count the cost" before you decide to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus.

C. Remember that Jesus said He came that your "joy may be made full" (John 15:11). Once you rid yourself of the things of the world, it is important to fill the vacuum that is left with the good things that God has in store for you!

1. Consider the parable about the one who had a demon cast out of him but because he did not fill up his life immediately with good, seven demons came back in and filled his life, so that the last state was worse than the first (Lk. 11:24-26).
2. The following passages will help you along this line (Phil. 4:8; Matt. 11:28-30; Eph. 1:3; Titus 2:14).