

The Cost to Follow

The Problems We Face Today

One of the challenges that believers face is the uncertainty that accompanies the decision to follow Jesus. What will it cost me? What will it cost others if I choose to follow Jesus Christ?

There are many expectations and demands placed on our lives by others. We have so many interests, desires and goals that we do not believe we can really follow Jesus.

- We are not sure if we can live up to the expectations of Jesus if we follow Him.
- We fear we will have to give up things we enjoy or value to follow Him.
- We are concerned what others will think or say if we choose to let Jesus be Lord in our life by following Him.
- We do not believe we can devote the time and energy needed to be His disciples.
- There are too many truths, too many changes needed and so we just resign ourselves to the belief that we cannot follow Him just now.

These problems are common to believers; you are by no means alone in the struggle

Lesson Truth

Although salvation is a gift from God that we receive by faith, there is a personal cost to belong to Jesus Christ and to follow Him. As Jesus gave His life for you, He calls you to give up your life for Him.

Lesson Goal

The goal of this lesson is for you to understand the cost to follow Jesus. The disciple Peter spoke it plainly and simply: “we have left all we had to follow you.”

Lesson Discussion

If Anyone Would Follow Me



Matthew 16:24-25 ESV “Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.’”

This is the place in the road where many who profess Jesus Christ turn back. Many have received God’s free gift of salvation, but only a few will truly follow Jesus. Following Jesus requires that we trust Him completely. If we truly believe Him and trust Him, we will follow Him.



Luke 14:28-30, 33 ESV “For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”

Jesus said that no man builds a tower unless he first sits down and estimates the cost so that he can be sure he has enough to finish the tower. The cost to follow Jesus is very clear – you must be willing to give up anything and everything the Lord asks.

If you are not willing to count the cost as you step out to follow Jesus Christ, you will soon turn back. Choosing to follow Jesus is not something to be taken lightly. Jesus expects complete loyalty, devotion and faithfulness to Him above everything else in your life—everything.

Following Jesus is an all or nothing proposition. It cannot be a part time, half-hearted endeavor.

From a worldly perspective this is ridiculous and fanatical. From God's perspective it is the highest and most blessed calling there is. Jesus does not want you to make a hasty decision in choosing to follow Him. He makes this very clear in His Word and it is a clear warning to those who think they can be part-time, half-hearted followers.

It is very important that you understand the cost and decide if you are truly willing to pay the price to follow Him and be His disciple. But remember, there is also a cost associated with choosing not to follow Jesus.

If you have truly mastered the first two lessons believer, you have no other option than to follow Jesus. The purpose of this lesson is to prepare your heart and mind so you can choose to follow Jesus because you know He is worth the cost. He is worth the cost but you must discover that for yourself.

Devotion to Jesus Christ



John 12:26 ESV "If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."

If you choose not to follow Jesus Christ you cannot serve Him. You can do Christian activities and serve the church, but you cannot serve Him. You can only become a servant of Jesus Christ when you follow Him as His disciple.

When Jesus says "follow me", He is simply saying that your loyalty, devotion, and commitment to Him must forever more overshadow and take priority over every other relationship in your life. He cannot and will not tolerate split loyalty in the life of His followers.

On the surface this seems pretty harsh and extreme and we immediately begin questioning if Jesus really means what he says. Jesus means exactly what He says.



Matthew 10:37-38 ESV "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me."

Everything Jesus taught and commanded is given to help us experience the highest and best that He wants for us in this life. Jesus says we can only be worthy of Him if we are completely loyal and devoted to Him above all else in our lives.

You cannot allow your family, your work, your service to God, other interests, or anything else in this life to come ahead of Him. He is worthy and deserves to be first in your life in everything. He must become your first love or else you cannot follow Him and you cannot serve Him.



Matthew 13:44 ESV "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

The brief time we spend on this planet is tiny compared to what we will spend in eternity with Jesus. He will show you the way to best prepare for eternity with Him if you will follow Him as Lord. Jesus said that anyone who does not give up everything He has cannot be His disciple. Who can really do this? The first disciples did this—they left everything for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Does Jesus still expect those who follow Him to leave everything?

The standard that Jesus set for the first disciples is no different than He sets for those who would follow Him today. It is easy to see why only a few of the many who call themselves Christian will ever truly follow Him as Lord.

If we are not following Jesus, He is not Lord. If He is not Lord, self will continue to be Lord

over our lives and we will be excluded from the life that Jesus wants us to have. We cannot do God's will when self is our Lord.

Many who profess faith in Jesus Christ are unwilling to pay the cost to follow Him. Their allegiance to the world and the things in this world overshadow their allegiance to Jesus. When you choose to truly love Jesus, you will not think twice about following Him.



Matthew 13:45-46 ESV "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

Most are willing to go only so far in the faith, often to the point just short of giving up the right to themselves and everything they have to Jesus. They choose to split their loyalty between Jesus and the world.

Why does Jesus set such a high expectation for those who would follow Him? He does this because He knows that unless we are totally loyal and committed to Him we will not be able to carry out the work He calls us to do. We will try to serve two masters.

Jesus knows we cannot live the standard He set if we are not willing to give up the right to ourselves completely to Him. He cannot count on us to carry out His will. If we look at Jesus' life, we see that He did "exactly" what the Father commanded according to the Father's will because He loved the Father. Even to torture and death on a cross.



John 14:31 ESV "but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here."

Jesus Is Our Example

Jesus set the example for His disciples and He expects us to follow His example. Jesus did exactly what the Father commanded and we must do exactly what Jesus commands. We cannot do that if our loyalty is split between Jesus and the things of this life.

One reason some will not follow Jesus is because they do not believe they can be totally faithful, devoted, loyal and committed to Him. And so they sidestep around the call of Jesus to follow Him as Lord. When we choose to follow Jesus it is a journey into life that is life but it is not instant. Our following is a learning and growing process and we do not get there all at once.

When we look at our lives with all of our relationships, commitments, interests, and work, we do not believe we can live up to Jesus' expectations. Just remember, Jesus will change the way you see things when you give your life to Him exclusively. He will empower you to live His standard and He is the only one who can.

Jesus can empower us supernaturally to break free from the things of this world that prevent us from being His. Through the Holy Spirit He can make us what He says we must be if we will submit to Him as Lord. It is a life journey and you start out as a beginner with much to learn.



2 Peter 1:3 ESV "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence."

When Jesus called the first disciples, they saw something in Jesus that was irresistible. They could not help but leave everything to follow Him. To leave everything for Jesus is not logical and I am sure it did not make any sense to the families and friends of the early disciples. But there was just something about this man Jesus. They knew He had the words of eternal life.

They knew they had to follow Him—no matter what.

Choosing to follow Jesus is choosing to live by faith. Faith does not know what tomorrow will bring, but it trusts the Lord now. We do not know what God is going to do next in our lives but we can trust that it is always the right and best thing from God's perspective. Trust and obedience is what keeps us on the journey.

When you follow Jesus Christ you can count on the fact that Jesus will never leave you or forsake you. As Lord, He takes responsibility to provide everything you need to serve Him and to carry out His will and purpose for your life.

Persecution

Jesus assured his disciples that anyone who gives up something valuable for his sake will be repaid many times over in this life, although not necessarily in the same form. For example, a person may be rejected by his or her family for accepting Christ, but he or she will gain the larger family of believers.



Matthew 5:11-12 ESV “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Christian persecution is hatred toward Jesus and His followers. Many hated Jesus when He walked the earth and many hate Him today. And when you choose to follow Him you should not be surprised if they hate you also.



Romans 8:35-39 ESV “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the daylong; we are

regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither life nor death, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Many believers in Third World countries suffer persecution for the sake of the gospel. Persecution comes in many forms, both subtle and obvious. Through the power of the Holy Spirit we can stand against anything and everything that will come against our faith. Nothing can separate us from the love of Jesus when we follow Him.

Jesus set the example for us in that he suffered, was rejected, and was crucified on a cross. He willingly bore His cross because His whole purpose and desire was to do the Father's will. The Bible teaches us that all who live Godly in Jesus will suffer persecution. There is no greater faith experience than that.



Romans 12:1-2 ESV “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Our cross is not the same as the cross Jesus bore. We will not bear a cross for mankind's salvation. Our cross is participation in the fellowship of His suffering for the sake of the Kingdom of God. It is the highest and most blessed calling of the Christian life.

Yet through it all Jesus will be with us; His love will uphold us; His power will go before us; He will strengthen us; He will be glorified by the lives of His faithful followers. Their lives will become a faithful testimony to Him.

Going Forward

If we are to take what Jesus said literally about giving up everything we have to be His disciple, how do we transition our life so we can learn to live in complete and total reliance on Him? What if we have a wife, husband, children, lands, possessions, a job, a business, or a variety of other interests? How do we practically transition to become disciples when we already have commitments, demands, and expectations placed on us by others?

You do not need to answer those questions now. The lessons to follow will teach you how to follow Him, one step at a time. The truth you must understand in this lesson is that you cannot be His disciple unless you have counted the cost and are willing to pay the price.

You can expect that many well-meaning people, especially family and friends will not understand what you are doing and why. They will also experience a cost because of your obedience to Jesus Christ. You must not try to shield others from the cost of your obedience to your Lord. You must learn to trust God completely with the outcome of your obedience to Him, no matter what it may cost others.

Some will think you have lost your marbles and have gone off the deep end spiritually. People in your church or friends and family may not understand and may try to counsel you to bring you back to your senses. Even your pastor or elders in the church may pull you aside and suggest that you think a little more about it or get agreement from others in your life before you embark on this journey.

All these folks are well-meaning, but they cannot understand or relate to your experience unless they themselves are truly following Jesus as his disciple. Therefore you cannot wait to get agreement or approval from others when choosing to follow Him. You step out in obedience and the Holy Spirit will guide and direct you each step of the way.



One Step for living this truth

Next we will suggest the specific action step you can take to allow the truth taught in this lesson to be lived in your own personal life. You only have to do this one step to master this lesson. Your focus and effort should be to make sure you consistently and persistently do the one step as directed below.

If you will do the suggested step below persistently and faithfully each day, God will show you clearly what it will cost you to follow His Son and He will show you that He is worth it.

Once you understand what it will cost to follow Jesus, you will be ready to go on to the next lesson and make the decision to commit to follow Him.

ACTION STEP

Spend time in this lesson until you are sure you understand what Jesus is asking. Spend time in prayer asking God to affirm these truths to you. You will know when you are ready because your love for Him will erase every barrier that stands in the way and you will know in your heart He is worth it.

Look at your life as it is now. What is it that you would be unwilling to give up for Jesus? Is it your family; your possessions; your interests; a job; something else? Satan will instill fear, doubt and worry into your mind to get you to decide against following Him just now. Hold fast your love for Him and your faith and trust in Him and

decide right now that He is worth it. Continue doing this action step until you have counted the cost and decide He is worth it.

Bumper Sticker Summary

The cost to follow Jesus is all that you count dear. Yet you will find that those things will pale in comparison to the life that is truly life that you will gain. Jesus either gets all of you or none of you, but He is worth it. Where else would you go if not to follow Him for He is the only one who has the words of eternal life. He bids you to come follow Him.

Illustrations for Living The Truth

Mary had struggled for years with doubts about her salvation. There were times when she was sure she was saved and other times when she was not sure at all. During her devotion time as she was reading the Gospel of Matthew, she realized that she had never really made Jesus Lord of her life. Mary knew He came to the earth to be savior of the world, but she had never understood the necessity of making Him Lord of her life. However, she knew if she surrendered to the Lord and became obedient to Him that it would put a serious strain on her relationship with her husband. He was not a Christian and he was very possessive of her. Mary thought about how it would impact this relationship and she realized it would be a tremendous challenge to her faith. After praying about it, Mary knew she had no option other than to follow Jesus and surrender her life to Him. She decided the cost was worth it.

Mary did face many challenges in her relationship with her husband, but the Lord helped her work through each situation. Her husband was eventually saved because of her faith and commitment to Jesus. Mary no longer struggled with doubts about her salvation because she knew in her heart that now she was His and belonged to Him forever.

Mark was saved at a revival meeting three years ago. He lived with his mother who required a lot of care and attention due to some physical disabilities. She dominated Mark's life and he had little time for anything outside of doing whatever his mother asked of him. He could not handle the guilt when there was a conflict between what his mother wanted him to do and what he wanted to do.

Mark's mother was not a Christian and would put guilt trips on him to get him to give into her every whim. Mark was also struggling in his spiritual life and did not know what God wanted him to do with his life. He felt he could do nothing except go to work to provide an income and take care of his ailing mother. Mark joined a bible study group that was studying discipleship as Jesus taught. He realized through the teachings of the Gospels that he should follow Jesus. But he knew he could not because of what he thought it would do to his mother. Mark was not willing to trust God to work through the situation with his mother. He counted the cost but was not willing to pay the cost by trusting God and following Jesus.



Scriptures on the Cost

Luke 14:26 ESV “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.”

Luke 18:28 ESV “And Peter said, ‘See, we have left our homes and followed you.’ And he said to them, ‘Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.’”

Luke 14:33 ESV “So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”

Revelations 12:11 “And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.”