

“You Cannot be My Disciple” The Cost of Discipleship

Can you imagine Jesus telling you, “You cannot be My disciple”?

There is a major difference between being a believer and being a disciple of Jesus Christ! Many who call themselves “Christians” are not true disciples of Jesus at all. Jesus said, “...why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46 NKJV). God only gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him. (See Acts 5:32; Heb. 5:9.) Therefore, to be a true Christian, you must be willing to obey and to follow the instructions given to you by Jesus. To be a disciple of Jesus Christ you must heed Christ’s every word.

How can you be a disciple of Christ? You can be chosen if you comply with all His instructions. Jesus said, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. **By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples**” (John 15:7-8 NKJV).

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you” (John 15:16 NKJV).

Most simply don’t desire to follow Jesus very closely. Many are like Peter the night of Jesus’ trial and suffering. He followed at a distance, not wanting to walk too closely with Jesus. He wanted to know what was going on, but didn’t desire to get in the middle of the action as did John. John was not as afraid of being identified with our Lord.

Most Christians have never stopped to think about the cost of being a true disciple of Jesus. Many are simply along for a good time and the fellowship.

Yet the price of a true follower of Christ is much more than simply believing that Jesus died to cover all sin. Let’s look into the Word of God to determine the price tag of discipleship.

Counting the Cost of Discipleship

While Jesus was teaching and preaching in Palestine, there were those who wanted to be His followers. “And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain *man* said unto Him, ‘Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.’ And Jesus said unto him, ‘Foxes have holes, and birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *His* head.’ And He said unto another, ‘**Follow Me.**’ But he said, ‘Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.’ Jesus said unto him, ‘Let the [spiritually] dead bury their dead: but **go thou and preach the kingdom of God.**’ And another also said, ‘Lord, I will follow Thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.’ And Jesus said unto him, ‘No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God’” (Luke 9:57-62).

Many of us blurt out statements about our willingness to follow Jesus when we have no idea of the consequences of those words!

Jesus began to explain what it is like to truly follow Him and to be His disciple. First, the comforts of home may be lacking. Jesus said that He didn't even have a home He could call His own.

Next, Jesus said, "Follow Me." But the man had his own idea about how he wanted to follow Jesus. **He wanted to do it his own way and in his own time**, "When I get all my family affairs in order, when my father finally dies and I bury him, then I think I will be ready to serve You Lord; that is, if something else doesn't come up." In essence he was saying, "I want to be Your disciple Jesus, but I want to obey You on my own terms." Jesus told him to let the spiritually dead take care of the physical things.

We are to follow Him NOW!

Then the man that said, "I will follow You, but first let me go bid them farewell which are at home at my house." Jesus said to him, "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

If we are seriously interested in being a true disciple of Jesus Christ and not just being a halfhearted (spiritless) Christian, we must be willing to look only to Jesus and never look back at the life we may have had if we had not decided to follow Christ. Once we have determined to pursue God, we must never look back contemplating what could have been!

In Matthew 10 we read some of the costs associated with being a disciple:

Great Hardship: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: **be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves**. But **beware of men**: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. The disciple is not above *his* master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub [dung god; Satan], how much more *shall they call* them of His household?" (Matt. 10:16-25).

During your service and dedication to God they will say, “You are not led by God,” or “You aren’t a minister of God.” Jesus said don’t worry about these accusations. If they have called Jesus “Satan,” they will say the same about you.

Fearlessness with Great Boldness: “**Fear them not** therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. **What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light:** and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the housetops. And **fear not them** which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather **fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.** Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. **Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven.** But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 10:26-33).

Lack of Peace: “...In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33 NKJV). “**Think not that I am come to send peace on earth:** I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes *shall be* they of his own household. **He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me**” (Matt. 10:34-37).

The peace Christ gives is from above. “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). The peace we are able to enjoy is achieved through our oneness with Christ, not from the people around us. The outside world will cause us stress, anguish, trials, and tribulations but Jesus said, “...be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

You must accept these conditions God gives you and be willing to work for Him under those constraints. “And **he that taketh not his cross** [these situations and conditions], **and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.** He that findeth his life shall lose it: and **he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it**” (Matt. 10:38-39; see also Luke 14:26-27).

As soon as you declare your allegiance to Jesus and dare to become a disciple, your troubles begin. Here are some external problems you will face:

1. You may lack physical things others take for granted (Luke 9:58).
2. Because of your love of God, people are going to hate you. You will be brought before counsels, intimidated, and persecuted.

3. The harassment will start; family members will reject you and think and say all sorts of crazy and evil things about you. They may even be willing to deliver you up to the powers of Satan.
4. The need to flee from one place to another to avoid harassment, persecution, and possible death may become necessary.
5. You will be labeled Satan's worker.
6. Your life will not be one of continual peace in this world.
7. There will be a tendency to fear people instead of God.

If you are not willing to accept these conditions, you cannot be a disciple of Jesus Christ! "...Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27). You must carry the burden God has given you and follow Jesus.

To be a disciple of Jesus requires real dedication and personal commitment. You must be willing to submit every part of your life to serving God. **There is no halfhearted ("spiritless") approach to being a disciple.** If your desire is to be only a lukewarm (tepid) Christian, then Jesus says, "You cannot be My disciple!"

Doing the will of the Father is a prime prerequisite of a disciple. This was the core of Jesus Christ's ministry. And so it should be of everyone willing to follow in the footsteps of Christ. (See Heb. 10:7, 9.)

Oh, you might be a believer but you can't be a disciple of Jesus unless you are willing to forsake everything else and all that you have to serve Him. You must be willing to bear any difficulties God gives you and follow Jesus wherever He leads you. The requirements of discipleship are much more than simply believing in Jesus as your savior.

Discipleship requires these internal adjustments:

1. You must totally commit your life to God! It is not your own. You are bought with a price (I Cor. 6:20, 7:23).
2. God has to be above everything else in your life and you must be obedient to God and do exactly what Jesus instructs.
3. You must be willing to lose your physical desires and stop all the things you may have wanted to do (Matt. 6:33).
4. You will need total reliance and trust in God for everything.
5. You must be led by the Holy Spirit in doing the will of the Father (Matt. 26:42; Rom. 8:14).
6. Good fruit will need to be produced—evidence of God working in your life (John 15:8).
7. You must be willing to announce to all the Kingdom of God and all the things that pertain to Jesus Christ (Acts 28:30-31).

“...Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:33). What does it mean to forsake all that you have? There can be nothing that stands between you and God. “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me” (Ex. 20:3). What are your gods? What is more important to you than the instructions from Jesus? Do you have anything that is more valuable to you than God? What are you serving and putting before God?

The number one god most people have is themselves!

Most try to serve a god of their own making. A majority do not turn the control of their lives over to God. A very large number are not willing to say, “Not my will but Your will be done, Oh God.” Is it going to be your will or God’s will?

Remember the parable in Matthew 19:16-22, where the rich young man came to Jesus and wanted to have eternal life? He asked Christ, “What must I do?” Jesus said, “Keep the commandments.” The young man said he had done that from his youth and asked what else was there to do. Christ said, “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what you have, give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven. Come and follow Me.” But when the young man heard that, he went away sorrowful because he had great possessions.

You see, the man’s god was his wealth! What stands between you and God? If Jesus asked you to sell your home and support His work, would you do it? If Jesus asked you to get rid of all your pets, or pet projects, and come follow Him, could you do it? If Jesus asked you to give up your weekend sports activities, would you do it? If not, you can not be His disciple!

To follow in the footsteps of Jesus, you must be willing to carry the same message He brought. That message was given to Him by the Father. He came announcing the Kingdom of God. That is the announcement of God’s literal government ruling here on earth with all other Satan-inspired, human governments eradicated. That is a different message than what is being preached today. Today we have a message about Jesus and reconciliation with God; this is only part of the gospel. The complete gospel is what Jesus revealed. The Apostle Paul preached the same gospel Jesus did, as we read in Acts 28:30-31, “And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, **preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ...**”

So what do you think? Do you have what it takes to be a disciple of our Lord? Don’t be too hasty in your decision. Jesus said, “...he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me” (Matt. 10:38). Count the cost of being a true follower and worshiper of Jesus Christ. Your life will not be a bed of roses; there will be thorns. Jesus explains the way of life of a true disciple will be restrictive and very difficult. Few people ever find or follow that arduous way that He offers to His true disciples, but the rewards are worth it. (See Matt. 7:13-14.)

Supporting the Gospel Message

Some may genuinely want to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, but do not feel they have been personally called to preach the Word. Jesus understood that all disciples were not going to be called to preach the Word. But He provided for them a way to join in all the benefits and blessings of those who were directly involved in preaching the Kingdom of God. He said in Matthew 10:40-42, “He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”

Here we see Jesus explaining that if you accept and support a person carrying the message about Jesus and the Kingdom of God, you are received by God in the same way the messenger is. And if you give to support the messenger, you will share in the same reward that disciple receives!

Wow! Not everyone has the same spiritual gifts as another, yet all can share in the benefits of preaching the Kingdom of God! By helping to support the ministry of a true disciple of Jesus Christ, we can share the same reward!

This ought to be a source of great encouragement! You too can receive great recompense for helping those God has called to carry His message to a sick and dying world!

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