

Understanding The Cost Of Following Christ

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[0 : 00] I don't know how many history buffs we have in the room but I'm somewhat of a history buff and I want to introduce you to someone from 1845.

! This is Captain John Franklin. He was a British captain and in 1845 was a celebrated captain, had led the British Navy in the Battle of Trafalgar and was celebrated in all of Britain.

And 1845, he was going to lead an expedition, an expedition that he had had some experience with leading. This was in an attempt to find the Northwest Passageway from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean going through the Arctic Sea.

So sailing around Greenland. Greenland's kind of been in the news a little bit lately and there's some history there. But you can kind of, I don't know if you can see this map really well today on a bright day, like we got some sunshine. What is that?

But you can see they sailed kind of south and west of Greenland and through the Baffin Bay and then when they got to the area there labeled as Victoria Island, this is where they began to have some trouble.

[1 : 25] Eventually, the whole expedition was doomed. There were two ships that sailed in this expedition, 139 total sailors that were a part of this expedition, but they got caught up in ice flows that basically drove the ships where they didn't have a choice where they were going because the ice flows dictated where they went.

And it took them to places that were off of their course. And eventually they were busted into the ice, busted into the ships and they had to abandon them.

And they were somewhat prepared. They had three years worth of food stored up on their ships using canning as a method, although they had used lead solder to seal the cans.

And so lead poisoning became one of the issues. Captain Franklin actually died of lead poisoning while on this journey. He was one of the early ones to actually die on this expedition.

But other than that, their planning for this trip was ill-fated. They pretty much had their uniforms and their standard-issue cold-weather clothing, although they had silk scarves and just standard-issue gloves.

[2 : 52] But some of the other things that they decided to take on board, they had some very ornate and fine china that they would use to eat with on this expedition.

Cut glass wine goblets. They had very ornate Victorian-designed silverware. And each of the officers on these two ships had a special place setting with their initials engraved on their silver utensils.

And Victorian silk scarves and all of this. And while the ships were outfitted with coal for steam engines, not only to provide steam in case the wind wasn't favorable, but also to have some heat on board, they didn't bother to store much coal on their ships.

Actually, they took one each of the storerooms, coal storerooms, on board. And instead of putting coal in it, they outfitted it as a lounge with 1,200 book libraries on each ship.

And cupboards to hold extra china and extra cups and dishes and so forth. And each ship also had its own organ as a part of its outfitting.

[4 : 28] They eventually, of course, as I said, they got run up by the ice flows. And the men abandoned ship eventually. They were two years battling this ice.

And the Inuit Indians, we would call them Eskimos, actually began to see what was happening with these ships and these men.

As they abandoned ship, they had to abandon ship. And they would tow rowboats or their rescue vessels there.

We would load it up with supplies. And they were trying to find where the nearest station was at, where life would be, and they could survive. However, all 139 of them did perish in this expedition. And it was quite the way that the Inuit described them. Although for the longest time, British government didn't trust what they had said, where the ships were located.

[5 : 36] They said, no, that wasn't where they were headed. And they said, nonetheless, this is where the ships are. And they wouldn't believe them and wouldn't believe them. And it was only until 2014 and 2016 where the two ships were finally found.

And so just in these last few years, they have done some expeditions and some dives to see what was left of these ships. They found burial plots.

They have found tents where men inside were died and were just left there. Most famous painting of this era comes from this painting here of all these men that died around one of these lifeboats. One man alone still alive and awaiting his fate. And it's quite interesting when you see that kind of history and you see that kind of catastrophe that took place.

And the ill nature, the lack of counting the cost of being well prepared for this expedition.

[6 : 51] If you were to compare walking with Christ, your life with Christ as an expedition, what would you say you would need to have in order to be prepared for that?

What would you say in terms of counting the cost of what it would take for you to survive and thrive in that relationship with Christ as you made your way through your life?

Because Jesus himself promised that this life would be difficult if we chose to follow him. Take up your cross and follow me.

That's not a life of ease. It is a life of difficulty. The apostle Paul taught about this. 2 Timothy 3. There's multiple places, and I'm just listing the one.

And he wrote, Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Persecution, hardship, difficulty, it is a part.

[7 : 56] It is a part of what it means to be a Christian, to follow Christ, to choose to follow him, means you know that life will be difficult.

And our text that we're looking at today is something that's very difficult. It's hard for us to understand what Jesus meant by some of the things that he said in the text today.

And it's hard for us to try to put it into practice, what he teaches in this text. And it starts off in Luke 14, verse 25, with this statement.

Now, great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and he said to them. It's interesting that when we read this text, Jesus is not interested in building crowds.

He's not interested in having a huge following at all. As he turns and what he does, we see this in a few places in the Gospels, he will actually teach something that's very difficult for them to hear, knowing that a number of them, and perhaps even the majority of the people who were following, would walk away, would willingly just say, oh, that's not for me, this is too much.

[9 : 13] And so Jesus, there's these large crowds that are accompanying him on his way.

Remember, he is traveling from the north in Galilee up to Jerusalem in the south, and he knows that he's going to Jerusalem to the cross.

And as he's going, there's this huge parade of people that are following behind him. They're interested in the miraculous.

They're interested in what Jesus can do for them. That's not unusual today. We see people who are interested in Christ or interested in Christianity because of what Jesus can do for you.

But Jesus then turns and says something very interesting in our text. And as we read this passage, all of this is hopefully helping us to understand the cost of following Christ.

What's the cost? What is going to be at stake if I'm choosing to follow Christ? What will that be like if I do this?

[10 : 29] And the first thing that he's going to tell us, and then we'll read this next verse, is that I must be willing to prioritize love for Christ above all other loves.

But the way that Jesus says it is unique, and it's alarming, and it makes us say, what? What does he mean by this?

And so let's go ahead and read what he said. So he turns to these large crowds that are following after him, and he says, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother, and hate his wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Now in our passage, he's going to say this last phrase three times. He cannot be my disciple. And so this is tough for us to hear.

And this instruction, hate my wife, hate my husband, hate my children, hate my parents, hate my kids, hate my own life.

[11 : 36] What in the world does Jesus mean by hating, hating our family? What does he mean by that? Especially when we know that all throughout Scripture, we are commanded to love one another.

Right? We're told that we need to love each other, that husbands, you're to love your wives, that you should love your parents, parents love your children, that we should love our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Even Jesus taught we should love our enemies. And so is Jesus contradicting himself here? Or what does he mean by hate your family?

Well, I want to give you a little bit of context to help explain this, because again, this is, as the first point says, it's an issue of prioritizing.

And let me demonstrate this for you. All the way back in Genesis chapter 25, when Jacob and Esau are born, Esau is the firstborn, Jacob comes after him, and he wants Esau's birthright.

[12 : 49] And so he devises this clever scheme. And so at one point, Jacob was cooking this wonderful stew, and I'm guessing it was a pretty good stew.

I don't know if you guys like stew, but I like stew. And Esau came in from hunting and was hungry. And he offered it to Esau for a price.

Give me your birthright. I'll give you some of the stew. Esau said, well, this birthright's not doing me any good right now. Sure, I'll take that. He ate and he drank and he rose and he went his way.

And thus Esau despised his birthright. Now, when we think of hate, hatred or despising something, we see that written in the text and we think, wow, I mean, he really didn't want to be associated with his birthright.

That's not what the text is saying. He is saying simply that he didn't care about his birthright in such a way that a bowl of stew was more appealing to him than his own birthright.

[14 : 03] So it wasn't that he hated it in the sense that we talk about hate in the way that our culture talks about hate. It's saying that there was an order of priority to Esau.

And there was something that he placed as a higher priority than his own birthright. Another interesting story is found again with Jacob. when Jacob has to run and he goes to a far off land back to where his grandparents were from, basically, his grandmother.

So Jacob went in to Rachel also. He worked for seven years to earn the hand of Rachel. But Laban, the father-in-law tricked him and gave him Leah instead, the older daughter.

And so he went into her on the wedding night and they did their thing. What you do on a wedding night and you know what that is. And he woke up in the morning and it was Leah instead of Rachel. And it's like, why did you play this trick on me? Well, I'll work for another seven more years and I'll give you my other daughter. Now, I don't know how to explain that. We don't, we don't do that kind of a thing today.

[15 : 15] I mean, if somebody was coming into my house looking for one of my daughters, I'm not going to offer them up two of my daughters, right? I don't know of any guy that's doing that today, but back then apparently, and God tolerated it.

This is, this is not God putting his stamp of approval on this. People ask me all the time about, what about, what about in the old Testament when they had multiple wives? Doesn't mean that that's what God desired.

What would God commanded, but God did tolerate some of that. And we have to wonder in our own lives, what does God tolerate as sinful in our own lives?

And still he chooses to use us, but back to our story here. So Jacob went into Rachel on the night of his second marriage then.

So he, now he had two wives and he loved Rachel more than Leah. Now we struggle with that too, but it's, it's makes sense because he was crushing on Rachel to begin with.

[16 : 15] He had wanted Rachel all along and then he got surprised with Leah and it's like, ah, and so he kept working for another seven years just to make sure that he could get Rachel as well.

And so it makes sense that he would love the one more than the other. And then right in the next verse, when the Lord saw that Leah was hated. And again, it's not that Jacob hated his wife, Leah.

it's that the priority was Rachel first. And then Leah. That's what was, was being contrasted here in, in the text.

It wasn't that, that Jacob so despised Leah, so hated her. That, that's not what's in view here.

Exodus chapter 20, verse five.

This is the list of, of the 10 commandments. And the one commandment about not having other gods, you shall not bow down to them or serve them for I, the Lord, your God, am a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the fathers and the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me.

[17:27] And, and it's, and it's not that, that the Israelites, when they were tempted to serve other gods, they weren't saying, Oh, we hate Jehovah God, but we just want to add these other gods too.

And, and from God's perspective, that was despicable. That was dishonoring. That was something that was unacceptable in his eyes because he is a jealous God in the sense that there is no other God.

There are no other gods. There's, there's only the one. And so the idea of prioritizing. And then again, in the new Testament, back to Jacob and Esau, this phrase that we read in Romans chapter nine, Jacob, as it is written, Jacob, I love, but Esau, I hated.

Again, it's not that God hated Esau. That that's not what we, in the same way that we think of hatred. It's that Jacob was chosen.

Esau was not. And, and so we have to understand it from that perspective. So on your notes, you have some, some definitions there, what it means to hate.

[18:37] In this context, from a, from a Jewish perspective, as opposed to our perspective, what we think of when we think of hatred in our world today, hatred, we think of hostility.

We think of despising. We think of intense dislike. That's not what's in view in the context that Jesus just says about hating our mother and father.

But here, it's a matter of priority. It is a matter of, of order to place in order of importance or desire. Or another way of saying it is to care more about the one thing than the other. And that's what Jesus is asking us to do.

That our relationship with him ought to be the commitment that we would make to him is such that he has the highest priority in our life, even more than any parent, any spouse, any child, any other human relationship, any thing, any other desire that we might have, any hobby, any work, whatever it is, everything comes under the number one priority, which is Jesus Christ himself.

[20:08] Now, there's a story, Francis Schaeffer, I don't know if you are familiar with, with, with him. He died, I don't know, a couple decades ago, maybe.

author of a number of, of great books. He is there and he is not silent. How, how should we then live is another great Francis Schaeffer book.

I was introduced to him as an author early on in my walk with the Lord. And I've been blessed as a result of that. He tells the story of something that he would never recommend and neither would I, but that he did as an, as a young believer.

He was saved as a teenager. I can relate to that. I was as well. And early on, he sensed that God was calling him into ministry, something that his unsaved father was totally against.

Did not want to, did not want his son to be in ministry, did not want him to go to college, just, just didn't want him to do that. And he struggled mightily with that because he felt as if God was saying, I want you to go to college to prepare for ministry.

[21:18] I want you to do this. And dad was saying, no. And so one day when the decision time was, was ready to be made and, and, and, and he went into his basement and he began to pray.

And as he was praying, being a young believer and not quite understanding how God's will is discerned. He took a coin out of his pocket and he said, Lord, if, if please, if, if when I flip this coin, if it's heads, I'll know that you want me to go to college.

And if it's tails, I know that you want me to obey my father and not go to college. He flipped the coin. It was heads. Ah, and he said, Lord, please forgive me.

I want to ask one more time. This time I'm going to flip the coin. And if it be tails, I'll know I need to go to college. And prepare for ministry. And if it's heads, I'll know to obey my father.

And he flipped it. And turns out it was tails. And he said, one more time, Lord, one more time. And, and if, if it's, if it's your will that I go to college, let it be heads.

[22 : 26] He flipped the coin. It was heads. And now he, at least in his mind, in his simple, very immature walk with the Lord at that point, knew that, that God's will was for him to go to college and to prepare for ministry.

And so he walked back upstairs and he announced to his father, my father, I must do as, as, as I have been called.

And so this fall, I will be going to college and I will be preparing for ministry. And his father turned around in a huff and he walked out of the room and he slammed the door.

Just before the door hit the door frame, he said, I'll pay for the first semester. Later on, his father became a Christian.

And Francis Schaeffer would credit that, that commitment, making that decision as to what influenced his father into making that kind of a decision.

[23 : 30] So we have to honor, honor God above all. And there's another unique aspect to, to this, uh, that you have on your notes there. And it's the idea of, of family being a possession, something that we get, something that is provided to us because we're a part of a family.

Often times when we think of, of this, our relationship with family versus our relationship with God, we think of it in the sense of duty. I have a, I have a duty to my family, uh, to, to honor them and, and to obey them and to do what, what they command.

Uh, and to do what they say. And, and that's what's in view here. Jesus kind of addressed that in chapter 12, that sense of duty to family. And here he is, I think in the, in this context, considering one of the verses that we're going to, we're going to see here in just a little bit, that, that everything that he's talking about here has to do with possessions, things, things that we receive, things that are, that are a benefit to us.

And certainly, uh, we might not think of it in this way, but Jewish families, uh, certainly did think of, of, of, um, their family being a possession.

What family provided for you. And, and maybe we can relate to some of these things. Family gave the typical Jew a sense of security. Now, again, in, in their culture, they, they didn't have necessarily, uh, police officers, rural communities and so forth.

[25 : 08] And so, uh, a lot of times the family dwelling place would become somewhat of a, of a bunker and you would protect your family from any threat of harm from the outside.

And so that was, that was a part of the dynamic, uh, in that culture. So Jewish, uh, for a Jewish family, uh, there was a sense of security. I, I'm, I belong to this family and this family gives shelter and security.

There was also a sense of status. They had a, a feeling of status because I'm Jewish. And being a Jewish person meant that you're God's chosen.

You're one of God's chosen people. You're one of God's chosen clans. And so because of that, I feel more special than any of these other Gentile families or Gentile people, this, this kind of uppity, uh, feeling that they would have.

Like when you consider Jonah, not willing to go to, because he doesn't want those people to repent, that kind of mindset permeated, uh, their, their culture.

[26 : 18] So they, they had a sense of status. And then erroneously, falsely, they thought it provided them salvation because I'm Jewish.

I'm, I'm part of Abraham's family. That gives me like an automatic entry into heaven. I'm, I'm just forgiven.

And of course, Jesus is contradicting that, uh, all throughout the gospels. And, and so, but this is kind of how the typical Jew during that time would think that because of their heritage, uh, because of their family line, they felt like they, they were in with God already.

And so Jesus is saying, your family, you need to be willing to set that aside in terms of your dependence on family.

And instead of that, be dependent on me, on Jesus. That's what he's after when he talks about hating family, hating mother and father that keep that in view.

[27 : 33] when you read this passage, when you read this passage as well. Now he goes on in verse 27, and it goes from something that's kind of a shocking statement to now here's something that's, um, really difficult for us to hear.

Uh, again, uh, whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Uh, and again, that phrase cannot be my disciple.

If you're not willing to take up your cross and follow him. And people in that day understood what, what, what it meant to bear a cross, to take up a cross and to follow him, fall in line behind him is literally what that means there.

And it doesn't mean that you're putting on a gold necklace with a little cross on it. Okay. Uh, in our culture, we use that kind of as an identifying marker. You know, I'm a Christian. I wear this. But in that culture, uh, taking up your cross literally meant you're going to your death. You're going to be, uh, put to death, uh, on that cross.

[28 : 36] And it was extremely humiliating. Uh, it was, uh, it was something that was very shameful, uh, for, for anyone who would be not, not just that you were going to lose your life, but in the manner that you were going to lose your life, it would be, uh, uh, something that would be very shameful for your family.

And, and that was on purpose in the way that they designed that. And so for us in reality, what does that mean? To bear your own cross and follow me.

I must be willing to accept the, the ridicule and the rejection that comes from following Christ.

Ridicule and rejection of the world that comes from following Christ.

Last time I checked, I don't, I don't think there's too many people in the world today who are dying on crosses. And I haven't seen, and you haven't seen me walking down the road, carrying a cross. Now, sometimes there are people, uh, and it seems odd to, to see that when someone will actually take a cross and put it on their shoulder and, and carry. What does Jesus mean by that?

[29 : 47] And it has to do with self-sacrifice. It has, it has to do with, with surrendering self to follow him. And so when we look at that, what it means to, to bear our own cross, then, uh, again, on your notes, it's to surrender any other source of life than Christ.

Christ is to recognize that my life is not found in what I do for a living. It's not found in my children. My life is not found in how much money I make. My life is not found in, in the things that I take enjoyment from, whether it's a hobby or whatever it might be, that my life is in Christ.

And, and, and any other things that, that I would say life comes from, it doesn't mean that I, I can't enjoy the things of life.

That would also be against God's command. We're told that every good and perfect gift comes down from the father of lights, but it's, it's a matter of, am I able to recognize that what I have in my life comes from God and, and to offer him the thanksgiving that he deserves as a result of all this blessing that I have in my life, or if my life is those things, if this is what consumes my time and my energy and, and my focus, and, and I don't have anything for the Lord, except for what I do on a Sunday morning, that, that, that doesn't fit with what Jesus is teaching us here.

[31 : 26] So my life then, uh, is consumed by Christ. And that means to turn away from all self-seeking. And this is, this is difficult for us too, is it not?

How do I determine when I'm shopping for something on the internet? Is it something that I want that I have to have? Is it, is it, is it, uh, uh, uh, gonna, gonna bring me satisfaction, gonna bring me a sense of joy that I don't get from my relationship with the Lord?

Am I buying into that kind of materialistic mindset? Am I, am I, am I trying to serve my own needs, my own interests, my own wants and desires, or am I willingly putting myself, uh, putting myself out there to serve other people?

Um, um, um, to submit to and to serve others, um, um, as we're taught. Um, then the third thing here is I must be willing to, as much as I am able to anticipate just how costly my commitment to Christ will be.

How costly is this going to be? And Jesus tells two parables back to back here to, to illustrate this, this idea.

[33 : 02] For which of you desiring to build a tower does not first sit down and count the cost. So that's the first, the first, uh, illustration. Sit down and count the cost.

Whether he has enough supplies, money, whatever it is, manpower to complete it. Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation for that tower and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to mock him, saying this man began to build and was not able to finish.

He didn't correctly count the cost for what it would take to complete the tower. Or, what king going out to encounter another king in war will not sit down first and deliberate.

So we have sit down and count the cost. And here we've got sit down and deliberate. Whether he is able with 10,000 soldiers to meet him who comes against him with 20,000 soldiers.

Now, it might very well be possible that when you deliberate that you think, yes, 10,000 with correct strategy and positioning and resources can defeat the 20,000.

[34 : 17] But did you deliberate? Did you, or did you just go off and think, okay, I can take this, this guy, I can take this army. And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.

And so this is the, the, then the question here, what does it mean then to consider the cost or to, to deliberate?

And what does it mean in terms of that counting the cost and deliberating when it comes to making a decision for Christ? In terms of making a decision for Christ?

Because, um, I got to tell you, this, this is something that for me, um, is bothersome. And, and so I, I, I kind of want to share with you my, my little internal struggle that I have with, within evangelicalism.

Um, um, and that is in this idea of making a decision for Christ. Uh, in, in evangelicalism, we love to use invitations and emotions in order to draw people to Christ.

[35 : 36] Right? So we, we bring people in, we, we play music, we, we preach sermons, we tell compelling illustrations.

And then at the end, we want to draw the net, but in drawing the net, then again, we'll use songs or, uh, uh, use techniques to manipulate emotionally, manipulate people.

And my struggle with this is because this is something that I have seen firsthand. Um, you know, you go to a church service and, and if there are others who do this, use these kinds of techniques, that they may with proper motive, be able to do that.

I struggle with it. I'm just sharing my struggle with where I'm at. Um, back in the day when I was younger, they would remember, I don't know, some of you might, might have this remembrance singing the, the 10 verses of just as I am.

And, and the preacher at the end of every verse of that song saying, now who's going to come down, you know, the aisle and, and, and who's going to, or the idea of, of, uh, using counselors as a way to prime the pump.

[36 : 54] That's the language that's, that's used. Um, at the, at the beginning of the invitation, counselors would be positioned throughout the room. And then when it was time, they were instructed to come up to receive people who were coming forward to accept Christ as savior.

But they did it in such a strategic way as if that when someone was there, they would think, well, other people are going, I'll go to, that was literally the expressed motivation for doing a strategy like that.

Maybe that's a fair thing to do. I don't know. I'm telling you my struggle. I was part of a church. Uh, my wife and I had just recently joined. This was when we were living in Texas where the preacher was an excellent preacher.

And I hadn't noticed this at the beginning, but at the end of every sermon, meaning at the beginning of every invitation, he would come to tears and he would shed these, these tears during his invitation.

And it was, it was so compelling. And so, oh, we were, we were just drawn into that only to find out that the man was guilty of shoplifting condoms and having an affair with his secretary.

[38 : 19] And, and we were left to wonder, was this the Holy Spirit using this man?

Now, I, I believe that the Holy Spirit can use someone who's very flawed because if they're speaking the word of God, I get that. He uses me, right? That's, I'm not perfect.

I'm, I'm a flawed man. I get that. But is that manipulation? Are we manipulating people's emotions to get them to make a decision for Christ?

especially in the context of Jesus saying to us, you must count the cost. You must sit down and deliberate and count the cost.

Now, nothing against emotion. God made us emotional creatures. I don't have a problem with people expressing emotions.

[39 : 28] I, I will tell you that for years, I struggled with that as a pastor, as a preacher, allowing myself to become emotional. Because the last thing I wanted to be guilty of was to manipulate someone into making a decision for Christ.

And what's interesting is that even the most famous of the evangelists, some names that you would know, would admit that only about 10 or 15% of the people who walk an aisle and make a decision

for Christ, only 10 or 15% actually stick.

Their words. And so what are we doing? Are we trusting God to, here's what I'm called to do. I'm not called to be a good invitation giver. A good fundraiser is another one. I'm not good at either one of those.

But I hope I'm a faithful preacher of the gospel. Because that's what I'm called to be. Faithful witness to what the word of God says.

[40 : 43] And yes, we all have our different techniques and different ways of, of doing things. I have my own techniques of, of doing things. It's strategic that I put a chair up here.

Right. It's strategic that I don't use a big wooden pulpit. I never have liked one of those things. Right. These are things that we do. And those are fine.

But are we motivating people to follow Christ in a way that honors him? Or am I doing it to draw a crowd?

Or is making disciples what we're called to do? Because when I look at the scriptures, making disciples seems to be what we're called to do.

All of us are called to do, to make disciples in the name of Christ. So yes, I will give an invitation. I will invite people. I will pray a prayer and invite people to trust Christ as savior.

[41 : 46] I, I will try to check myself and make sure that my motive is true. And that I'm not using any kind of manipulation to make people make that kind of a decision that's based solely on emotion.

Making a decision for Christ shouldn't be based solely on emotion or solely on the intellect. But it becomes a matter of the will. Of all of me.

Emotions, intellect, my heart, everything about me should be involved in considering the cost and making that decision. Am I going to be a follower of Christ? Am I going to trust him with my life? Am I going to trust him with my life? Am I going to trust him with my life? And that's the invitation. The invitation is not for you to pray a prayer. The invitation is not for you to get a fire insurance policy.

So I don't go to hell one day. The invitation is for you to be a follower, to become a follower of Christ. To know with as much information as you can have.

[42 : 53] And we all start off very ignorant. But to make a decision that says, yes, I'm in.

I trust Christ with my life. And I want to live for him and serve him. And what that might mean for you today might mean something different 10 years from now or 20 years from now in terms of that commitment and counting the cost and what that means for you and I as we live this thing called the Christian life.

So, first thing. Sit down. He says it twice. Sit down and count the cost or sit down and deliberate. Okay? So it's not just making a decision in a moment. Okay? And again, here's another thing. The Bible talks about how today is the day of salvation. And yet, I would caution people, if you're not ready to make that decision, don't do it until you're ready to make that decision.

[44 : 09] Until you're ready to say, I'm all in. I'm all in for Christ. Because being a disciple isn't so much about emotions.

And again, your emotions are certainly involved in a decision like that. To say that they're not or shouldn't be doesn't make sense. And certainly, being a follower of Christ means you're going to express emotions.

But there's also this sense of a reasonable calculation that's involved. To consider the cost.

To consider the cost. And then to say yes to him. Now, along with that is this idea.

This isn't something that you consider just as you begin your relationship with the Lord. Your walk with the Lord. Your life with Christ.

[45 : 15] It's not just something that happens that moment that you cross the line of faith and say yes to him. But it's something that as a follower of Christ, you decide all throughout your walk with Christ.

All along the way, you are saying, I'm considering the cost. I'm deliberating what's at stake. And I'm willing to lay it down for the sake of Christ.

When I made my decision to trust Christ as my Savior, I was 17 years old. Obviously, I wasn't married yet. I didn't have kids. I didn't have a house. Barely owned a car.

And that meant something different than it does to me today. With a wife, kids, and grandchildren, possessions.

So counting the cost is a different equation. Am I still willing to lay it all down? For my relationship with Christ.

[46 : 27] Then he goes on. And this is kind of a summary statement here in verse 33. Therefore, so therefore. Therefore, in summary of hate your mother and father.

And take up your cross. And count the cost. And deliberate. And therefore, in light of all of that, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has.

He's talking about possessions. So even your family is a possession. Your own life is something that you possess. If he does not give that up.

If he does not renounce all that he has. Cannot be my disciple. You cannot have other loves. In comparison to Christ.

In competition to Christ. Yes, you're called to love your spouse. Yes, you're called to love your children and your parents. Absolutely. I would tell you, and I think the Bible teaches this.

[47 : 29] That the best way for me to love my wife and to love my family. And to serve the people around me is for me to love Christ first and foremost.

He makes me a better husband. He'll make you a better wife. A better child. A better parent.

Absolutely. It's having that priority in the right place.

I remember losing a family years ago when I taught this very same thing. The idea that Christ comes first even before your own children.

Oh, no. And I was kind of taken aback by that. And they didn't come back. And it's like, ah. They counted the cost and ended up with a different answer than I did.

And we have to be careful with that. Last one. I must be willing to say goodbye to anything.

[48 : 38] Anything that matters more to me than Jesus. Let me tell you, my wife, my kids, my grandkids, they mean a lot to me.

A lot. Am I willing to lay them down for the sake of Christ? They belong to him.

If I'm viewing it correctly, am I willing to say that? The house that I live in, possessions that I have, am I willing to lay that down for the sake of Christ?

I want us to be careful here. And this is so important. I want us to be careful that we don't understand what Jesus is saying, that we take it the wrong way.

And you have this on your notes. And let me kind of clarify this as we go in your notes. What he's saying here in this summary statement is this.

[49 : 48] He is not looking for those who have the resources to follow him. The parable of the guy who wants to build the tower and the king who wants to go to battle, that parable is not meant to teach us that when we're deciding, am I going to follow Christ, do I have the resources, do I have it within myself, or within my possessions?

Do I have what it takes to follow Christ? Because you don't.

None of us do. And that's not what Jesus is teaching here. To be consistent with everything else that Jesus is teaching, is that he's looking for those who, after counting the cost, know that they don't have what it takes.

And that the only hope they have is in the one in the story that they were looking at. Remember, Jesus turned around and he speaks to this crowd of people.

The only hope that I have of living this Christian life has nothing to do with my resources, has nothing to do with what kind of a man I am, what kind of a woman you might be, has nothing to do with how much money I've got, the kind of character that I have or don't have.

[51 : 32] It has nothing to do with me. It has everything to do with Jesus. That's what he's wanting us to recognize. I can't.

It's the only way to survive. It's the only way to live this Christian life. It's to recognize, I don't have what it takes.

And my only hope is in the one I'm trusting to save me. We come to Christ, we get saved, not because we have anything to bring, right?

We get that. Not because, you know, I've earned it, I've been good enough, I've done enough good works, right? We get that. It's the same thing when it comes to living the Christian life.

That's why we need to hear the gospel over and over and over again. My heart needs to understand every day that as a believer, as I walk with him, my only hope is Christ, not in what I can do to be a good enough to live this Christian life.

[52 : 52] I can't. I can't. Have you tried to live this Christian life in the flesh? Have you tried to live this Christian life in your own strength? Have you tried to live this Christian life by, well, if I pray more and if I study the Bible more and if I go to church more and if I do this more and if I do that more, that's just your flesh.

That's just your own effort. So the only hope that any of us has, not only when it comes to trusting Christ, that initial moment when we put our faith in him, but every day that I wake up, it's, Lord, I can't do this.

I can't. My only hope is when I surrender to you all of this, all of this life, all that I have, I surrender it to you.

And, Lord, now I ask that you would live your life through me. Romans 12.1, Galatians 2.20.

It is Christ who lives through us. That's what, that's what this is about. Philippians 2 talks about this.

[54 : 31] Paul is writing to the church at Philippi and he says, therefore, my beloved. He's, he's, he's telling them to live a, a selfless life, to be a servant, to do it the way Jesus did when he came, because when he came, he came as a man and he came as a servant, even to the point of death on a cross.

And he's calling us to do the same thing. To be a servant. Therefore, in light of that, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, not only when I'm there with you, but now much more in my absence as I'm writing this to you.

Work out your own salvation with fear and troubling. It's not work for your salvation with fear and troubling. You can't. But it's, take the salvation that God has given you and now work it out.

Work it out. He goes on, for it is God who works in you. You don't, you don't take the salvation that God has given you.

No, thank you, Lord, for saving me. I'm going to put that in my pocket and I'm still going to do all of this in my own strength. No. Take the salvation that he's given you, which is Christ in you, and work it out.

[55 : 56] Allow him to have control of your life. Serve him every day by serving the people in your life, your spouse, your kids, your coworkers, your boss, people that you come into contact with.

Just be a servant. That's what he's called us to do. For it is God who works in you both to will and to work. In other words, you just submit your life to Christ and as you do that day by day, he's going to change the way you think.

And the things that, like, ooh, I'm really getting all fired up because, you know, I want this and I want that and this is, I need this and I need that and I want to get this out of this relationship and I need that out of this relationship and it's all about me and what I want.

And every day as I submit my life to Christ, that changes. That begins to change. What can I do for this person? What can I do for my wife, for my husband?

How can I best serve their interests ahead of my own? For my kids, for my parents, for people that I work with. Just the people in my life, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

[57 : 13] You want his good pleasure in your life? Surrender it. Surrender your life. not just today, but every day.

Be willing to count that cost. You don't have the resources within you to do it. But when you count the cost, you recognize it costs you everything.

My life. Lord, it's yours. Live your life through me as if I were a sacrifice on an altar, dead and burned up.

And now you're going to take that and you're going to live your life through me. So discipleship, then, it's not a matter of how much we have to offer.

God's not interested in how much you have to offer. None of what you have to offer is going to impress him. But it's renouncing all that we think we have to offer.

[58 : 40] That's what God is interested in. Am I willing to renounce all that I think I have to offer?

And then Jesus closes it with this tiny illustration here, last two verses about salt. Salt. What does salt have to do with anything?

Salt is good. But if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? Everyone knew in that culture that once salt had lost its taste, throw it away.

It's worthless. It can't do anything for you. It's not any good, right? We like the taste of salt. Salt has a distinctive flavor to it.

We use it to make what we eat more palatable. They did the same thing. They had some other uses for it as well. But in this context, this is what he's after.

[59 : 44] He said, is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. I don't know what you do with salt in the manure pile. I guess maybe that makes better compost. I don't know. Someone tell me.

I don't know. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. He's saying, just as salt is known for its distinctive flavor, Christians, we are known for our distinctiveness. And that distinctiveness comes when we surrender our life to him. I've sat down, counted the cost, I've deliberated.

I can't do it. I don't have the means within me to do this thing. I do have, Lord.

I surrender it. It's yours. So I'll take up that cross, not in my strength, but in the strength of Christ. I'll build that building.

[60 : 53] I'll, whatever it is, my relationships, I'll make you number one. Are we willing to count the cost?

Let's pray. Lord, thank you so much again for how you teach us. And none of us were there 2,000 years ago on that roadside as you stopped to talk to the crowd.

But, Lord, here we are hearing this same truth today. this Christian life, this following after Christ is, is not easy.

And this world will make it more difficult. And if we choose to be distinctive in our walk with Christ, we will be mocked and ridiculed. This world will not accept us.

Lord, we have you. That changes everything. Help us to recognize that there's nothing about us that we can bring to that equation.

[62 : 17] That it's simply about surrendering all of ourselves to you. Whatever I have to bring, how little, how great, it's yours.

I trust you with my life and I trust you with my life daily. because I can't do it on my own.

So, Lord, I pray that that our minds would be changed. I pray that our our lives would be transformed by the renewing of our mind. that your word would do its work in our lives to change our hearts, to change our desires, to change our will, to want to live for you every day.

Lord, we love you. We ask all of this now in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.