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Counting the Cost

“And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?” Mark 8:36-37 NLT

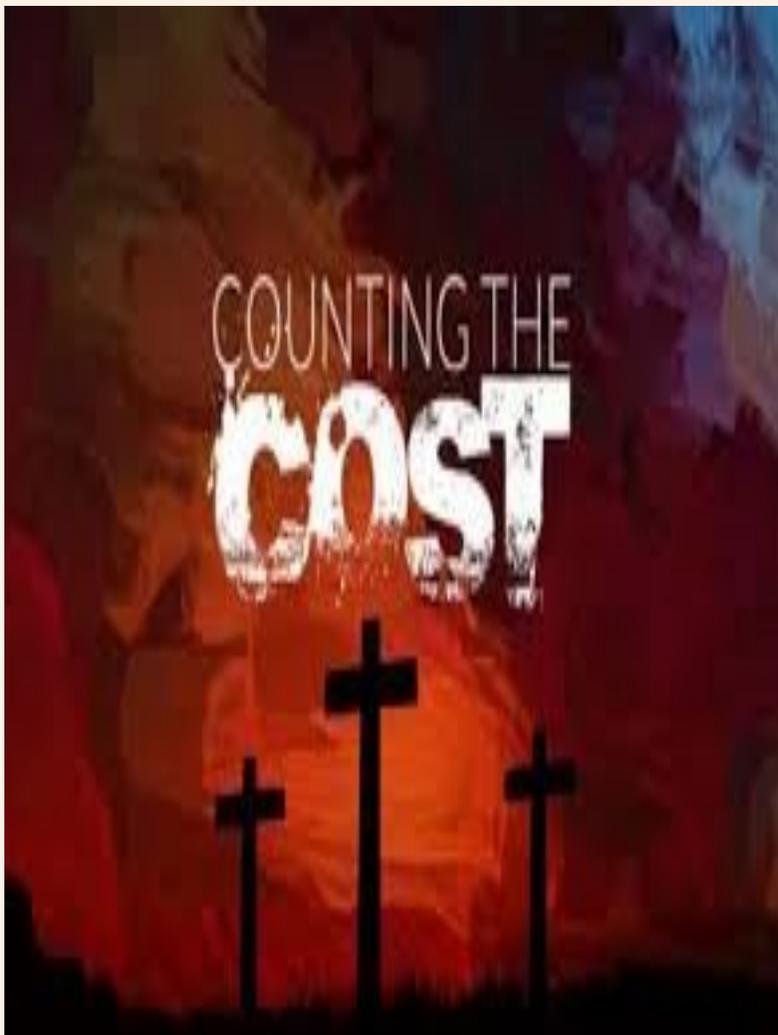
We like to read about disciples who followed Jesus and were successful. However, not all of them were successful. Sometimes they allowed even very unimportant matters to distract them from following Jesus. We read about one man

who wanted to take care of some family business first and Jesus warns us about looking back. It is clear that some disciples were not ready to give up everything to follow Jesus.

Does Jesus teach us to hate our own families? What are we to understand from some of the statements that Jesus makes? Following Jesus is not like taking a vacation. Jesus is not calling his disciples for a short-term mission. Jesus is calling us to a full commitment. He calls us to bear our own cross and follow him. This is not a picnic. It is a death to self.

In this issue we are pleased to feature Brother Edward Rouse and his son, David Rouse, from Hyderabad, India. I have known Brother Edward since he was a young man in one of the first children’s homes established in India back in the 1970’s by the late Brother Baxter Loe. I was privileged to visit the hospital when Brother David was born and to give him his name. These two men are stalwart soldiers in the Lord’s Army in India. They host a weekly television program, teach Bible training works, and travel extensively proclaiming the Word of the Lord.

...lsg



Leave the Dead and Follow Me

“As they were walking along the road, someone said to Jesus, ‘I will follow You wherever You go.’ Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have dens and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.’ Then He said to another man, ‘Follow Me.’ The man replied, ‘Lord, first let me go and bury my father.’ But Jesus told him, ‘Let the dead bury their own dead. You, however, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.’ Still another said, ‘I will follow You, Lord; but first let me bid farewell to my family.’ Then Jesus declared, ‘No one who puts his hand to the plow and then looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.’” Luke 9:57-62

What did Jesus mean when He said, “Let the dead bury the dead”? Jesus said, “Follow me.” But the man replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

Jews often use the word dead. Many times the word dead refers to sin or a worldly life. In Proverbs 21:16 we read, “The person who strays from common sense will end up in the company of the dead” (NLT). In Matthew’s account of this story, Jesus answers the man, “Follow me now. Let the spiritually dead bury their own dead” (Matt. 8:22 NLT). We must follow Jesus to proclaim His kingdom. For the true believer nothing is more important than following Him.

When this man tells Jesus that first he wants to bury his father, he indicates that it is important to honor his father and his mother. However, Jesus said that it is more important to follow Him.

When we examine the Scripture, it teaches us the importance of following Jesus (Matt. 8:18–22). In a similar passage found in Luke 14:26–33, Jesus talks about counting the cost of discipleship. Jesus concludes by saying, “So therefore, any one of you

who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple” (Lk. 14:33).

So, to follow Jesus means to obey Him like Abraham did. Abraham took his son Isaac to a mountain that God had appointed to offer sacrifice. In Genesis 22:12 we read, “And He said, ‘Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.’” This act of Abraham was in the spirit of “leave the dead and follow me.” By this spiritual obedience to the Lord, we will become a living sacrifice and a true follower of Jesus.

Otherwise, if we follow our worldly desires, we declare that we are spiritually dead. Paul writes to Timothy, “But she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives” (1 Tim. 5:6). Paul writes to the Ephesians, “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience” (Eph. 2:1-2).

So, let the dead bury the dead and let us follow Jesus for the expansion of His kingdom. The way to follow Him is according to 1 Peter 2:21: “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his footsteps.” We must not worry about worldly and materialistic matters, but let us live spiritually and live for His glory.

...Edward W. Rouse

Evangelist

Kukatpally Church of Christ

Hyderabad, India

The Cost of Discipleship

“A large crowd was following Jesus. He turned around and said to them, ‘If you want to be my disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple. But don’t begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it? Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of money, and then everyone would laugh at you. They would say, “There’s the person who started that building and couldn’t afford to finish it!” Or what king would go to war against another king without first sitting down with his counselors to discuss whether his army of 10,000 could defeat the 20,000 soldiers marching against him? And if he can’t, he will send a delegation to discuss terms of peace while the enemy is still far away. So you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own.” Lk. 14:25-33 NLT

Discipleship is one of the most central themes in the teaching of Jesus. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus calls people not just to believe in Him but to follow Him wholeheartedly. In Luke 14:25–33, Jesus turns to a large crowd of followers and makes one of His most radical and challenging statements about discipleship. Instead of appealing to their excitement or desire for miracles, He confronts them with the serious cost of following Him.

He confronts them with the serious cost of following Him.

The passage shocks us at first: Jesus speaks about

“hating” one’s family and even one’s own life. Is Jesus truly calling us to hate? How does this teaching fit with the commandment to honor our parents (Exod. 20:12) and to love one another (John 13:34)? The key to understanding lies in seeing Jesus’ radical words as a call to priority and allegiance. He is not commanding emotional hatred, but talks about loyalties. In this passage, Jesus is teaching us that true discipleship demands supreme love for Him, self-denial, and careful counting of the cost.

1. The Context of the Passage (Luke 14:25)

The passage begins: “Now large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and He turned and said to them”

Jesus is on His journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51 onward), where He knows He will be crucified. Crowds are following Him, likely attracted by His miracles, His authority, and His teaching. But Jesus is not looking for superficial followers. Instead, He turns and confronts the crowd with the truth that discipleship is costly.

This means Jesus is not lowering the bar to gain more followers. He is raising the bar to test whether people are willing to follow Him with full commitment.

2. Loving Jesus Above All (Luke 14:26)

“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be My disciple.”

At first glance, this statement seems contradictory to Jesus’ other teachings about love. We know from Scripture that:

- We are called to honor father and mother (Exod.

20:12).

- Husbands are commanded to love their wives (Eph. 5:25).
- Parents are to love their children (Eph. 6:4).
- Jesus Himself loved His earthly family (John 19:26–27).

So why does He use the word “hate”? The answer lies in Hebrew idiom and comparison language. In Jewish culture, “to hate” אָיַב Pronounced: saw-nay, could mean to “love less” or to “choose second place” (as in Gen. 29:30–31, where Leah is said to be “hated,” meaning Jacob loved Rachel more).

Thus, Jesus is teaching that our love for Him must be so great, so supreme, that every other relationship even family or self looks like “hate” in comparison. He is not commanding emotional hostility but demanding absolute priority.

Many times, our deepest loyalty is tested in family situations. If following Christ means disappointing our parents, losing approval, or being misunderstood by siblings, are we willing to still follow Him? Discipleship calls us to place Christ above even the closest earthly bonds.

3. Carrying the Cross (Luke 14:27)

“Whoever does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple.”

In Jesus’ day, the cross was not a religious symbol but an instrument of death. To carry a cross meant to be on your way to execution. When Jesus said this, He was calling His disciples to daily self-denial, suffering, and even the possibility of death for His sake.

This was not a figurative call to endure small inconveniences. It was a literal image of shame, suffering, and sacrifice. Discipleship is not about comfort but about willingness to follow Christ

even through rejection, suffering, and loss.

Other similar references :

- Luke 9:23 – “If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”
- Galatians 2:20 – “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”

In Jesus’ day, the cross was not a religious symbol but an instrument of death.

4. Counting the Cost (Luke 14:28–32)

Jesus gives two illustrations:

- Building a tower (vv. 28–30): A wise builder first estimates the cost before laying the foundation. Otherwise, if he cannot finish, he will be ridiculed.
- A king going to war (vv. 31–32): A wise king counts his soldiers and strength before marching into battle. If outnumbered, he will negotiate peace rather than face destruction.

Both images emphasize the importance of thinking ahead, evaluating commitment, and preparing for sacrifice. Following Jesus is not a half-hearted decision; it is a lifelong, costly commitment.

5. Renouncing All (Luke 14:33)

“In the same way, any one of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be My disciple.”

Here Jesus sums up the teaching: discipleship involves a willingness to surrender all—possessions, security, ambitions, and attachments. He is not saying every Christian must sell all possessions, but rather that nothing can be held back from His lordship. Everything we own is His.

Other similar references:

- Matthew 6:33 – “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.”
- Philippians 3:7–8 – Paul says, “Whatever was gain to me I count as loss for the sake of Christ.”

Conclusion: The Right Priorities in Life

To answer the question: Is Jesus teaching us to hate our family? No, He is teaching us to set the right priorities—that love for Him must surpass all other loves.

The key lessons from Luke 14:25–33 are:

1. Discipleship requires supreme love for Christ (above family and self).
2. Discipleship requires carrying the cross (daily

surrender and sacrifice).

3. Discipleship requires counting the cost (serious commitment, not emotional enthusiasm).

4. Discipleship requires renouncing all (placing everything under Christ’s lordship).

True discipleship is not cheap. It costs everything—but in giving up everything, we gain Christ, who is of surpassing worth.

...David Rouse

Hyderabad, India

Following Jesus is not a half-hearted decision; it is a lifelong, costly commitment.

The Judge Sentenced Himself

Jeffrey Clothier was recently elected to the Genesee County District Court in Michigan. He appears to be taking his job seriously, having said, “there’s going to be consequences when you break the law.” He seems to also be a compassionate man who wants to help offenders of the law pay for their crime while also learning better ways to deal with life’s challenges.

Clothier was shocked at the number of shoplifting charges brought before his court; in one day alone there were 48 such cases. When convictions follow, the judge hands them a sponge and a bucket. They are told to report to Walmart – a store well acquainted with shoplifting – and on an assigned day free car washes will be offered to customers, using the labor of these offenders.

Most will agree that this judge’s approach is innovative. Instead of locking up more people to spend time without gainful results, the community will benefit as those convicted will learn something about consequences. But there’s one more detail about Judge Clothier you should know: the judge will be right beside these men and women as they wash cars.

Speaking of judges, there is none greater than Jesus. Paul noted this fact in 2 Timothy 4:1: “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom.” Peter agreed with this as he spoke to Cornelius in Acts 10:42: Jesus Christ “is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.”

...the judge will be right beside these men and women as they wash cars.

Jesus is more than the ultimate Judge, however; He longs to be the Savior of all. He told Zacchaeus, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Judgment Day will result in many receiving disastrous eternal sentences. You won’t see Jesus laughing at those proclamations, though. His strongest desire is to save everyone (see 2 Peter 3:9).

At what price did Jesus make this salvation possible? Galatians 3:13 tells us: “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’).” You might say that Jesus sentenced Himself to experience the punishment

that was rightfully ours. About 700 years before it happened Isaiah predicted the events which made possible forgiveness of sins: "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). In Acts 8:26-40 Philip used this remarkable prophecy to preach Jesus to an Ethiopian, a man who welcomed such good news and was baptized upon hearing it. We also should welcome it.

A judge washing cars alongside people he convicted of shoplifting is impressive. The Judge of all judges paying the penalty of the sins of all mankind is humbling. We need to get acquainted with Jesus!

...Timothy Hall
LightGrams, February 27, 2025

Reflections of the Psalms: Psalm 9

When do most people pray to the Lord? Usually people pray when they are facing some crisis or problem. There is nothing wrong with this. After all, our Father wants us to trust Him, and place our petitions before Him in prayer. However, times of crisis are not the only times in which we are supposed to be involved in prayer.

In Psalm 9, David's prayer is not a prayer of need. rather, his is a psalm, or song, of triumph to the Lord. We don't know the circumstances behind the psalm, but it is obvious that David has overcome a dangerous opponent. As David experiences the sweet taste of victory, what does he say? Does he pat himself on the back? Unfortunately, too many people do just that. In despair they cry out, "O Lord, help me!" Then, when the Lord answers their prayer, the next thought is, "Boy, I was sure lucky I", or "I did a good job of handling that situation!"

David knew where the source of his victory came from. In the first two verses, David's dominant phrase is, "I will". "I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonders. I will be glad and rejoice in you? I will sing praise to your name, O Most High".

David's song of triumph pictured God in two ways. First, he shows God as the righteous Judge. Read verses 3 through 8 again. Carefully consider

the words that were used to describe God's actions as a judge. Without Jesus Christ, this is what the world will ultimately face. "Endless ruin has overtaken the enemy, you have uprooted their cities; even the memory of them has perished."

Power, wealth, fame, and all the other values that are held so dear by the world, will fall and disappear before the Lord. None were more powerful than the Pharaohs of Egypt, or the Caesars of Rome. Yet, how many of these men do we know today? How important are they today? "...even the memory of them has perished." Too often we think of this life as being real, and the spiritual things of God as being "unreal". However, the true reality is the spiritual life we have in the Lord.

David knew where the source of his victory came from.

From God as the Judge, David's thoughts then turned to God as a refuge. Since the history of humanity began, there has been oppression of the weak. Today is certainly no exception. Very few countries practice any sort of observance of protecting their citizen's "civil rights". On every hand, we can see oppression, tragedy, death, war, and countless other things that are clearly against the will of God.

Many wonder, "Where is the fairness - the justice

in all this? When will the good be rewarded and the bad judged? When will the accounts be settled?" These are good questions that need to be answered. One answer is that "the Lord is a refuge for the oppressed..." God knows and watches over his people.

Now, this does not mean that His people are free from pain and troubles. Rather, the Lord is "a stronghold in times of trouble." The Lord will give us strength to overcome the problems we will face.

Remember, our true reality is not this world or life. The true reality is God the Father. As long as we are joined to Him, we have already won. Long after the power of the oppressor has vanished, long after this world is gone, we will still be with our Father through Jesus Christ. "Those who know your name will trust in you, for you. Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you." God's justice will be carried out against those that will not accept the Lord. Sometimes the wicked are caught up in their own traps and schemes. At other times, the accounting will take place before the judgment seat of God.

Our job is to try to reach as many as possible, and save them from the fate of the world.

One thought for Christians today. What should we do about all this? Should we draw up a list of the evil and wicked people that we know and pray that they "get what they deserve"? The answer is no. The world is full of people that will not accept the will of God.

Our job is to try to reach as many as possible, and save them from the fate of the world. Throughout the centuries worldly and evil people have been brought to the Lord, and their lives have been transformed. Think how much more effective such a person could be for the Lord!

Judgment is the Lord's work. Our work is to reach

out to those that need Jesus Christ. Will we always succeed? No. All we can do is plant and water. The LORD takes care of the increase.

...Jim Shelburn

San Antonio, TX

Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say,

"I will take revenge;

I will pay them back,"

says the LORD.

Instead,

"If your enemies are hungry, feed them.

If they are thirsty, give them something to drink,

In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads."

Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

Romans 12:19-21



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