

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. - 1 Peter 2:2

THE SINCERE MILK OF GOD'S WORD

The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword... - Hebrews 4:12

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The Commitment of Following Christ

In **Luke 14**, Jesus spoke of the commitment of being His disciple. Using illustrations such as one counting the cost before building a tower (**verses 28-30**), Jesus pointed out the need to “count the cost” of *following Him* (**verses 26-27,33**).

In a society where the extent of being a Christian is seen as “going to church” once or twice a week (and nothing more), now is a crucial time to consider what Jesus taught is the “cost,” or commitment, of being His disciple.

In **Luke 14:26**, Jesus said, “*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*”

Jesus’ point in this verse is not to encourage hatred toward anyone, but rather to teach that we must not allow *anyone* to come between us and pleasing God (cf. **Matt. 10:37**).

Being an obedient Christian often involves going against what someone we are close to desires of us. It may involve angering a parent, child, sibling, or close friend. Jesus does not desire us to seek conflict *for the sake of conflict* (cf. **Matt. 5:9; Rom. 12:18**), but He desires us to follow Him, regardless of what conflicts may result (cf. **Matt. 10:34-36**). Facing rejection is an unfortunate but real part of following Christ’s footsteps (cf. **2 Tim. 4:16**).

Jesus went on to say in **Luke 14:27**, “*and*

whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.” This ties in with His statement in **verse 33**, “*whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*”

Jesus’ point *here* is not that we must purposefully make ourselves miserable while on earth, but rather that we must not allow *anything* to come between us and pleasing God.

Developing the mindset Jesus is calling for in these verses requires us to see Christianity the way it is described in the New Testament and not the way it is often viewed today.

Romans 12:1 says, “*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*” This is not just speaking of a weekly event, but of a lifestyle.

When Paul was in prison and expressed uncertainty about his future, he said “*For to me live is Christ, but to die is gain*” (**Phil. 1:21**). Notice the phrase “*for me to live is Christ.*”

Christ was not just a part of Paul’s life. He was the *center* of it. Paul made it his purpose in life to surrender to Christ’s will.

Because of Paul’s dedication to the Lord, he was willing to make drastic changes. Imagine how uncomfortable it would have been for him to turn from zealously persecuting Christians to zealously working for Christ. Imagine the reactions (cf. **Acts 9:21**), and particularly what it would have

been like to speak with the Jews he was once in agreement with.

Making uncomfortable changes is part of the commitment of following Christ. When Peter wrote to Christians, he mentioned the *“time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries”* (1 Pet. 4:3).

The Christians he wrote to had to give these things up. They had to *change*. And just as they had to put a number of things *off*, they needed to put a number of things *on* (cf. Col. 3:12-17; James 4:17).

Much of what makes changing for Christ difficult is the reaction we receive from others. Peter pointed out that as a result of Christians putting off immoral things, others *“think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.”* (1 Pet. 4:4). Friends who we once joined with in sinful activities will think we are strange, and even speak evil of us as a result of our choices. We must be willing to accept this when we choose to follow Christ.

As a result of the changes we make and the reaction of others, Christians often face persecution. In fact, Paul told Timothy *“all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”* (2 Tim. 3:12). The persecutions he faced in his time included being stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19), beaten with rods and stripes (2 Cor. 11:24-25).

In our time and place, persecution may be mental, i.e. people speaking poorly of us. We might be treated harshly even if we are not *physically* harmed for our stand for truth (cf. Matt 5:44). We might be taken

advantage of or be hurt financially as a result of doing what is right (cf. Rev. 13:17).

The point of all of this is that following Christ is not just about sacrificing a fishing trip on Sunday morning to assemble with saints. This could be included, but it only “scratches the surface” of the commitment of following Christ.

We must develop the character of Christ (Gal. 5:22-23; 2 Pet. 1:5-8). We must follow God’s pattern as spouses, parents, children, employees, and neighbors (Eph. 5:21-6:9). We must study diligently (Acts 17:11), and pray without ceasing (1 Thes. 5:17).

If *anyone* or *anything* stands in the way of *any part* of God’s will for our lives, we must separate ourselves from it. This is the message of Luke 14:26-33.

May we all surrender totally to God’s will for our lives. May we not allow anything to come between us and submission to His will.

-Michael Hickox

Words to Consider

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called into one body; and be ye thankful.

-Colossians 3:12-15