

“Discipleship: Costly!”

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Jesus clearly sets the conditions of discipleship. In the Gospel He emphasizes the cost that disciples have to pay to follow Him. Anyone who wishes to be Christ's disciples must pay the cost and it will cost one's relationships, one's time and energy, one's possessions, one's everything! This seems really rough! But Jesus knows our hearts and wants us to also know what the benefits of discipleship are in following Him.

The greatest benefit is the promise of eternity with God in Heaven. We also have the ability to speak to God directly through prayer. As we come to Him with a humble heart, we receive the presence of the Holy Spirit in us. Following Jesus gives us a joy that no one can take away. We have a hope that will never disappoint, and a peace beyond our understanding. We also have a Father who loves and cares for us, and Christian friends we can count on and rely on. The cost? It will cost us everything we have!

Discipleship requires total commitment! Many people want just a casual relationship with God that costs them nothing in this life, or want a religion that suffers nothing. Martin Luther said, *“A religion that gives nothing, costs nothing, and suffers nothing, is worth nothing!”*

Open to Luke 14. There were great crowds following Jesus. Some wanted to hear what He had to say, but others were there hoping to see Him do another miracle! Jesus, knowing their hearts wanted to make sure they understood the cost of following Him and being His disciples. Look at verses 26-27, *“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. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”*

Discipleship Will Cost You Relationships! Jesus is saying that following Him means to put Him first and only in your life. Nothing must be a substitute for Him as the focus of your allegiance, not even your own family. Devotion to Jesus must be so wholehearted that even attachment to parents and to the other members of your family must not be allowed to stand in the way. If a person is unwilling to give that kind of unconditional devotion, then, Jesus says, *“he cannot be My disciple”*.

Being a disciple is going to make a difference in our lives! It's acceptable in today's society to call yourself a Christian. But it's a different story when you start living, thinking, and acting like one! It's okay to wear a cross around your neck, but when you start carrying your cross that's a different story. Living your Christianity in its purest form will cause you to gain enemies!

Discipleship, according to Bonhoeffer, means submission to the law of Christ which is the law of the cross. The cross means sharing in the suffering of Christ. A disciple is a true disciple only as far as they share in Christ's suffering, rejection and crucifixion. Suffering is the badge of true discipleship.

Discipleship Will Cost You Time and Energy. Becoming like Jesus doesn't happen overnight. Following Jesus and being a true disciple will cost you some time and energy. It will cost your time and energy because there are certain things disciples are simply expected to do.

Disciples are expected to speak to Jesus. We can't be like Jesus unless we talk to Him regularly! When the Disciples followed Jesus, they left everything to spend time with Him. They were there listening and watching and learning from Him for three solid years. We don't have Jesus physically with us now, so we need to talk with Him in prayer. Some don't pray because they haven't seen any results and aren't sure He's listening. Instead, we need to view prayer as an investment of great value!

Disciples are expected to learn from Jesus. We learn by putting ourselves in daily contact with the Word of God. We need to take the time to learn from God's Word to learn how to be like Him. God's revealed Himself in His Word and also tells us what it truly means to be His disciples. We've got to read and study it!

Discipleship Will Cost You Possessions. Open to Philippians 3. There are things you'll have to give up to follow Jesus. There are practices, habits, and ways of thinking you'll have to stop and give up to follow Him, but it will all be worth it when you realize what's gained by doing it!

Look at verses 7-8, *"But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ."*

Jesus clearly told the cost of following Him. He makes His point clear in Luke 14:33, *"So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be My disciple."* There can be no conditional discipleship! According to Bonhoeffer: *"Discipleship can tolerate no conditions which might come between Jesus and our obedience to Him."* Discipleship requires absolute commitment to follow Christ! It means a total devotion to Him!

Discipleship Will Cost You Everything. We can't follow Jesus as His disciple and try to hold on to things we know He says are wrong. This cheapens the grace of God. We're under the grace of God, but when we make a decision to follow Jesus and be partakers of that grace, we also agree to die to ourselves and live for Christ! There are some things we can't do anymore because we're a Christian. We're not our own because we've been bought with the price of Christ's body and blood!

Discipleship is the ongoing process of becoming like Jesus Christ, and of being conformed to His image, even though it will make you different than the world! The main goal in discipleship is to be Christ-like. Even though the cost of discipleship might be high, the benefits and blessings are even greater!