

The Cost of Following Jesus

Leader Bible Study

The benefits of following Jesus are wonderful: justification from sin, lifelong sanctification, and adoption into the family of God. But following Jesus also comes at a price. People had waited so long for the promised Messiah to come into the world, so many were eager to follow Him. Yet as Jesus taught, He urged people to consider the cost of being His disciple.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus explained to one disciple that following Him might involve giving up worldly comforts. He told another disciple that following Him should be higher priority than anything else—even one's commitment to his parents. (See Matt. 8:18-22.) In Matthew 16 and Luke 9, Jesus told His disciples, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."

Jesus shared two examples in Luke 14 of people who must count the cost of doing something. If a person is building a tower, he must first calculate the cost. If he begins the project and is unable to complete it, onlookers will ridicule him. In a similar way, a king counts the cost of going to war before sending out his army. If he is not able to oppose the enemy, he doesn't foolishly send out a small group to fight a larger group. Instead, he seeks peace.

Many who wanted to follow Jesus changed their minds. Jesus even asked the twelve disciples if they wanted to turn away as well. Peter answered, "Lord, to whom will we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

Paul acknowledged the difficulty of following Jesus in 2 Corinthians 4 but kept his eyes on eternity: "For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory" (v. 17). As you teach, emphasize that following Jesus is not easy, but He is worth it.

The BIBLE Story

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Matthew 8; 16; Luke 9; 14

Large crowds traveled with Jesus; many people wanted to follow Him. **One man said, “Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.” Jesus told the man, “Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.”**

Another disciple said, “Lord, I will follow You, but first let me go and bury my father.”

Jesus replied, “Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

Jesus told the people that following Him wouldn’t be easy. It would cost them a lot.

“Anyone who comes to Me must be willing to leave his family. You must love me most of all—more than your own life! **Anyone who is unwilling to suffer cannot be My disciple,” Jesus said.**

Jesus urged the people to think about what they were doing. **He told them a story: “If you wanted to build a tower, you would first sit down and figure out what it would take to complete the tower. Otherwise, you would build the foundation and be unable to finish. People would laugh at you.”**

Then He told them another story: “If you were a king, you wouldn’t go to war against another king without considering whether your army would be great enough to win the war. If you have too few men to fight, you would send some men to ask for peace before the battle even started.”

Jesus wanted the people to consider the cost. “If you are not willing to give up everything you have, you cannot follow Me,” Jesus said. Following Jesus means giving Him complete control of your life. That is not easy, but it is worth it.

Jesus said, “Whoever gives up his life for Me will find true life. What good is it to have everything you want in the world if you give up life with God forever?”

Christ Connection: Jesus taught that following Him is not easy. It requires commitment and sacrifice. When we trust in Jesus, we give Him complete control of our lives. True life is found in Jesus, who gave up His life to rescue us from sin and death. He is worth it.

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