

# THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

June 8, 2008

1).

- Adam and Eve are a type of Christ and His Bride. **First Adam= Adam, Last Adam = Jesus. First man was put to sleep, part of his body was removed to form a wife who was presented back to him; Last Adam was put to sleep/death, out of his body came the elements used to form His wife, the faithful Church, who will be presented back to Him.**
- A fuller picture of this future marriage union is given through the types of Isaac and Rebekah, Ruth and Boaz, and Moses and Joseph's wives. **These stories show us that a choice is involved on behalf of the wife, she must choose to go...and must do what it takes to marry the Man. We also see that the (mostly Gentile) wife is found between the first and second "comings" to the brethren.**
- Our *current* marriages are a picture of and teach us spiritual truths concerning Christ and His Church. **God is the head of Christ, who is the Head of man, who is the head of woman. Orderly. The woman submits to the man/Man, who submits to Christ. The man washes the woman...the Man washes the woman. They complete one another.**
- Because of this panoramic picture, we can learn MUCH about how we are to govern our lives today, in faithful obedience to God's Word.
- There is a choice to be made, by each individual Christian, regarding whether or not they will go on the journey to the land of their calling (the heavenly kingdom) and marry THE Son of Promise, THE Kinsman-Redeemer, Jesus the Christ. There is for every Christian, in essence, a proposal of marriage by the Son of God...Him saying, "Will you marry Me?"
- Accepting this marriage proposal will involve the leaving behind of everything associated with our first birth (this world) and the cleaving to everything that is associated with our future marriage and our Bridegroom. The leaving makes possible the cleaving...and the cleaving makes possible the "becoming one flesh."
- And with this choice comes a cost. That is what we will talk about today.

2).

Luke 14:15-33

15 And when one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this (**the "this" is referencing something Jesus just said...read it later, it's important.**), he said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" 16 But He said to him, "A certain man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many; 17 and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.' 18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.' 19 And another one said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.' 20 And another one said, 'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.' 21 And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' 22 And the slave said, 'Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' 23 And the master said to the

slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.'"

25 Now great multitudes were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sister, yes, and **even his own life**, he cannot be My disciple. 27 Whoever does not **carry his own cross** and come after Me cannot be My disciple. 28 For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? 29 Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, 30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' 31 Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and take counsel whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks terms of peace. 33 So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions."

- We can easily see the topic for this story—"the kingdom of God/heaven."
- And we can see in its primary application that this "invitation" that the Master sends out is referencing the initial offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel. At the time that Jesus spoke this, the offer to the Jews was still on the table. They refused it, as we know, and the church—made up of mostly Gentiles—became the recipient of the offer.
- So, we can take this parable/story and apply it to us today, since its subject matter is that of the kingdom of God.
- What does that mean to us today? Same thing...many were and are invited to eat dinner with the Man who is hosting the dinner, yet most who are invited refuse to come. Why do they decline? They're busy. One wants to go "look at" a piece of land he's bought. Another wants to try out the oxen he's just bought. (Notice that it is *material things* that occupy their attention rather than responding positively to the invitation.) Then another tends to his new wife, rather than accept. (Here we see that it is a relationship that is taking priority.)
- Notice they say, "Consider me excused." The word "excused" is the Greek word 'paraiteomai' which means to refuse, reject, or avoid.
- This angers the Master, so he extends the invitation to the marginalized members of society...those that by the world's standards are seen as "less than"—the poor, crippled, blind, lame (Is there not a bit of truth in that for us?)
- Then on the heels of that sobering thought, Jesus speaks about hating one's closest family members. In fact, He says that if you don't hate them, you can't be His disciple. Wow. This of course must be seen in the context of PRIORITY, not in a simple form of hating someone. *Hating someone in and of itself is not good*. Compared to the calling and invitation on offer to you (the Christian) everything and everyone must, by contrast, be despised in relation to the importance of Christ in your life.
- Then, on the heels of that, Jesus says to calculate the cost of being His disciple. Do you think that there might be more to give up than a mere hour of your time for a Sunday morning? Or even another 2 hours on a Thursday?
- The word for "calculate" is the Greek word 'psephizo' which means literally to use pebbles for counting. It comes from the Greek word, 'psephos' which is a pebble that has been

worn smooth by handling. So, in order to calculate the cost, we must count out what we must give up in return for being a disciple, and the inference in the word is that it will be something that we have handled quite a few times.

- Notice that “calculating the cost” has to do with completing, finishing, and winning a battle. REREAD VV. 28-31. This should draw to mind the race, the journey, the current battle, and the goal. The goal, of course, to be found “complete” at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

3). There is no shortage of Scriptures describing the cost of discipleship. The cost is simply put (although not simple in execution), in each gospel, in slightly different ways...but with the same truth told. The cost for each of us that desires to pick up our cross and follow Jesus will be the same as the cost to Jesus: the death of our “flesh” (our old man, our attachment to this world and to our first birth).

Remember, there is nothing wrong with human flesh—skin, bones, blood. Jesus, who was without sin, was made of it. It’s the sin nature that each person is born with that Scripture calls “flesh.”

You are probably familiar with these following Scriptures...I hope you are. I am not trying to teach you something you don’t know. I am trying to remind you of something that you do know and that you can easily fall away from.

Matthew 10:37-39

37 “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it.

- What is to be first? Our family? No, they are not to be FIRST. We cannot **love** them more than we love Jesus. Yes we love them, but keep the priority straight. We must leave it all behind (in a figurative sense) and cleave to Him. This is about being “worthy” of Jesus. *Worthy*. We are worthy of Him if we lose our life, now, in this age. The Greek word for “worthy” is ‘axios,’ which means to measure up to...or be comparable to...or deserving of. SO the converse of it would be true as well. If we do not lose our life, our connection to and love of this world, we will NOT be worthy of Jesus. Wow. Note this Scripture—

II Thessalonians 1:4-7

4 ...therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. 5 This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. 6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire...

- The persecutions and afflictions they endured were so that they would be considered worthy of the kingdom, *for which they were suffering*.

- What do you suffer for?
- When will you get relief? Check v. 7. *...when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire...*

- Here's another one—

**Matthew 16:23-27**

23 But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's. 24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find. 26 For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds."

- Lose your life, deny yourself—which means to set your mind on God's interest, not man's. Look at the juxtaposition of losing your life and gaining the whole world. The converse is inferred...lose the world, gain your soul. All set within the context of the recompense to be given when the Son of Man comes in His glory.

- **John 12:24-26**

24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 He who loves his life loses it [in the life age-lasting, check context]; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal/age-lasting. 26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

- Here we see the example of dying...then bearing fruit. This is in reference to life for the age to come. How would we die? In the same way that Jesus did, He left the example. We die to the flesh.

- **Matthew 20:21-22**

21 And He said to her [the mother of James and John], "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left." 22 But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you are asking for. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said to Him, "We are able."

- The connection is clearly seen between that of *a cost* and that of entering the kingdom and sitting with the Lord. It is a noble request that the mom makes, but look at the answer, "You do not know what you are asking for." This clearly speaks of counting the cost, doesn't it? And notice the cost—drinking the cup that Jesus drank. Which was/is suffering in the flesh, resulting in the death of the flesh.

4). So let's reflect a minute and ask ourselves. Have I counted the cost? And if so, do I truly realize the immensity of that decision? Just as Jesus told the disciples that they do not know what

they are asking....do you know what you are asking when you ask Him if you can sit with Him in His kingdom? Have you counted the cost?

- I'd like to tell you a story about someone, using no names, but it is someone we are familiar with. This saved individual was honestly seeking the Lord, and struggled with what it really meant to enter the kingdom and receive an inheritance. This person wanted *the truth* about what it would take to receive the inheritance. This individual was told by a respected teacher that, in order to receive the inheritance, this person would need to obey God's Word. This was good...and well received because this individual was already familiar with the Word and was obedient in many areas. But this individual knew there was more to it than that...and wanted the "more" ...and asked the Lord to show the areas that needed work. So God, in answer to the prayer request, made it clear where the real issue was. And you know what? The individual got sad, because it was the very area that was hardest to relinquish. And the person walked away from the Lord.

Do you know who this person is?  
Someone you know?

You see, if you truly want your inheritance, your life in the age to come, God will get in to the core of you and uproot everything and anything that is holding or will hold you back from Him. And it will be the very thing that you have put the highest value on.

- Not to dissuade you in any way, but let's have a reality check. Did Jesus enjoy the time between His arrest and His death? Was the scourging—the tearing out of His flesh one chunk at a time—pleasurable? So why do we think that our life will be any different? Sure, we most likely won't have to endure physical pain, but will the emotional and mental anguish be any less painful? When we have to give up parts of our "self" (that which is rooted in the world and the things of this world—our 'old man') that God wants us to be rid of, will that feel good? So why is it that when things get tough, and the immediate joys, the tangible joys, surrounding us disappear, that we think "Oh, this is too hard." Do we even know what hard is?
  - If we ever find ourselves saying, "I can't do it," what we really mean is either, "God can't do it" or "I don't want to do it." Do you see the distinction? We cannot, in our flesh, put to death our flesh. Only in the Spirit, by the Spirit, can we put to death the flesh...and in that sense we really aren't the ones doing it. God does it. And in the acts of confession, submission, and obedience, we allow Him to do it.
  - And then let's not forget, that through it all, we must have JOY at the root of it all, as Jesus did—

Hebrews 12:1-2

1 ...let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- If we endure without the joy, or have the joy without the enduring, then it is incomplete and empty and without purpose.

5). Let's move on to the reality of success in this present race of faith.

Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23

3 And He [Jesus] spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow; 4 and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. 5 And others fell upon the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. 6 But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. 7 And others fell among the thorn, and the thorns came up and choked them out. 8 And others fell on the good soil, and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty and some thirty. 9 He who has ears, let him hear."

18 "Hear then the parable of the sower. 19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. 20 And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. 22 And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 23 And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit, and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."

- There is a very clear admonition in this parable—most who hear the word of the kingdom (which by its nature must preclude that these individuals are saved) will be unfruitful.
- Some will hear the good news about the kingdom...but they don't understand it, so they lose what they heard as the evil one snatches it away. And yet, they are still Christians and still have the free gift of eternal salvation.
  - Notice where the sowing is done... 'in the heart.' V.19. Remember, head knowledge is not enough. Our hearts need to *burn* as the disciples' did on the road to Emmaus when Jesus revealed the truths of the Scriptures.
- Some will hear the word of the kingdom, receive it with joy, but will fall away once the cost comes into view (primarily when they start to experience the paying of the cost). For those who wish to pick up their cross and follow Jesus, the flesh must die...and it hurts. During this time, this group will fall away. The cost is too much.
- Some will hear the word of the kingdom, and by inference, they receive it. But, there were thorns in place (a strong connection with the world and its riches) and those thorns choke out the word. This group doesn't fall away, they simply become unfruitful. They counted the cost, picked up their cross, but didn't allow the painful process of suffering to take place. Notice that it is the WORRY over the

worldly things...and the DECEITFULNESS of the riches that are the problem. This individual did not leave...and therefore could not cleave.

- The last group would be the group to focus on. This one has good soil to begin with, hears the word of the kingdom, understands it, and then bears fruit. No hindrances and no worries. Just fruit production. (Keeping in context with the loss of soul/life to gain it again, we must infer that this group of people endured suffering...and overcame it.)
- Now, let me ask you. Knowing the time that we live in (the Laodicean church) and the rarity of the word of the kingdom being sown due to the leaven's damaging work...how focused should you be on finding yourself in that last group? Have you counted the cost? Have you handled the pebbles and counted each one?

6). In the following verse I'd like us to see the warning being presented to us.

Matthew 7:13-14

13 Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. 14 For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

- The context is obviously referring to life in the age to come, in the kingdom which is to come (cf vv.6:33; 7:21-23).
- Many go through the wide gate (referencing the easy path) that leads to destruction.
- Few enter by the narrow gate (referencing difficulty) that leads to life.
- Does this make you think of the parable of the sower?
- This is followed by the shocking statement by Jesus Himself—

Matthew 7:21

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.”

- Said another way by Paul—

Acts 14:22

“Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”

7). Now let's take this choice and cost into the church-relationship setting. The decision and determination to pick up our cross, count the costs, and come after Jesus is an individual choice and an individual's responsibility. We cannot make these decisions for one another—

Revelation 3:20

(To the Laodicean church...that's us)

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me.

- Notice that Jesus knocks...and if any ONE hears, that ONE must open the door. Then Jesus will come in to that ONE, and will dine with that ONE.

- And please notice that Jesus says this *to the church*. They are already saved. So what must Jesus be knocking for? What does He want? Simple, go back to the Luke passage—

**Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.**

- And the Matthew parable—

**When anyone hears the word of the kingdom...**

Or even... **“Will you marry Me?”**

And because I cannot make your decision for you, and you cannot make the decision for me, I can in no way judge you or condemn you or control you in this. Let me explain.

- Our spiritual journey is ultimately between us and God. We cannot control which path the other person takes. We are to encourage one another, speak truth to one another, teach one another, love one another—IN WORD AND IN DEED—and forgive one another. Our encouragement to each other needs to be based in the truth of God’s Word, not in our own opinions and desires. The truth we speak to one another needs to be based on and drawn from the Scriptures, not our own opinions. Loving and forgiving comes from the Spirit, and it is unconditional (we will look at what this really looks like in our lives in weeks to come). We do this because God commands us to do it...it is in no way based on the other person’s actions. THEREFORE, whatever the other person chooses to do, since we cannot control it, we must remain faithfully obedient to the Lord and stay on the narrow pathway regardless.
- As for judging or condemning others on their decision or determination to pick up their cross and follow the Lord... we cannot presume to know the details of their spiritual walk, nor can we know what God has planned for them. Sometimes individuals need to be brought to a place of desperation before they will allow the Lord to step in and help them. Sometimes God must wait before allowing a person to press on to maturity because of the extreme accountability associated with the knowledge of the truth. Sometimes God tests each one of us in a way that is so individualized that no other person on the face of the earth can know why it has to happen that way.
  - THEREFORE, we must stay true to God’s Word and teach the truth of God’s Word. The Word of God is Spirit and the Spirit is life—
    - Hebrews 4:11-13  
11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.
  - Whatever decisions we make, God will rightly judge and will rightly dole out the recompense. *Sometimes* we see recompense/consequences in this lifetime, as God will many times bless or curse our actions accordingly. Regardless, we need to believe what God says—

Romans 8:26-28

26 And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; 27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. 28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

- And with all of this, keep in mind that our journey with certain individuals may end, as we go in separate directions, but never should our love for them, our forgiveness of them, nor our recognition of them as fellow members of the body of Christ ever cease or diminish. Grace is a characteristic of God that we would do well to mimic.

8). So to wrap up...do you really want to get married? Do you really want to do whatever it takes to be found ready at the Judgment Seat of Christ when (and where) the Bride will be identified? Have you counted the cost? Are you ready to leave...and to cleave? *Will you go? Will you keep going?*

- Now, to those who may be asking, “Gosh, this message was harsh. Can we have a little grace and love in there?” The message I just gave was the truth from God’s Word, and, as you know, God is the Perfect Balance of Justice and Righteousness. You cannot have the harsh without the mercy, the scolding without the encouragement, or the punishment without the warning. So, for that encouragement, let’s end with these words:

Matthew 11:25-30

25 At that time, Jesus answered and said, “I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes. 26 Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in Thy sight. 27 All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. 28 **Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.**”

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.