

THE GREAT COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

LUKE 09:57–62

Introduction

Some people desire to follow Christ; therefore, they attach themselves to Him and join the church. Yet they come ever so short and miss eternal life. Why? Because they never knew the price of discipleship. They were to pay a great price, but they knew nothing about it or else were unwilling to pay the price. True discipleship costs everything a person is and has.

- I. One must count the cost (vv. 57-58).
- II. One must follow immediately (vv. 59-60).
- III. One must not look back (vv. 61-62).

I. *Luke 09:57–58 The Cost of Discipleship*

One must count the cost. A man offered to become a follower of Jesus, and he made an unusual promise: he would follow Jesus wherever He led. Why? For the same reasons so many are attracted to the Lord.

=> He enjoyed the presence of the Lord and His followers.

=> He was motivated by the Lord's wisdom and teaching.

=> He appreciated the good the Lord did.

Jesus' reply was to the point. The man had to count the cost, for Jesus offered no luxury and no material comfort – only self-denial. The man had to deny himself and sacrifice all he was and had. Note several facts.

1. Jesus Himself was the prime example. He denied Himself completely. He sacrificed and gave all, both Himself and all He had. He did not even have a place to lay His head. The animals of the world did; the birds had their nests and the foxes had their holes, but Jesus had no place. He gave all to meet the needs of a dying and desperate world.
2. Jesus told the man to count the cost. A profession was not enough. Being *willing to follow* was not enough. The man must deny himself completely, sacrificing and giving all he was and had to meet the needs of a lost and desperate world (See *Cost of Discipleship*, Lk. 9:23).
3. Jesus called Himself the Son of Man (See *Son of Man*, Lk. 9:58). This pictures exactly who He was. The man was to follow Jesus, accepting Him as the Son of Man. He was to accept Jesus as the Ideal Servant of man, the Ideal Man who loved and cared and ministered and felt for all, and who did it perfectly.

Thought 1. Some persons are willing and determined to go to the ends of the earth. However Jesus said that *He — the Son of Man, His pattern of life —* must be accepted.

Many are committed, but their commitments are *self-commitments*, not Christ-centred commitments. We must realize that self-commitments can arise from (1) strong wills, (2) strong determinations, and (3) strong discipline. And the person can follow through in a great way. But self-commitment is not enough for Christ. There has to be a total commitment to the Son of Man, abandoning all of self and all of the world.

Luke 9:23 *Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."*

1 Pet 2:21 *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.*

Phil 2:5-8 *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!*

2 Cor 4:11 *For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.*

2 Cor 8:9 *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*

LUKE 09:58 SON OF MAN

Jesus was not only what an ordinary man is, a son of man; but Jesus was what every man ought to be, the Son of Man Himself. As such, He has become the *Ideal Man*, the *Representative Man*, the *Perfect Man*, the *Pattern*, the *Embodiment* of everything a man ought to be (See *Birth of Jesus Christ, Son of God*, Mt. 1:16). Jesus Christ is the *perfect picture* of a man. Everything God wants a man to be is seen perfectly in Jesus Christ (cp. Jn. 1:14; Col. 2:9-10; Heb. 1:3). The title also means the *Ideal Servant* of man. It stresses His sympathy for the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives, the blind, the bruised, the outcasts, the bereaved (cp. Lk. 4:18). Jesus is the pattern, the model, the perfect example of concern and caring. He served just like every man ought to serve others.

Jesus called Himself "the Son of Man" about eighty times. It was His favourite term. The title *Son of Man* is probably based upon the Son of Man of Daniel 7:13-14. There is a picture of Jesus as the heavenly Son of Man contrasted with Adam as the earthly Man in 1 Cor. 15:45-47. Each served as a Representative Man in God's plan for world history. □

LUKE 09:23 CROSS AND DISCIPLESHIP

Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Luke 09:23

People in Jesus' day knew what it meant to "take up" a cross. They saw scores of criminals bear the cross to the place where they were to be executed, and they witnessed scores of crucifixions, some even by the side of the roads that led in and out of the cities.

The cross does not mean merely bearing one's particular hardship in life, such as poor health, abuse, unemployment, invalid parents, an unsaved spouse, a wayward child. The cross is always an instrument of death, not just an object to carry or bear. The Christian is to die mentally and actively. He is to deny himself daily. He is to let the mind of Christ, the mind of humbling himself to the point of death, be in him and fill his thoughts every day (Phil. 2:5-8; 2 Cor. 10:3-5). He is to put his will, his desires, his wants, his ambitions to death. In their stead, he is to follow Jesus and to do His will all day long. Note this is not negative, passive behaviour. It takes positive, active behaviour to *will*, to *deny self*, to *take up one's cross*, to *follow Christ*. A person has to act, work, get to it, be diligent, consistent, and enduring in order to die to self.

There are several ways the believer dies to self. Romans 6:11-13 spells out the ways as clearly as they can be.

Rom 6:11-13 *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. (see Rom. 6:2-10)*

1. The believer reckons or counts himself crucified with Christ.

Rom 6:11a *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin.*

Rom 6:6 *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.*

Gal 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Gal 5:24 *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.*

2. The believer reckons or counts himself dead to sin, but alive to God.

Rom 6:11 *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

1 Pet 4:2 *As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.*

3. The believer does not let sin reign in his body.

Rom 6:12 *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.*

Col 3:5 *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

4. The believer does not yield the parts of his body to sin, as instruments of wickedness.

Rom 6:13a *Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness.*

Rom 8:13 *For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

5. The believer yields himself to God — as much as those who are alive from the dead are yielded to God.

Rom 6:13b *But rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life.*

Rom 12:1 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.*

Rom 13:14 *Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

6. The believer yields his body members as instruments of righteousness.

Rom 6:13c *And offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*

Gal 5:16 *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

It should be noted that one's hardship or burden can bring a person to the place where the Lord can deal with him. It is then that the hardship becomes the cross and denial of self that Jesus is talking about. With an act of self-denial, the Christian can then count or reckon himself alive to God (Rom. 6:13). He can then follow Jesus. This is an act which can be described as committing all that one is and has to Christ. It is an act that needs to be repeated every day (see Mt. 10:38). □

II. *Luke 09:59–60 Discipleship: Call and Decision*

One must follow Jesus immediately. Note three things.

1. It was Jesus who invited the man to follow Him. There was something very special within the man that caught Jesus' eye, and Jesus was moved to call him. In fact, the *specialness* within the man was of such quality that Jesus stayed after the man even after the man hesitated. The man was of too much value to let go, so Jesus pleaded and argued and even commanded, "Go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Thought 1. Note two important points.

- (1) Every person is of extreme value to Jesus. Therefore, the Spirit stays after a man as long as the man allows Him, despite man's selfishness.
 - (2) Every person who is called by Christ to "preach" must take heed and respond immediately. The Lord's call is to be the primary thrust of a person's life.
2. The man had divided attention. The call of God came to this man, yet he hesitated (See Mt. 8:21). Note two facts.
 - a. The man's hesitation was legitimate. Caring for parents is essential. His father was either already dead or on the verge of death. He was legitimately needed at home.
 - b. The man's problem was *divided attention*. When he felt God's call, he looked at his situation and did not yield immediately. What happened so often happens. His circumstances and problems overwhelmed him, so he wanted to wait and handle them. As soon as the problems were handled, he would leave and follow Jesus.

Luke 14:26-27 *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters — yes, even his own life — he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."*

Mark 10:28-30 *Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!" "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, others, children and fields — and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life."*

2 Tim 2:2-4 *And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs — he wants to please his commanding officer.*

2 Tim 2:24-26 *And the Lord's servant must not quarrel: instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.*

2 Tim 4:5 *But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*

3. Jesus demanded that the man act now and not wait. Jesus saw through the man's partial commitment. He saw through the man's lack of trust in God. Jesus expects us to take care of our parents (1 Tim. 5:3-8), but He demands first loyalty and immediate response. He demands two things in particular.
 - a. A sense of urgency. Imagine! Jesus refused to give the man time to bury the dead. Why? Because the need is so great, and men are dying every hour without Christ. Nothing can be done for the dead (his father), but the living can be reached and snatched out of the grip of death and saved unto eternal life. If we hesitate, for whatever reason, some whom we might have reached will die and be doomed. The point is forceful: the hour is urgent.

Mark 1:17-18 *"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him.*

John 4:34 *"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."*

John 9:4 *"As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work."*

Rom 13:11-12 *And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light.*

1 Cor 7:29 *What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none.*

Eph 5:16 *Making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.*

Col 4:5 *Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.*

2 Tim 1:6 *For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*

2 Pet 1:13 *I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body.*

Rev 3:19 *Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.*

Psa 90:12 *Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.*

Eccl 12:1 *Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them."*

- b. Go and preach the Kingdom of God. Note that Christ tells His messengers what to preach, yet how little the real message of God's kingdom is preached (See Mt. 19:23-24).

Acts 4:20 "For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Acts 18:5 When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

1 Cor 9:16 Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!

2 Tim 4:2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction.

Jer 20:9 But if I say, "I will not mention him or speak any more in his name," his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.

Amos 3:8 The lion has roared — who will not fear? The Sovereign LORD has spoken — who can but prophesy?

III. *Luke 09:61–62 Decision and Discipleship*

One must not look back. Note three things.

1. This man offered himself to Jesus. He was *willing* to follow Jesus. Something about the Lord touched his heart or else the Lord's teaching and ministry appealed to him. He saw the enormous benefit to men and to society as Christ ministered to the needs of men. In either case, he made a decision to follow Jesus. He was *willing*.
2. The man had a *double allegiance*. Note the words "but" and "first." The man had thought through his decision and concluded that he was willing to follow Christ, *but* something else needed to be handled *first*, a family affair, a business affair, an employment affair, a financial affair — some other concern was put first (as is the case with so many).

Something else could have been concerning the man. He may have wanted his family's counsel and advice, to see how they felt about his decision. Perhaps he felt their approval was needed. Then again, he could have been putting his love for family before his love for Christ. Perhaps he was attached to his family more than he was attached to Christ. Family should be our *first* attachment *after* our attachment to Christ. Christ is to be first in our lives.

Mat 6:33 "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Mat 12:30 "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters."

Mat 25:34-36 “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’”

Luke 10:36-37 “Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Luke 14:33 “In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”

Luke 16:13 “No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”

John 21:15-17 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.” The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”

Phil 3:8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

1 Pet 5:2 Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers — not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve.

Deu 10:12 And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Josh 24:14 “Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.”

1 Sam 15:22 But Samuel replied: “Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.”

1 Kng 18:21 *Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.” But the people said nothing.*

1 Chr 28:9 *“And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever.”*

Psa 2:11 *Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling.*

Jer 7:2 *“Stand at the gate of the Lord’s house and there proclaim this message: ‘Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the LORD.’”*

Ezek 3:17 *“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me.”*

3. Jesus’ judgment was descriptively stated — stated in such a way that once heard or read, it would be difficult to forget: “No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.” The man got the point, and he probably never forgot it. It more than likely pricked his conscience and disturbed him often as the saying flashed across his mind. He had willed to follow Christ, but he “had looked back”; therefore, he was not fit for the Kingdom of God.

The idea is this. A man who begins to plough and then looks back...

- ploughs a crooked row. No row (person) is ever straight, not like it should be. (Each row or person receives only partial teaching.)
- ploughs an inconsistent field. The field under his care is never matured; it never receives consistent work.
- ploughs in a spirit lacking total commitment. He may turn away at any time, leaving a job unfinished.
- ploughs but allows distractions and disruptions which affect the crops (the plants are not cared for).

Mat 7:21 *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”*

Mat 7:26-27 *“But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”*

Mat 19:21-23 *Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."*

Luke 12:47 *"That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows."*

John 6:63-70 *"The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him." From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!"*

Rom 14:12 *So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.*

Gal 4:9 *But now that you know God — or rather are known by God — how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?*

Heb 10:38 *"But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him."*

Heb 12:3 *Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

James 1:8 *He is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.*

James 4:8 *Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

James 4:17 *Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.*

2 Pet 2:20 *If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.*

2 Pet 3:17 *Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.*

1 John 2:19 *They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.*

Rev 2:4-5 *Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place. ■*