

THE COST OF BEING THE LORD'S DISCIPLE

MATHEW 10:34–42

Introduction

In this passage Jesus is exact and uncompromising. He lays some heavy demands upon His disciples. He states clearly what it will cost a person to be His disciple, and He describes the cost by using four illustrations.

- I. Illustration 1: Jesus' purpose (v. 34).
- II. Illustration 2: a person's family (vv. 35-37).
- III. Illustration 3: the cross (v. 38).
- IV. Illustration 4: a person's life (v. 39).
- V. Illustration 5: a person's ministry (vv. 40-42).

I. *Mathew 10: 34 Jesus Christ's Purpose: Spiritual Struggle*

Jesus' purpose. Jesus says He did not come to bring peace on earth, but a sword. What did He mean? (See Jn. 16:33.)

1. He did not come to give His approval or sanction to the physical corruption and decay of the earth. The earth and all that is therein ages, deteriorates, and dies. It all wastes away. Jesus did not come to give God's peace or blessing upon a world that dies. What He came to do was to bring a sword to earth. He came to war against aging and decay and death. He came to slash out, cut away, and put to death the physical dimension of being that condemns everything to decay and death.
2. He did not come to give His approval to the sin and evil of the earth. He could never give God's peace or blessing to a world that is so full of cursing and rebellion against God and so full of selfishness and division between men. He came to bring a sword to earth: to war against sin and evil and to destroy all the evil that is both within and without man.

Jesus' presence automatically causes division. This is because the believer's godly and divine nature is so completely opposite from his fallen and Adamic nature. As certain persons heed the call of Jesus, becoming one with Him and the way of righteousness, there is suddenly a division both within and without.

- a. *Within* there is division between his old fallen, Adamic nature and his new divine nature (see 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:22f; Col. 3:8-10; Gal. 5:13-17, esp. 16-17).
 - b. *Without* there is a division between Him and those who choose to reject Jesus and to follow the way of darkness (see Mt. 5:10-12). The division often occurs among family members and friends when one person accepts Jesus and the other person does not. The saved person becomes a totally new creature, born of God with new ideals and a
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righteous behaviour; but the unsaved family member or friend remains in darkness, continuing to desire the things which please his flesh (See *Persecution*, Mt. 10:21).

Thought 1. The world is full of hurt, pain, and suffering — not peace. The truth cannot be denied. However, we can be of good cheer, for Christ has overcome the world.

John 16:33 *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

Thought 2. Christ came to give the sword of His Word to the world. His Word, sharper than any two-edged sword, pierces the soul and spirit of a person, discerning the thoughts and intents of his heart. It convicts the person to become a follower of God and His righteousness (see Heb. 4:12).

MATHEW 10:21 PERSECUTION

*“Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.” **Mathew 10:21***

A believer's family will be divided. A person's own family can become his greatest persecutor. Why? There are three reasons.

1. Because of the believer's commitment to Christ and His righteousness. The family often lives a worldly life and cannot understand a godly life. The family, therefore, opposes a family member who ceases to participate in certain functions and traditions (2 Cor. 6:17-18; 1 Jn. 2:15-16).
2. Because of the family's orthodox religion or church. The converted family member may wish to change religions or churches. The family opposes such a move.
3. Because of the believer's commitment to Christ. The believer should become a dynamic witness sharing the graciousness and love of the Lord. Such an active witness is sometimes an embarrassment to a family.

Luke 5:27 *After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. “Follow me,” Jesus said to him.*

Mark 10:28 *Peter said to him, “We have left everything to follow you!”*

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.”*

Luke 18:29-30 *“I tell you the truth,” Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life.”*

Thought 1. A true believer is a man of conviction, believing that Jesus Christ is truly the Messiah, the Son of the living God. He adheres to this truth, living and bearing witness to it. Such conviction and unswerving testimony are seldom understood and often opposed. Because of this a believer sometimes has to choose between obedience to Christ and obedience to his family.

Thought 2. Nothing hurts more than having our own family oppose us when we make a decision to follow Christ. When our families oppose and persecute us, it hurts us deeply.

Thought 3. In some cases the most severe opposition comes from family members. The reason is twofold.

(1) They feel their influence should be respected.

(2) They feel that the whole family is affected by what its members do.

These two feelings are normal for a family, but the believer knows and has committed his life to the truth of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the believer is convinced that what is needed is for the family to be converted, not for him to deny his faith. □

II. *Mathew 10:35–37 Divisions in the Family*

The first illustration Jesus used is that of a person's family. The believer is to note three things about his family.

1. First, Jesus sets the believer against his family. It is important to see that it is Jesus who causes the division. Jesus calls a person out of the world and separates him from the world so that he can go about correcting the evil of the world. If a family member continues to live in sin and to walk ever onward toward the grave without turning to God, two things usually happen.
 - a. The believer struggles to save his loved one, no matter what opposition he may face.
 - b. The family member rebels against the righteousness and efforts of the believer.

Luke 12:51-52 *“Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three.”*

Thought 1. The believer is called to a life of righteousness and to a warfare against sin and evil. If a member of his family is engaged on the side of sin and evil, there is a *natural conflict* between the believer and the family member.

- (1) The family member is still of the earth, seeking the pleasures and possessions of the world, and still living primarily to satisfy his earthly desires. He represses and subdues the thought of God so that he can pursue his own earthly desires.

(2) The believer is of the earth, but he is also of heaven. He is physical and spiritual, and he is living primarily for God and His righteousness, living to reach men with the glorious gospel of Christ. The two natures differ drastically. They are diametrically opposed to one another. The person of the world talks primarily about the world and lives for the world. The person of the spirit makes God the primary force of his life: talking about and living for God and His righteousness.

Thought 2. Jesus is honest with man. He means business. He *came*, and He intends for His purpose to achieve its end even if it causes division within a family. Those who will be saved and who stand for righteousness will be saved by Christ even at the expense of family unity.

Thought 3. The worst experience for the messenger of God is for his enemies to be “the members of his own household” (v. 36). There is no experience so bitter as to have one’s own family oppose and be counted among the persecutors.

2. Second, Jesus demands supreme love. Note the words, “more than me.” Believers are to love their families, but they are to love God more; He is to be first and foremost. Their first loyalty is to be to God. Two terrible things happen when a family is put before God.
 - a. Families cannot be what they should be without God. No family can reach its full potential without God. Without God a family will lack spiritual growth and strength, conviction and commitment, confidence and assurance, purpose and meaning for all eternity. There will be no prospect and no hope of eternal life, no assurance of anything beyond this life.
 - b. Families cannot be looked after and overseen by God unless God is given His rightful place in the family. If the family takes control over its own life, ignoring God and His control, then what happens to the family is in its own hands. God is put off to the side, excluded, and shut out. He is given no voice in the life of the family. The family is left all to itself. All kinds of trouble can and usually does follow. There is a lack of spiritual strength to face the trials and crises that confront the family during its life together.

The point is this: we must love God supremely, putting Him before all others, even before our families. When we do, our families are assured of being everything they should be and of being looked after and cared for by God (Mt. 6:33). Therefore a man’s decision to follow Christ, no matter the sacrifice to his family, is a wise decision; in fact, it is the only reasonable decision (Rom. 12:1-2).

Thought 1. Jesus demands first love and first loyalty (Mt.8:18-22).

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

Mat 22:37-38 *Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment." (see Mark 12:28-30; Luke 10:27)*

Thought 2. Sometimes a man loves his family so much that he turns from Christ, choosing his family over Christ. There is usually one of two reasons for this decision.

- (1) The opposition against his following Christ is too strong. The division within the family is too deep.
- (2) The sacrifice demanded is too great. It may be that God is calling the man to some ministry, to some field of service, to some act of giving; but he decides the financial and emotional strain would be too much. He decides that God is demanding too much of a sacrifice for his family.

When we allow our families to keep us from serving God and from doing what we should, we are making our families the supreme love of our lives. We are worshipping them, looking after them and their welfare first instead of worshipping and putting God first. When we put our families first, we are allowing our families to become our idols.

3. Third, Jesus warns the believer that he shall either be counted worthy or unworthy of Him.
 - a. There is a great reward for loving Christ supremely. If we count Christ worthy of our first love, He will count us worthy of Him. We are assured: we shall receive *the great salvation* in Him (see Mt. 10:32).
 - b. There is a terrible loss for not loving Christ supremely. If we love our family more than Christ, He will count us unworthy of Him. We are assured that we shall not receive the great salvation in Him (Mt. 10:33).

Mat 10:32-33 *"Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven."*

Mark 8:38 *"If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."*

2 Tim 2:12 *If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us.*

Thought 1. A person's family is to be the strongest and most precious relationship among human beings. A person is to love his family as much as he loves any others on earth. However, there is one relationship that is to supersede his relationship with his family: that is his relationship to Jesus Christ. He is to love Christ supremely, counting Him more worthy than all, even more worthy than his own family. There are at least three reasons why Christ is to be counted more worthy.

- (1) Christ is the Supreme Being of the universe. He is the Creator, Sustainer, and Protector of life throughout the course of our walk upon earth. Our time and our care are in His hands. Our families can sustain and protect us only to a certain point and only for a short time. They do not control life, but Christ can. He is the Supreme Being of the universe; therefore, He is the only One who is worthy of our supreme love.
- (2) Christ is the Supreme Saviour. He is the Giver and Provider of life, both abundant and eternal life. Our families can bring some happiness and pleasure to our lives, and they can protect us to some degree in this life - but not ultimately. Accidents and disease are beyond their power. They can save us in only a few situations and only for a brief time. Christ is the Supreme Saviour; therefore, He alone is worthy of our supreme love.
- (3) With Christ we have the Supreme relationship. Christ is totally unselfish and He loves perfectly. Of course, we are not completely unselfish nor do we love perfectly, but to have the privilege of being loved perfectly and treated completely unselfishly (all the time) is the height of relationships (Jn. 3:16; Mt. 7:25-34).

III. *Mathew 10:38 The Cross of Self-Denial*

The second illustration Christ used is that of the cross.

1. Christ again made a strong demand. Note the words "Anyone who does not take *his cross*." Every man has "*his cross*." The cross is the symbol of death and of execution. Every man must die to self day by day. He must count himself dead to sin and follow after Christ. (See *Cross and Discipleship*, Lk. 9:23.)

Mat 16:24 *Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."*

Luke 14:26 *"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."*

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

2. The reward is again being counted either worthy or unworthy of Christ. If we do not put ourselves to death, we are not worthy of Christ. He shall deny us.

Thought 1. What Christ says is strong. A man must die to self, sacrificing his will, ambition, and desires. Whatever it is that a person wants — comfort, ease, wealth, fame, power, family — all must be placed behind Christ and His will.

IV. *Mathew 10:39 Self-Denial*

The third illustration Jesus used is that of a person's life.

1. Jesus demands a person's life. Note the unique way He words this.
 - a. "Whoever finds his life will lose it." The phrase "finds his life" means that a person seeks his own pleasure and passions in life. It is a selfish life, finding out what pleases self and going after it. It is heaping and hoarding and doing as self wills. It is finding out what gives self *life* and pleasure on this earth and doing it.

But there is something wrong with this. It is selfish. We live in a sinful and evil world: a world of pain and hurt, of starvation and disease, of crime and injury, of accident and wrong-doing, of greed and selfishness, of war and death. The one thing that is needed by all is to deny self: to commit and to lose our lives in Christ, which is to combat evil and to deliver a dying world to eternal life.

- b. "Whoever loses his life...will find it." The phrase "loses his life" means that a person seeks to lose his life on this earth in order to find God. It means that a person gives up the right to order his own life, and he lets Christ control his life. It means that a person's pursuit must be all consuming, that a person diligently seeks after God. When a person is consumed with finding God, the things of the world just fade away. But the person who refuses to relinquish this right to the Lord misses out on the life God purposed for him. He fails to experience the fulfilment of completing his mission on earth, whereas the person who gives the Lord the right to order his life experiences real life. He experiences that deep sense of fulfilment, satisfaction, and pleasure with his life – even in the face of difficulties and hardships. In addition, Christ says that he will find life, both abundant and eternal.
2. The reward is *losing* life vs. *finding* life. Life, the very thing which a person seeks, is found only in Christ. If a person never finds Christ or if he rejects Christ, he loses life. If he denies himself and follows Christ, he finds life (See *Eternal Life*, Mt. 10:39).

Thought 1. A person must not search for his life on this earth. If he finds life on this earth, he will lose his life. Why? Because all that is on this earth is corruptible: aging, decaying, deteriorating and dying. Nothing on this earth lasts. This fact clearly says something: life cannot be found on this earth; only death can be found.

Thought 2. What men call life is not real life.

=> The flesh, with all its goose pimples and chills and butterflies, is not life.

=> Wealth, with all the things it can purchase, is not life.

=> Recognition and fame, with all the ego it can boost, is not life.

=> Power, with all the rights and pomp it can give, is not life.

=> Pride, with all the self image it can build, is not life.

All this and all else on the earth fades and passes away. It just does not last. How can life, real life, be something that ends so quickly and leaves one so empty?

Thought 3. The world and so many in the world are desperately in need. Every person should therefore lose his life in serving God and his fellow man. One thing is sure: a person should not *hoard life*, seeking only to satisfy his own pleasures and desires in life.

Thought 4. The person who tries to save his own life and the life of his family will lose his life. Denying Christ or putting something before Christ is not the way to save anything, much less one's own life.

MATHEW 10:39 LIFE, ETERNAL LIFE

Real life is found only by giving up one's life to Jesus. The person who refuses to relinquish this right to the Lord Jesus misses out on the life God intended for him. He fails to experience the fulfilment of completing his mission on earth, whereas the person who gives the Lord the right to order his life experiences real life. He experiences that deep sense of fulfilment, satisfaction and pleasure with his life — even in the face of difficulties and hardships. In addition, he is given that special quality of life called eternal life. □

V. *Mathew 10:40–42 Receiving Others*

The fourth illustration Jesus used is that of welcoming and ministering.

1. Christ demands that we welcome and minister to all His servants. Imagine this! The person who ministers to God's messenger is said to minister to the following...

- to Christ Himself (v. 40)
- to God the Father (v. 40)
- to a prophet (v. 41)
- to a righteous man (v. 41)
- to a little one (v. 42)

Mat 10:11-13 “*Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you.*”

Mat 18:5 “*And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.*”

Mat 25:40 “*The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’*”

Luke 10:16 “*He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.*”

2. The reward is astounding. The person who welcomes and receives God's servant shall receive a reciprocal or an equal reward.

- a. The person who welcomes and ministers shall receive the presence of Christ and of God Himself. He reflects honour upon the Lord and even upon God Himself. In fact, Jesus says that welcoming and ministering to others is the same as entertaining Him and His Father (Mt. 10:40).
- b. The person who welcomes and ministers shall receive a reciprocal or an equal reward with God's servant. Perhaps a person cannot be a prophet or a shining example of a righteous man, but he can receive the reward of both. How? By simply welcoming and supporting and caring for God's servant. This is an astounding truth: the person actually shares in the work of God's messenger when he receives and helps him. Christ puts an enormous value on how his messenger is received and treated. If the messenger is welcomed, Christ will give an equal reward for the kindness and care shown to his messenger. (What a lesson for churches as to how they receive and trust their ministers!)
- c. Christ declares that the smallest ministry will not lose its reward. A person will be rewarded for the smallest ministry done for God's messenger. Just giving a cup of water to a messenger is extremely significant to God. It causes God to say emphatically that a person will be rewarded for such an act. The person needs to know that he is ministering to someone who is very, very dear to God. Christ calls His messengers "little ones," which is a term of endearment.

Mat 25:23 *"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"*

John 12:26 *"Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me."*

Rom 2:10 *But glory, honour and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*

Eph 6:8 *Because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.*

Col 3:24 *Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

Thought 1. There is great confidence and assurance here for the messenger of God. It is implied that some *will* receive and welcome the messenger of the Lord. There will be some who will open their hearts and homes to him, and they will receive his message. ■

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). □