

The Cost and Rewards of Discipleship

I. THE CHRISTIAN'S TRUE CALL

- A. In a generation of optimization, I believe our need is not new methodology pertaining to discipleship. Rather we must acquire restored understanding and reverence for this life we are called to live.
- B. In ancient rabbinic tradition, discipleship possessed a much different connotation than we presently hold. A disciple, or *talmid* in Hebrew, was characterized by their devoutness to the teachings of their rabbi. Moreover, a disciple in this time not only committed themselves to obtaining the knowledge of their master, but also to being fashioned entirely into their likeness.
 - 1. Talmidim would forsake everything to be with their rabbi every waking moment, adopting their ways, worldview, and customs. It was the glory of the disciple to be a carbon copy of their teacher, to abide so close to them that the dust of their rabbi's steps would cling to their robe.
- C. Our reverence and practice of discipleship has progressively relaxed through the centuries. Wide is the gate of christian affiliation while clinging to the things of the world. Yet Jesus' call to us remains the same as it was to the twelve: a consecrated life trekking the narrow road, fulfilling the Great Commission, and enduring to the end.
 - 1. Leonard Ravenhill writes, "*The way of the Cross was once a gory road; now it is presented as a glory road. The offer to men is no longer the lordship of Christ in this life, but the promise of an all-expenses-paid, eternal honeymoon.*"
- D. From this we gather the paradox of salvation is that it is a free gift which will ultimately cost us everything. Thus, discipleship is to choose to give all that we are to Christ, yielding to His yoke of teaching, and throwing ourselves into His hands to shape us into His image.

II. THE COST OF FOLLOWING CHRIST

- A. There's much debate in the contemporary church as to what is required to follow Jesus. Such debates include the presence of what is now called a "modern gospel." However, no such thing exists. This modern gospel widely adopted in the west is simply a beautifully wrapped heresy, empty in substance and truth, with liberal grace as it's jewel. Likewise, Boenhoeffer notes this liberal grace, or cheap grace as he calls it, is a "grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."

"My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die." (Gal. 2:20-21 NLT)

B. Jesus presents the convicting truth of what is necessary to follow Him throughout each Gospel narrative. On the other side of Jesus' invitation, "Follow me," is the requirement to abandon everything. For when Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die (Dietrich Bonhoeffer).

1. If Jesus commands us to carry our cross, we cannot truly accomplish this if our intention is not the same result as His road to Calvary, death to ourselves.

"Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.'" (Matt. 16:24)

C. With that, there is much needed a calculated abandonment upon the call to discipleship to fully grasp the weight of what Jesus requires. To count the cost in such a manner aids us in soberly considering God's severity, and lean into the fear of the Lord.

"So he departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen in front of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak upon him. And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?" And he returned from following him and took the yoke of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the yokes of the oxen and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him." (1 Kings 19:19-21)

"Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?" (Luke 14:27-28)

D. Let us restore our view of discipleship from the mouth of Christ, not from our persisting culture, comfortability, or convenience. If Jesus came to bring a sword, which is the Word of his mouth, we must let His words pierce us, discern our innermost thoughts and intentions, and leave us bare before Him. That we might be emptied of self and filled with His Spirit.

1. What God asks of us to give, we must give. Jesus' words Follow me extend beyond a mere invitation, it is a command. Yes, God respects the free will of men, though a disciple does not take lightly the commands of God.

"Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." (Matt. 10:37-39)

"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. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26-27, 33)

2. This same Jesus who says, *“I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world,”* also says *“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.”*

E. There is no dual citizenship between the Kingdom of Heaven and the domain of darkness. We see clearly that friendship with the world is enmity with God. Therefore, We cannot preserve any part of ourselves that is meant to be consumed in the furnace of discipleship. Lest we lose ourselves.

“You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, ‘He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us?’” (Jas. 4:4-5)

“Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.” (Luke 17:33)

F. It’s important also to note that this motif of death to self is consistent with Jesus’ theme that there is no turning back in following him. One cannot return to a corpse in hopes to find life, and Jesus makes clear that a disciple who seeks to go back to their old ways has truly not given all and is unfit for His Kingdom.

“On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back. Remember Lot’s wife.” (Luke 17:31-32)

“To another he said, ‘Follow me.’ But he said, ‘Lord, let me first go and bury my father.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.’ Yet another said, ‘I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.’ Jesus said to him, ‘No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.’” (Luke 9:58-62)

1. It’s in his mercy God does this, given anything unholy cannot be preserved in his presence. To withhold is to operate in disobedience.
2. Furthermore, in Jesus’ address to the seven churches, His warning “But I have this against you” is an expression of mercy more than it is His judgment. We often stop at our affirmation, but refuse His correction. When accepting His correction is our means of sanctification, and being formed into His image in the earth.

- G. We must hold greater value for intimacy and discipleship with our Lord than that of all we possess, even our life itself. There is much to learn of this in Jesus' interaction with the rich young ruler.

“And behold, a man came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The young man said to him, “All these I have kept. What do I still lack?” Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” (Matt. 19:16-22)

1. God seeks devoted followers and His desire is to reorient our value system and detach us from the things of the world. We must familiarize ourselves with the question, “What do I still lack?” And Jesus' response ought to lead us to surrender not sorrow!

- a. Our posture of surrender ought to be joyful, swift, and steady in response to the call of discipleship.

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” (Matt. 13:44)

“Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.” (Matt. 4:22)

“And he said to all, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.’” (Luke 9:23)

- H. Accompanied with the cost of our lives, the cost of following Jesus also entails the promise of suffering.

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.” (Jas. 1:2-4, 12)

“Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.” (John 15:20)

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the

name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” (1 Peter 4:12-14)

“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,” (2 Timothy 3:12)

1. Not only suffering, but suffering until the end.

“Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10)

III. THE COST OF FULFILLING THE GREAT COMMISSION

A. If we are to be a people fashioned into the image of Jesus through discipleship, our mandate is to jealously pursue what his heart is after—his flock. Doing so at the cost of laying one’s life down for the sake of serving another.

“You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.” (John 13:13-15)

“But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:43-45)

1. Our hearts must emulate Jesus’ who did not cling to His Divinity, but ransomed Himself out of obedience to His Father. From the life of Jesus we can also conclude that deliverance from entitlement looks like a life indebted to God and dedicated to the service of others.

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

IV. THE REWARDS OF DISCIPLESHIP

A. Discipleship is costly. Jesus promised troubles and persecutions. But **the narrow way leads to expansive joys**. Now that we’ve been exposed to the depth of discipleship we’re now going to expound on the rewards made available to us at the cost of discipleship.

“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.” (John 16:33)

B. **Understanding the need for eternal reward-** (If He is our inheritance then what’s the point in receiving rewards in eternity?)

1. Rewards reveal the reality of our sonship.

7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir [a]of God [b] through Christ. (Gal. 4:7)

2. Rewards fulfill the law of sowing and reaping.

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. 9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. (Gal. 6:7-9)

3. Rewards make good on His promise that our labor in the Lord is not in vain.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Cor. 15:58)

4. Rewards reveal the justice of God.

10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and [a]labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. Two to three sentence

5. Rewards reveal that Jesus delights in sharing rewards with us. Our lives are intricately and inseparably linked with Christ's. The reward He receives is shared with all of us as His heirs, we die with Him, live with Him, and share in His joy.

17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. (Rom. 8:17)

8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, (Rom. 6:8)

21 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' (Mat. 25:21)

Although these rewards are available to us we must remember that there is no greater reward than Him.

12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. (Mat. 23:12)

These rewards are not what we're striving for, but rather our goal is to have a good heart posture to receive these rewards in eternity.

V. WHAT WE WILL GAIN ON EARTH?

1. A personal relationship with and access to the Father. If we trust Jesus Christ as our savior and our sins have been forgiven by Him- that is what qualifies is to enter the holy presence of God.

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6)

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own,[a] and his own people[b] did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1"10-13 ESV)

2. Understanding (The Fear of the Lord)

3 The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate. (Prov. 8:13)

26 In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, And His children will have a place of refuge. (Prov. 14:26)

23 The fear of the Lord leads to life, And he who has it will abide in satisfaction; He will not be visited with evil. (Prov. 19:23)

13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. (Ecc. 12:13)

Side note- The Fear of The Lord ANOINTS us with GLADNESS
(Psa 19:9, Psa 111:10, Pro 8:13, Heb 1:8-9)

2. Wisdom & Knowledge

6 For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding; (Prov. 2:6)

10 By pride comes nothing but strife, But with the well-advised is wisdom.(Prov. 13:10)

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Support Scriptures; preferably a principle scripture and an example scripture. (James 3:17)

3 And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship (Ex. 31:3)

12 wisdom and knowledge are granted to you; and I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings have had who were before you, nor shall any after you have the like. (2 Chron. 1:12)

3. Protection & Security

23 The fear of the Lord leads to life, And he who has it will abide in satisfaction; He will not be visited with evil. (Prov. 19:23)

17 No weapon formed against you shall prosper, And every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, And their righteousness is from Me,” Says the Lord. (Isa. 54:17)

6 Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.” (Duet. 31:6)

7 You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah. (Psa. 32:7)

4. Deliverance

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. (Rom. 6:14-19)

13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and [a]conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Col. 1:13)

5. Aid of the Holy Spirit

26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession [a]for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. (Rom. 8:26)

26 But the [a]Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. (John 14:26)

13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. (John 16:13)

6. A Joy from the Spirit that is irrevocable

22 Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you. (John 16:22)

11 “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. (John 15:11)

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 [a]gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. (Gal. 5:22-23)

7. Spiritual Gifts (Tongues, Discerning of Spirits, Healing, etc...)

6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. preferably a principle scripture (Rom. 12:6-8)

29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. Two to three sentence Support Scriptures; preferably a principle scripture and an example scripture. (Rom 11:29)

8. The ability to desire (Him)

9 With my soul I have desired You in the night, Yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early; For when Your judgments are in the earth, The inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. (Isa. 26:9)

25 Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. and an example scripture. (Psa. 73:25)

23 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not [a]want. (Psa 23:1)

9. The ability to have the WILL to desire Him and to continue in discipleship

13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (Phil 2:13)

35 And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. (John 6:35)

My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you, So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding; Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding, If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will understand the fear of the Lord, And find the knowledge of God.” (Prov. 2:1-5)

VI. WHAT WE WILL GAIN IN ETERNITY?

A. The word “Crown” derives from the greek word ‘**stephanos**’. It means crown, garland, wreath or reward. It was used as a symbol of victory given to the winning contestants as a prize in public games, or used to honor generally. It was also used as an ornament during festivities or celebrations (it usually looked like a wreath of leaves.)

B. The crown is figurative speech that Paul uses.

“And everyone who competes for the prize is disciplined in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.” (1 Cor. 9:24-25)

“19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; (Mat. 6:19)

C. Faithful endurance wins a Heavenly reward- which is this

“4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you...” (1 Pet. 1:4)

D. There are five heavenly crowns found in the New Testament that will be rewarded to believers:

1. The Imperishable Crown / The crown of Victory (Incorruptible Crown for mastery over the sin nature.)

“24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.” (1 Cor. 9:24-27)

2. The Crown of Rejoicing (For leading others to Christ and in righteousness, and building up the body.)

“19 For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.” (1 Thess. 2:19-20)

3. The Crown of Righteousness (For living righteously in this world.)

“8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.” (2 Tim 4:8)

4. The Crown of Glory (For fulfilling your calling and finishing the work assigned- an exhortation for the elders to rule as the Lord commanded.)

“5 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but [a]willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being [b]lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; 4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.” (1 Peter 5:1-7)

5. The Crown of Life (For enduring trials while proceeding in God’s plan.)

12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (James 1:12)

“10 Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10)

- E. Discipleship is understanding that we will always be students, constantly learning. Everything we think we know, in our pride, we will discover we don’t, as the Lord teaches us. These are the rewards made available to us at the cost of discipleship.