

When Following Jesus Costs More Than You Expected

Life-changing moments come in many forms. Some we prepare for—graduations, weddings, the birth of children. Others catch us completely off guard. But perhaps the most profound transformation occurs when we truly understand what it means to follow Jesus. Not the sanitized, Sunday-school version we often imagine, but the radical, all-consuming discipleship He actually calls us to.

In Matthew 10, Jesus gathers His disciples before sending them out on mission. After giving them authority to heal and perform miracles, He drops a statement that stops everyone in their tracks:

"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's enemies will be the members of his own household." (Matthew 10:34-36)

Wait—what? This doesn't sound like the Jesus we talk about in comfortable church settings. This sounds confrontational, even harsh. Yet these words reveal something crucial about the nature of authentic discipleship.

The Peace We Want vs. The Peace Jesus Brings

The Jewish people in Jesus' day were looking for a Messiah who would restore their national glory. They wanted someone who would bring political peace, financial prosperity, and religious freedom—a return to the "good old days" of King David and Solomon when Israel was the most influential nation in the ancient world.

Jesus had to confront this expectation head-on. The Greek word He uses for peace here—*eirene*—speaks specifically to quietness, rest, and the absence of struggle. The nation wanted comfort and ease. They wanted a Messiah who would eliminate their problems.

But seven hundred years earlier, Isaiah had prophesied that the Messiah would be called the Prince of Peace—a different kind of peace. The Hebrew word *shalom* speaks to totality of peace in every area of life, a flourishing of the soul that transcends physical circumstances. Jesus came to bring this eternal peace, reconciliation with God through His death and resurrection, not simply to make earthly life more comfortable.

As He tells His disciples in John 14:27: *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives."*

The Sword That Divides

Throughout His ministry, Jesus made sixteen "I have come" statements, explicitly announcing the purpose of His arrival. These declarations are implicitly incarnational—only someone who came from somewhere with a prior mission speaks this way.

He said things like:

- "I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10)
- "The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10)

And yes, He also said: "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."

All of these statements are true about Jesus' character and mission. The sword He speaks of isn't literal violence—it's the dividing line that allegiance to Him creates. When we choose to follow Jesus completely, we're choosing between competing loyalties. Sometimes those competing loyalties involve the people closest to us.

The Cost of Allegiance

For first-century Jewish families, this teaching hit especially hard. Family wasn't just an emotional unit—it was the primary economic, religious, and social identity structure. Your family determined your place in society, your financial security, your religious standing, and your very identity. People were introduced as "son of" or "daughter of" their father's house.

To be in conflict with your household over Jesus was to risk disinheritance, social exclusion, and religious ostracism. It could mean social death.

Yet Jesus confronts this reality directly: *"Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me."* (Matthew 10:37-38)

The strength of attachment to family in Israel had a tendency to supplant commitment to God. An entire nation whose world centered around being God's people had allowed family to become more important than following the Lord.

Jesus wasn't claiming family is bad. He was addressing the proper order of allegiance: God first, then family.

Living It Out Today

So what does this mean for us? How do we apply this radical teaching to our lives?

First, we must stop living out our faith with the comfort of others in mind. Has our Christianity been customized to produce zero friction in the relationships that matter

most? Do we follow the Jesus we discover in Scripture, or do we modify His teachings to avoid causing problems at work, with friends, or in family gatherings?

Second, we need to understand the difference between offense and offensive. The cross is inherently offensive to those far from it. Paul wrote that the cross is a stumbling block (Galatians 5:11). But we don't need to be offensive on its behalf. Some people experience relational conflict not because they follow Jesus closely, but because they follow Him poorly—with self-righteousness, harshness, or spiritual superiority. The sword Jesus brings is quiet, humble submission, not aggressive posturing.

Third, we should expect that the most intense pushback may come from those closest to us. When we make decisions to follow Jesus wholeheartedly—changing careers, raising children differently, serving sacrificially, prioritizing church community—the people who love us most may be the ones who push back hardest. Not because they're bad people, but because they love us and want to protect us from discomfort or risk.

Finally, we must remember the Father's house. Everything Jesus says we may lose in Matthew 10, He promises exists in the Father's house. In John 14:2, Jesus says, *"My Father's house has many rooms...I am going there to prepare a place for you."* The Greek word for "place" speaks of belonging. We will not be homeless, nameless, or disinherited. We have a place and a family we belong to.

The Alternative Cost

There is one other option: we could choose not to fully commit to following Jesus when it creates tension. But Jesus addresses this too: *"Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven."* (Matthew 10:32-33)

The alternative way is actually the most costly decision we could ever make.

Setting Our Eyes on Eternity

Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18: *"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."*

Eternity is a long time. This side of it is remarkably short.

Jesus requires undivided allegiance. He's honest that it will cost some of us relationships in this life. But the same Jesus who sends the sword has already prepared a place of belonging for us.

The demand is total. The provision is also total.

The question isn't whether following Jesus will be comfortable—He's already told us it might not be. The question is whether we believe He's worth it, whether heaven is real, and whether the Father's house is our true home.

When we set our affections on eternity and choose Jesus fully, even in the moments where it creates friction, we're choosing the only thing that will last forever.

Scripture References from the Sermon

Directly Mentioned or Quoted:

1. **Matthew 10:1** - Jesus called his 12 disciples and gave them authority
2. **Matthew 10:34** - "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword"
3. **Matthew 10:35-36** - Turning family members against each other
4. **Matthew 10:37** - "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me"
5. **Isaiah 9:6** - Messiah called "Prince of Peace" and "Wonderful Counselor"
6. **John 14:27** - "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you"
7. **John 10:10** - "I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly"
8. **Luke 2:49** (implied) - Jesus at age 12: "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"
9. **John 2:16** - Jesus cleansing the temple: "Stop turning my Father's house into a market"
10. **John 14:1-2** - "My Father's house has many rooms...I am going there to prepare a place for you"
11. **Galatians 5:11** - The cross of Christ is offensive
12. **Matthew 10:32-33** - Acknowledging/disowning Jesus before others
13. **2 Corinthians 4:17-18** - Light and momentary troubles producing eternal glory
14. **Hebrews 12:2** (alluded to) - "Author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross"

Alluded to or Thematically Referenced:

15. **Jeremiah 29:11** - "Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future"
16. **Proverbs 22:6** - "Train up a child in the way they should go"
17. **Luke 19:10** - "The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost"
18. **Leviticus 25** (implied) - Sabbath year land reset and inheritance laws

Suggested Verses for Main Themes:

- **Cost of discipleship**: Luke 14:26-27, Luke 9:23, Mark 8:34-35
- **Kingdom priorities**: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 13:44-46
- **Eternal perspective**: Colossians 3:1-2, Philippians 3:20
- **Family of God**: Mark 3:31-35, Ephesians 2:19