

Discipleship series

The cost of discipleship

Elizabeth Elliot on His Sufficient Grace for Discipleship

It's the anticipation of that "glory of victory" that helps us to persevere in the hard times. It's the assurance of that coming crown that helps us bear our cross today.

Just one year after her husband was slain in Ecuador, along with five other Missionaries, Elisabeth Elliot wrote, "We have proved beyond any doubt that He means what He says – His grace is sufficient, nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. We pray that if any, anywhere, are fearing that the cost of discipleship is too great, that they may be given to glimpse that treasure in heaven promised to all who forsake."

(Christianity Today)

Luke 14:25-35

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'

"Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

"Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out.

"Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

1) Relinquishing our rights

- We live in a time when we are taught to fight for our rights, fight for what's ours, fight for what we deserve
- Jesus sets out the conditions of discipleship in terms that go completely contrary to human nature and desire and what the world is currently promoting
 - He calls His disciples, and whoever else would want to be His disciples to carry their crosses and follow Him
- At that time every person who lived under Roman rule understood what it meant to carry your cross
 - Nowadays carrying a cross means wearing a nice piece of well-made polished jewelry in the shape of a cross
 - At the time of Jesus it wasn't something to be cherished at all. It meant death – an excruciatingly painful and humiliating death
 - What Jesus was calling His disciples to was the life that He was already living, and the death He was going to die
- He was calling us to die to everything that we hold dear in life, even our own life itself, to be His disciple
 - What He was calling us to was to relinquish, give up, our rights to follow Him
 - When He says that we should hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life it's in the context what relinquishing our rights to them as our love for Him supersedes our love for all others to the extent that it could be seen as hate.
- Examples of the disciples relinquishing their rights to follow Jesus
 - John and James left their father Zebedee in their fishing business to follow Jesus
 - Peter was married and gave up his family time to follow Jesus
 - Matthew was a tax collector and gave up his job and worldly security to follow Jesus
- Sometimes it could be the giving up the right to financial support when in ministry to work for your income at times, such as the case with Paul
 - 1 Corinthians 9:4-6 Don't we have the right to food and drink? Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living?
- What is the thing in your life that you love most? Are you willing to relinquish it to follow Jesus?

2) Counting the cost

- So many times we are moved by emotion and are full of emotional zeal to commit ourselves to Christ, serve in the church, and change the world, but many fall away when the emotions fade away and not they just don't feel like it anymore.
- I've served in areas where evangelists had had their big evangelism meetings and had apparently led thousands of people to Christ. The problem was that those thousands were never seen again after those meetings and the church hadn't grown
 - Did they respond emotionally to a Gospel appeal without counting the cost?
 - Did they even understand what they were doing when they responded to the appeal?
- A big problem with many modern day evangelists is that they call people to salvation in Jesus, but don't call them to follow him in discipleship
- Jesus calls us to relinquish our rights to follow Him, but He also tells us to count the cost before doing so
 - He first uses the analogy of a man who wants to build a tower and needs to count the cost and estimate how much it costs before he starts
 - He then uses the analogy of a king who is about to go to war with another king with a bigger army than his. He needs to count the cost to whether he'll be able to defeat him or not.
- When John and James asked Jesus if they can sit on His right and left in His kingdom, His response was to ask them whether they can count the cost of getting there
 - Mark 10:38 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"
- Jesus talks about consequences of not counting the cost first
 - If you go back after committing yourself to Him in discipleship you're not fit for the kingdom
 - Luke 9: 62 Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."
 - If you can't keep your commitment you will be humiliated before others
 - Luke 14:29-30 For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'
- Have you counted the cost of discipleship?

3) Tasty or tasteless disciples?

- Jesus uses the analogy of us being salt to reveal His will for us to be disciples that will influence others towards Christ by being the salt of the earth
 - Matthew 5:13 You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.
- Salt gives taste for enjoyment
 - Jesus wants us to be disciples that make others want more of Himself by not only telling them to taste and see that the Lord is good, but to taste it from the way we live sacrificial committed lives to Him as His disciples.
- Salt is also used as a preservative
 - Our lives and testimonies are to act as a preservative of the society around us keeping a check on wickedness and influencing towards godliness
- Half hearted uncommitted Christians are tasteless and not fit for the kingdom
 - Luke 14:34-35 Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out.
- What's your level of saltiness?
- What's your level of fitness and usefulness in the kingdom?