**COUNTING THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP**

By Brent Hunter

In Luke chapter 14 Jesus gave the ground rules for becoming one of His disciples. In vs.25-33, He said that a person who desires to become a follower of His needs to calculate the cost. This means that before making the lifelong commitment of becoming a Christian, one must

evaluate himself and see if he is willing to pay the price and take the commitment seriously. There is no one who cannot afford to pay the price, but there are many who are not willing to pay such a high price.

Jesus gave us His life and He expects our life in return. We are to present ourselves as a "***living sacrifice which is our reasonable service***" (Romans 12:1). The greatest and most important of all the commandments is to "***love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, and mind***" (Matthew 22:36-37). It is important to understand that even good moral people will be lost if they love God second or third or fourth rather than giving him first place. We must love Him so much that we will allow nothing to interfere with our putting Him first. The disciples "***left all***" in order to follow Jesus (Luke 5:11). We may be called upon to do the same someday. Nothing, including our physical possessions, is to become more important to us than God. Indeed, we become simply "***stewards***" of all we possess and we are accountable to God for our use of the blessings He has given us (I Peter 4:10).

There will be much that you will learn and come to understand as you grow and study. However, at the very beginning you need to be willing to surrender your will to His, and be committed to follow and obey truth--whatever it takes and wherever it may lead you. Your love for the Lord will be the driving force that will empower you to "***keep the commandments***" (John 14:15). This is why John could say that, even though following the commandments of God will be challenging, "***they are not grievous***" (I John 5:3).

In Exodus 19:4-8, we have an example of the type of faith you need to have in the Lord at the start, even before you come to know everything that the Lord expects of you. God reminded the children of Israel what he had done for them, how he had redeemed them from Egyptian bondage and saved them by bearing them upon "***eagle's wings***." Then God set before them the wonderful promises He had in store for them, (See vs 5-6, and notice similarity to I Peter 2:5-9), if they would simply obey His voice and keep His covenant. Then, even ***before*** the people knew what the specific laws were, they demonstrated their faith and trust in God by committing to obey God's laws. "***And all the people answered and said, all that Jehovah hath spoken we will do.***" (Exodus 19:8).

Likewise, once we have come to appreciate the Lord Jesus and all He has done for us, and have been convicted of our sins and therefore our need for salvation, and truly desire the wonderful promises of God in our life, then we demonstrate our faith and trust in God by "***confessing Christ as Lord*** " (Romans 10:9-10). Someone has said, "***Unless He is Lord of all, He is not Lord at all***." When one accepts Christ as his Lord he is stating that he is willing to do whatever the Lord asks, even before he has had the opportunity to learn every detail of what a future life of service to God may involve. Jesus made this clear, when He gave the great commission and ordered His disciples to go into all the world and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, "***teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you and lo I will be with you always even unto the end of the age.***" Notice that a lot of teaching must come after one has become a Christian. But the commitment to surrender your will to His and do whatever He asks, as you learn the Lord's will for you life, comes before you make the decision to become a Christian. We cannot make your decisions for you, or do your thinking for you, nor do we wish to. Difficult issues will have to be studied out and wrestled with as you fulfill your lifelong commitment to the Lordship of Jesus.

However, some general principles should be understood in the very beginning. Our commitment to the Lord can be divided up into three general areas: 1) A commitment to a personal relationship with God, 2) A commitment to the family of God, His church, and 3) A commitment to the lost people in the world who do not know Jesus. These basic responsibilities are clear in the scriptures and your willingness to be faithful to these responsibilities is a part of "***Counting the Cost of Discipleship***" that Jesus referred to in Luke 14. With these thoughts in mind, lets look at some scriptures dealing with these three areas of commitment.

**I. TO A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD COMMITMENT**

A. Obviously, you cannot have a relationship with someone you do not communicate with! A Christian needs to schedule regular times for communicating with God.

* + 1. A personal study of God's word is how you can maintain a personal relationship with your Creator.

 a. Let God speak to you regularly through His Word (II Timothy 2:15, Hebrews 4:12).

 b. The Bereans were "***more noble than those at Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so***" (Acts 17:11). This is a wonderful example and one you would do well to emulate.

* + 1. Prayer is the way we express our feelings, thoughts and needs to the Heavenly Father (Luke 5:16, Colossians 4:2, I Thessalonians 5:17). You should set aside a special time for prayer along with your Bible study. It is essential that you talk with God every day once you become one of His children.

B. A daily offering of your life and resources to the cause of Christ is part of your relationship with Him (Romans 12:1). Here are a few examples.

1. Your time. (Ephesians 5:15). 2. Your money. (Matthew 6:19; II Corinthians 8:2-5; 9:6-7) 3. Your thoughts. (Philippians 4:8) 4. Your supreme love. (Matthew 22: 37-38, II Corinthians 5:14-15).

* 1. Dealing with sin in your everyday life is part of the commitment.

3. We are to be dead to sin at the point of baptism (Romans 6:3,6,11).

We are to put to death daily our sinful tendencies (I Corinthians 15:31, Galatians 5:24). This is a part of our growth in Christ and our sanctification before God. This is serious business because Hebrews 12:14 tells us that "***without sanctification no man shall see the Lord***."

4. Galatians 5:17-21, Colossians 3:2-17, Ephesians 4:20-5:14--all list various sins that are not to be a part of the Christian's life.

* + - 1. Those that apply to you now need to be repented of and changed.
			2. You need to learn to "***abhor evil***" (Romans 12:9) and put away "all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness" (James 1:21).

3. Our primary purpose in life is to become like Christ (Luke 6:40; Romans 8:29; I John 2:6). A daily relationship with God is essential in fulfilling this purpose.

**II. COMMITMENT TO THE FAMILY OF GOD, THE CHURCH.**

A. All Christians are equally important, therefore every Christian must be involved and willing to do his part (I Corinthians 12; 12-27).

1. The work isn't to be left up just to the "***leaders***" (Ephesians 4:12,15,16).

* + 1. We need to have deep relationships within the body. Our best friends should be Christians since we are members of one another (Romans 12: 5,10; I Thessalonians 5:11,15).
		2. It is important that you understand your responsibilities to the assemblies of the saints (Hebrews 10:23-25).

4. Since we cannot condone false doctrine, we cannot worship and abide in the "***apostles' doctrine***" (Acts 2:42) by worshipping with just any religious body (II John 9-11). Why? (Mark 7:6-8, Galatians 1:6-10).

5. In practice this means that wherever you go, you must find a faithful congregation to worship and work with. This is important to remember when traveling or if you move to another location.

6. You need to understand clearly what you had been practicing, or not practicing, in the past that was unscriptural and understand that to continue in error once you have "***come to a knowledge of the truth***" is to cut yourself off from God's grace (Hebrews 10:26).

B. Our Relationship with the Elders must be one of submission.

1. Elders are our leaders and we should respect and obey them in matters of judgment (Hebrews 13:17).

2. Do not receive an accusation against an elder unless there are two or three witnesses (I Timothy 5:19).

3. We are not to "***drag our leaders through the mud***". It is a very serious thing to speak evil of an elder, especially if it is done falsely. Consider your words carefully when speaking about others, especially our elders, deacons, evangelists, and Bible class teachers.

4. If you are single, you should only consider marrying a fellow Christian who will help you get to heaven and with whom you will be able to share the things that are most important to you in this life. (Genesis 6:2,5-6; Deut 7: 2-4; I Kings 11:14).

5. This implies you must be extremely careful whom you date and why (I Corinthians 15:33).

All relationships must be kept pure as a Christian.

6. If at present, you have a non-Christian girlfriend or boyfriend, try to get them in contact with other Christians who will help you bring them to Christ.

 7. If you are married and your mate is not a Christian, you should try to "***sanctify the mate***" by leading him or her to Christ (I Corinthians 7:14-16; I Peter 3:1).

**III. COMMITMENT TO THE LOST: THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW JESUS.**

 A. Jesus came to the earth for the purpose of seeking and saving the lost. Therefore, as His disciples, saving the lost should be one of the primary purposes of our Christian life as well.

1. We cannot belong to Christ without also belonging to the cause of Christ.

2. It was Jesus' last command to His apostles (Matthew 28:18-20).

3. Ours is the same mission as the Christians in the first century, the spreading of the gospel throughout the entire world (Mark 16:15)!

4. The proclamation of the gospel is to be a natural outgrowth of your walk with Christ. It is a part of the fruits you are to bear on a daily basis.

5. There is time to study and grow and be trained, but there will come a time when you ought to be a teacher (Hebrews 10:12).

6. In the meantime, take advantage of opportunities to share what Christ has done for you in a positive way, and to do what you can to lead others to someone who can teach them.

7. We have classes to help you overcome fear and to help you learn how to be effective in soul winning. We also have small group Bible studies for evangelism you can become a part of.

B. We are to represent Christ to others (II Corinthians 3:2). We would not want to be a bad reflection on Christ or misrepresent Him in anything we do or say. For example:

 1. We need to dress modestly (I Timothy 2:9).

2. Avoid "***obscenity, and coarse joking, which are out of place***" (Ephesians 4:29, 5:4).

3. Anything that would discredit the Lord or His church should be avoided. (II Corinthians 6:3-4).

**CONCLUSION:**

A. Obeying the gospel will require substantial changes in your life.

1. A believer is to "***repent and be baptized***"(Acts 2:38). One is to "***repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance***" (Acts 26:20).

2. Only you know for sure the changes that you need to make to demonstrate true repentance.

B. Whatever your sins may be, laziness, materialism, carnality, immodest dress, or promiscuity, true repentance demands that a "***turning away***" from these take place. Being completely honest with yourself and making a commitment to turn from these things ***now*** is what it means to "***count the cost***" before you decide to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus.