

"The Cost of Discipleship"

Just because something is free doesn't mean it's cheap. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's Way." Grace is free, but the cost of discipleship is another matter. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way. We're here to search God's word for the Lord's way. And if you wish to know the truth, study the Bible. Find the difference between authentic Christianity and some watered-down forms of Christianity, and to do that, study the Bible. To know what God desires from you, study every day. God's Word provides everything that we need to have eternal life with God. We need God's Word. We're delighted when you spend time, this time with us. So we want to be a part of your life each week.

Many today want a convenient Christianity that asks little of them. They go to church sometimes, read their Bible occasionally, and pray when it's convenient. They give token amounts to the Lord but never really learn to sacrifice. They want God to commit fully to them, but they don't want to make a commitment that costs very much. They want a Christianity that allows them to believe whatever they like and live however they want.

They want a Christianity that never embarrasses them in front of their non-Christian friends. They don't want a strict morality or to talk about sin. They don't want to be taught anything that's different from the popular opinions of the day. Sadly, there are plenty of preachers willing to give them a watered-down faith and a gospel that asks nothing. While salvation is a free gift, being a disciple of Christ requires the denial of self and bearing a cross.

The word disciple describes a student who strives to imitate his teacher. A disciple of Jesus wants to become just like Him in every way. The essence of discipleship isn't a self-help plan for losing weight, or getting rich, or finding happiness. No, discipleship is about putting God's kingdom and His righteousness first in our lives. It's about Christ living in us through humble service and pure lives. It's about commitment to the one true way of salvation.

We're delighted that you are studying with us and if you want to know more about this topic, we offer the information on this program free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org.

It was 37 years ago that Mack Lyon began this program on one station in Ada, Oklahoma. And today we go throughout the United States and in many other countries. Thanks for being loyal viewers of this program as we begin our 38th year.

Well, the Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Luke 14:25 to 30, and then we'll consider the cost of discipleship.

Our scripture reading today comes from the gospel according to Luke chapter 14 verses 25 to 30.

Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, "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 carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

Those are words of Jesus and should be taken seriously. Let's pray together. Father we're grateful that You have loved us and given us Your son Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins. Father help us to take up our own cross and to follow You and to love You more than anything. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

Have you considered how valuable your soul is? Your most valuable possession is your soul. It's the one thing that you will always have. Now when you die, you won't take anything into eternity with you, except your soul. You can't take your possessions, your money, your house, or your car. You can only take your soul. Because of this, we must take, all of us, take time to think about our soul.

Romans 6 and verse 23 says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Now your salvation was a gift from God; it's free. God invites you to take hold of eternal life freely. The Bible says in Revelation 22 verse 17, that "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost." But just because something's free doesn't mean it's cheap.

When Jackie and I married, the preacher Dewayne Thomas asked, "Who gives this woman to this man in marriage?" And her father and mother gave her to me to be my wife. Well she was indeed was a gift of God, and the human I love the most. She's a gift, and I treasure her. But she's not cheap. The Lord gave Jackie and me our four precious daughters. Psalm 127 verse 3 says, "children are a gift of the LORD"; but some say it will cost as much as \$300,000 to raise a child through college. Just because something is free doesn't mean it's cheap.

God had to pay a price for your soul to be saved. He sacrificed His own Son to atone for your sins. 1 John 4 verses 9 and 10 says, "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. (Now) In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Now that big word "propitiation" means that Jesus had to die on a cross as an atoning sacrifice, so that you could be forgiven of your sins and reconciled to God.

I tell you, I can't imagine the anguish the Father felt in sacrificing His Son Jesus to such a horrible death. As a loving parent, I cannot see my children suffer without having anguish in my own heart. I hurt when they hurt. I'm just an imperfect man, but God is perfect in love and holiness. Now if I suffer over my children's pain, think how much more so does our Father in heaven.

The Father sacrificed His Son, and the Son also paid the ultimate price to save your soul and mine. 1 Peter 2 and verse 24 says, that "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, (so) that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed." Jesus bore our sins personally in his body. Now sin against Christ is personal, and His loving sacrifice for you is personal. Sin is not merely breaking a law; it's breaking God's law and breaking God's heart.

Jesus gave His head to a crown of thorns. He gave His back to a horrible, life-threatening scourging. They spit on Him and mocked Him. He gave His hands and His feet to nails, and they suspended His body between heaven and earth. Now in crucifixion, every breath the Lord Jesus took demanded great energy and was excruciatingly painful. He had to pull Himself up by the pierced hands and feet to draw a breath. He hung on the cross for six long hours until at last his heart could take no more. Jesus sacrificed himself for your soul. My friend your soul's salvation is not cheap!

We shouldn't think Jesus merely endured physical pain on the cross. The true punishment of the cross came in His bearing the sins of the whole world. He bore real wounds to heal us. Isaiah 53 reminds us that the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all; He received the stroke that was actually due us. When the Father saw the anguish of the Son's soul, His only Son who was a guilt offering, He

was satisfied and He justified the transgressors, that's you and me. 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 21 says that the Father "made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." For this great gift of salvation and reconciliation, we owe everything to Him.

Peter said in 1 Peter 1:18 to 19 that you were redeemed "not with perishable things (like) silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot." Oh we should never, never take our salvation for granted. We thank God every day for the Lord's sacrifice for our sins. His death not only atoned for our sins, it also gave us eternal life. It opened the door for us to live with God in glory as His children. Now according to Ephesians 1 and verse 3 we have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Oh, God has given us an indescribable gift!

Now just because the gift of eternal life is free, however, doesn't mean it's cheap for us either. God expects us to value this gift more highly than anything else. The Lord said in Matthew 13 verses 44 to 46, that "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and (he) buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and (he) bought it."

The kingdom of heaven is worth sacrificing everything that we are and everything that we own. We should be willing to give up anything and everything so that we might have eternal life and enter the kingdom of heaven. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 14 verse 33, "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions." I tell you if I follow the Lord, I can't consider my possessions as more precious than my Lord.

In fact, if a disciple must choose between loving his own life and loving the Lord, he should choose the Lord. The Lord said in Luke 14 verse 26, that "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." The Lord isn't teaching hate here. He's comparing the love that we must have for God and the love that we must have for our families and ourselves. To be a true disciple, God must come first.

To have eternal life and enter the kingdom of God, we must become disciples of the Lord. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 10 verses 24 to 25, that "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master." A disciple studies his master as well as his master's teaching. His task is to become as much like his master as possible. We should become like Jesus in our thinking, in our practices, in our attitudes, and in our efforts to please and glorify the Father.

Now some aren't content to follow the Lord or do His will. In Luke 9:23 to 24 Jesus said to the multitude, that "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it." Now if you live on your own terms, fulfilling your desires, you'll lose out in the end. If you deny yourself and take up your cross daily, you'll find that God saving your life and your soul forever.

The cross is necessary to be a disciple. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 14:27, that "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot (cannot) be My disciple." Some people want the crown of life but are unwilling to carry the cross and die to themselves. If you won't bear the cross, then you can't wear the crown. Some want God's grace but not His ways. They want redemption but not repentance. You can't hold onto the world and hold onto the Lord at the same time.

Now Jesus encountered three prospective disciples. And two wanted to follow Him, and one He called. And Jesus helped each of them to consider the cost. The first is found in Luke 9:57 to 58: and "As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, 'I will follow You wherever You go.' And Jesus said to him, 'The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.'"

Now Jesus didn't promise this man health and wealth if he came along. The Lord will meet our physical and spiritual needs, oh yes He will, but He's not in the millionaire-making business. We must love God for Himself. We don't follow Him for what we can get out of Him. Oh no. You cannot serve God and money at the same time.

Second, Luke 9:59 to 60 records: "And He said to another, 'Follow Me.' But he said, 'Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.' But He said to him, 'Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God.'" Now Jesus wanted this man to follow Him, but he hesitated. He had a father in a bad health. And he wouldn't commit to serve until after his father died and was buried.

How Jesus responded may seem unfeeling at first. And it probably shocked this man, when He said "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; (then He said) but as for you, (you) go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God." Caring for parents in their final days is important, but answering the Lord's call is even more important!

A third man said in Luke 9 verses 61 to 62, 'I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home.' But Jesus said to him, 'No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.'" Discipleship is for a lifetime. There's no salvation for the one who abandons his faith.

Well why have we talked about all this? Because, while God's grace is a gift, He expects those who receive the gift to place the highest value on it. The Lord Jesus said in John 15 verses 8 to 10, "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. (And) Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." Serving the Lord Jesus causes us to abide in His love and to glorify the Father. The phrase, "abide in My love," to me is intriguing. It suggests that if we fail or cease to keep the Lord's commandments, then we'll fail or cease to abide in His love.

The Father in Heaven and the Lord Jesus could live anywhere on earth they wish to live. They enjoy Heaven and the most beautiful places on earth. But think with me about what the Lord says in John 14:23, He says "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him." God the Father and Jesus the Christ choose to make their home with people who love them enough to keep their commandments. If someone looked at your life, would you prove to be a disciple? Let's pray together. Oh Father we're thankful for the great sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ and how He was willing to shed His blood for our sins. Help us heavenly Father to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses to follow You. And may we love You always and do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

The Holy Spirit said in Romans 12 and verse 2, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." To be disciples of our Lord Jesus we must take the focus of our minds off of the world and put it on the will of God. God's will is good, because God is good. His will teaches us how to live morally, spiritually, and respectfully. God's will is acceptable or pleasing; it

teaches how to please God and how to be acceptable to others. God's will is perfect or complete; it doesn't lack anything that we need to know to have eternal life.

Now you'll never regret choosing to be the Lord's disciple. The Lord has the words of eternal life. And there's no other path. Jesus said in John 14 and verse 6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life;(and) no one comes to the Father but through Me." Now only Jesus has the way to heaven, the spiritual truth that you need, and the life that never ends. Now serving Him is worth every sacrifice and demands our complete attention. We must be good students of His will so we may please Him always.

To become a Christian, that is a disciple, you must listen to and accept the gospel, you must believe in Jesus Christ, repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ, and be baptized in His name. Now baptism into Christ is an immersion in water. And when you're baptized, God washes away your sins according to Acts 22 and verse 16. He also adds you to His church (Acts 2 and verse 47), He unites you with Christ and gives you new life (Romans 6 verses 4 to 5), and He makes you His child (Galatians 3 verses 26 and 27). Oh I hope and pray that you'll become a disciple of Jesus Christ today and that you'll live faithfully to Him for the rest of your life.

Well we hope today's message on discipleship has blessed you. We offer a free printed copy or a CD of this message, and we ask that you mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website and that's: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. And you can now watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." And we also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

So please get involved with a church of Christ. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. As always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.