

Discussion - The Cost of Discipleship

The Spirit of Christ has led me to discuss with you today the topic of the cost of being a disciple of Christ. This is one of the least understood doctrines of the church in this hour. It is not misunderstood because the Scriptures related to it are difficult to comprehend, nor because there are few Scriptures relating to the subject. It is misunderstood because of the great difficulty of conforming oneself to the truth as spoken by Christ and the apostles, and it has therefore been obscured through neglect and distortion.

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Acts 14:22

Strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

This verse expresses the heart of the message God has sent me out to proclaim to a remnant of His people in this hour. The faith of all Christians is about to be severely tried in coming days, and Yahweh would have me to encourage you "to continue in the faith." Many will not. Many will fall away.

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Matthew 24:9-11

“Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many.”

Notice that this passage is speaking of the last hour before the return of Christ. This is the very hour we find ourselves living in. This passage speaks of tribulation and the nations hating true Christians who are walking as disciples of Christ. It says that some will even be killed.

It is in such an hour that many who have professed Christ will fall away. It is at such a time that those who formerly professed Christ will deliver up those who continue to stand faithful, and their will be great hatred. In my testimony which I will be sharing shortly, I will speak to you of experiencing such things.

Before I pass on from this Scripture, I want to mention one more thing. It says that in such an hour “many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many.”

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Revelation 17:16-17

"And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose..."

People of God, it is an extraordinary hour that we find ourselves in. Many things that have been prophesied are about to be fulfilled. The earth is about to experience her birth pangs in order that mature sons of God might come forth.

You may wonder, "Why must Christians experience suffering?" Because of sin and the fall of man, there is no other means by which God might produce mature sons and daughters after the image of Christ. Christ was perfected through suffering. Christ learned obedience by the things He suffered, and this is the only method given by God by which offspring after the image of God might come forth.

Consider the parable of the following Scripture.

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Genesis 3:16

To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth. In pain you shall bring forth children; Yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

Explain parable.

Notice that God said to the woman, "I will *greatly* multiply your pain in childbirth..." The Scriptures also describe the day of the Lord as a day of *Great* Tribulation. In a multitude of Scriptures the last days prior to Christ's return are spoken of as being like a woman in pains to give birth.

The church today has rejected suffering and the disciple's cross, and for this reason we see a lack of mature offspring in this hour. Men have a form of godliness, but there is no power present. Men are lovers of pleasure, lovers of self, rather than lovers of God.

Yahweh is determined to have a remnant body of mature sons and daughters who will attain to the first resurrection and be qualified to rule and reign with Christ for the thousand years of the millennial age.

In this hour all professors of Christ will be faced with a choice. They will either be encouraged and strengthened to continue in the faith, or they will fall away. Most will fall away, but a remnant will persevere and be greatly helped by God. Woe to those who fall away!

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Hebrews 10:36-39

For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. But My righteous one shall live by faith; And if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back *to destruction*, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

Despite what is taught in the majority of the churches today, the cost of being a disciple of Christ has not changed in the last 2,000 years. Christ was very clear in declaring that all who expressed a desire to be one of His disciples should count the cost first.

The more you look into the words of Christ the more you can observe that being a Christian disciple requires the most radical commitment that any man can make. Yahshua always spoke to the people in absolutes. He never made suggestions. He never asked for anything in part. He said that to be a disciple of His a man must leave everything behind.

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Luke 14:25-35

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.' Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions. Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

We are too much influenced by the judgments of a fleshly and wicked church. We are tempted to think that if we get enough people coming to this Bible study group that we will in some measure be successful. But what did Christ do when He saw crowds gathering around Him? Did He try to grow them even larger? Did He say, "I thank You Father, for now I know that My ministry is successful?" No! He started separating out the true disciples from the pretenders and hangers on. He revealed that He cared more for the degree of a single man's devotion than He cared for the number of professed devotees.

In the same way we should never be tempted to think that we are being successful if we attract large numbers to a Bible Study such as this. We are successful only as men enter into a complete surrender to God. This is one reason I have been encouraged with this Bible Study so far. I have observed that there are a number of men wrestling with those things the Spirit has been burdening your hearts with. There are those here who are wrestling with making a radical commitment, a commitment to following Christ no matter what the cost, for He is to be valued above all other things.

When Yahshua observed multitudes gathering around Him who wanted to be His followers. He told them what it meant to truly follow Him. He didn't tell them that they had an option to be on the varsity group which had one set of requirements, or the junior varsity which had a lesser set of demands. He didn't tell them that there was an A group of elite and totally committed saints and a B group of part-time devotees. He said that ALL who would follow Him had to measure up to the same standard. They ALL had to meet the same set of requirements, and Yahshua required that they give ALL FOR HIM.

The church has become as salt that has lost its savor. It is worthless in God's sight today. The church holds no benefit for the world, neither is it pleasing to the Father. Because the church has not surrendered ALL to Christ, it has become as a worthless thing. This is Christ's message in the Scripture above. Yet God is calling forth a remnant to come out of the lukewarm body of Christian religion who will count the cost and follow Him wholly.

The church has been lied to, and is under the influence of much deception that would suggest that the inheritance, reward, and future destiny of all Christians is identical, being based only upon a confession of Christ as their Savior. This error is maintained despite a multitude of Scriptures which are contrary to this notion.

In this hour we will see three divisions of Christians. Some will be deceived by false prophets. Some will fall away from any confession of Christ. Yet there will be a remnant who persevere and are saved.

God has warned the church through the apostles to not be deceived. Yahweh declares that He will not be mocked, and that all men will reap what they sow. If they sow to the flesh they will reap destruction. If they sow to the spirit they will reap life to the ages. The consequences have never been higher. Those who live sold out lives to Christ stand to inherit reward, power, glory and honor such as is beyond our imagination. Yet multitudes of Christians who could receive all these things will suffer loss that will be so staggering that they will respond with weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

The apostle Paul declares that there will be vast differences in the resurrection of the saints.

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I Corinthians 15:39-42

All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish. There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead.

The apostle's meaning is plain. Even as there is an observable difference in the glory of creatures of flesh, there will be distinctions of glory in the resurrection. Do you want to have the glory equivalent to a guppy when you could have the glory of man who was created in the image of God? Even as there are vast differences in the glory of the heavenly bodies so that the stars of the heaven cannot be seen while the Sun is shining in its strength, so too will there be vast differences among those who profess the name of Christ in the time of resurrection.

What will be the basis for this distinction?

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I Peter 4:12-13

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

Revelation 22:12

And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

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I Corinthians 3:12-15

Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Reward will be based upon each man's work. Your condition in the ages to come is not based upon your confession of faith in Christ. God will examine each man's work. He will see if you waged war against the lusts of the flesh, if you stood firm against the temptation and allure of the world, and if you withstood the onslaught of the Devil. Yahweh will not be mocked. He will not grant anyone access to His presence and to His most holy things simply because they said a sinner's prayer while all the time they lived for their own selfish desires rather than for the will of God. Be not deceived. God will not be mocked.

The apostle Paul summed his thoughts up this way:

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II Corinthians 5:10-11

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...

The church has been deceived to believe that God's intent is simply to make a multitude of confessors of Christ who are continuing to live their self-centered lives that are indistinguishable from that of their lost neighbors. The Christians of this hour seek the same temporal pleasures and material possessions as those who are strangers to the life of Christ. Christians are amassing houses and lands and material goods in contradiction to the word of God. Christians are in love with the world despite the warning given in Scripture.

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James 4:4

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Why does Jacob (James) call the church adulterers and adulteresses? It is because they have been espoused to Christ as pure virgins. They are to set all their affection and love upon the One who purchased them with His own blood. They are to be focused solely on the One who paid the penalty of their sin and restored them to fellowship with the Father. They are to be forever thankful that through Christ they have received the very Spirit of God which He sent to indwell the hearts of His disciples. Yet these ones who are to be devoted in purity to Christ are focused on accumulating the possessions of the earth and satisfying themselves with many pleasures. They have become adulterous in their affections.

Christians today have abandoned the standard of the high calling of God for their lives. The will of God is summed up in the words:

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I Peter 1:13-19

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

There is so much in this passage that should lead those with ears to hear to tremble at the seriousness of their calling. God did not redeem us from our vain life focused upon worldly pursuits with that which was of no value. He poured out the blood of His beloved Son with the goal that we might set aside all the vain and empty things of this life and pursue Him alone, living lives that are holy, even as God Himself is holy. This Scripture states that we were redeemed from our aimless conduct. Yet the vast majority of the lives of Christians today is just that, aimless conduct. It is mere activity that fills up our waking hours. We are devoted to one vain pursuit after another, until our days are filled with worthless things.

Is Yahweh not right then, to be exceedingly wrathful at those who have been bought with the blood of His Son, a gift beyond all value to estimate, who then continue to live in vanity? Such Christians, and there are multitudes of them, are treating the blood of Christ which was shed for them as if it were an unholy and common thing.

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Hebrews 10:29-31

Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "Yahweh will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Do you see the import of these words? The church has neglected what is written here. This is not a warning to the lost. It is a WARNING to the church. It says "Yahweh will judge HIS PEOPLE." Who are His people? It is the church. What will He judge them for? It is because they were purchased with such an exceedingly high price, and they were given the incalculable treasure of the indwelling Spirit of Christ, yet they have continued to live vain lives. They are not striving toward holiness. They are casual in their pursuit of God's will. They are divided in their affections. And for this they will be judged.

The Spirit has led me to begin this presentation on a very somber note. I do not believe it is possible for me to exaggerate the seriousness of that which is at stake here. We have ALL been affected by the careless attitude that afflicts Christianity today. We have ALL been too casual in our pursuit of God's will for us. We have ALL fallen short in our zeal to walk perfectly before God, because everything around us in the church today is full of apathy and compromise and half hearted devotion and partial commitment. The church cannot make up her mind whether she wants to serve God, or serve self, and consequently she has become a harlot.

God will judge this harlot, and for this reason He says "Come out of her My people, that you might not participate in her sins and partake of her plagues." If you are still struggling with coming out of a church who seems to make a good confession of Christ, but their hearts are far from God, being divided; If the members of the church are living for the world, for pleasure, and for self; If there is idolatry present that is not being exposed and removed, then come

out of her! This is the command of God. You cannot remain in a lukewarm church and not be affected by the compromising spirit there.

We see then that multitudes will forfeit tremendous reward by failing to walk soberly and with great purpose in this life. We see that many stand to endure the wrath of God for treating the blood of His Son as a common thing, and failing to show reverence for the priceless gift of the Holy Spirit. We see that those who are Christians but who continue to live for vain things and worldly pursuits will find themselves at enmity with God. God will not be mocked. Many who imagine that they will leave a life of ease and pleasure to go and be with God in heaven when they die simply because they have confessed Christ as Savior will find that because they did not treat Him also as Lord of ALL areas of their life that they will instead be cast into the Lake of Fire.

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II Peter 3:10-11

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness...

It is my hope that the weight of all these Scriptures will lead you to fear God and to cry out, "God, I know I have fallen short of Your will for my life. I have treated the blood of Your Son as a common thing. I haven't pursued your will for my life with the focus and determination that You expect. Help me God. Help me to arise out of the lukewarm spirit that has gripped the church and to live a life totally devoted to You. Help me to count the cost of being a disciple of Christ and to follow You wherever You would lead. Help me to live in victory over sin, Satan and the world."

The church has not communicated to you the truth about being a disciple of Christ. Yahshua never compromised. If there were even one thing that a man would not surrender to Him, Christ would not invite that man to follow Him.

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Matthew 8:18-22

Now when Yahshua saw a crowd around Him, He gave orders to depart to the other side of the sea. Then a scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go." Yahshua 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." Another of the disciples said to Him, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." But Yahshua said to him, "Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead."

Are you coming to Christ today saying that you want to be His disciple, but in your heart you are unwilling to give up your home and material possessions? Christ would say to you, "The beasts demand a permanent dwelling on this earth, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head. If you would be His disciple you must be willing to live as He lived. He accepted whatever the Father chose for Him. Sometimes He slept in a bed in the house of friends. Sometimes He slept on a hillside in the wilderness. Sometimes He slept in the stern of a boat. He never demanded that the Father give Him anything in this earth. We all enter the earth naked of all possessions, and we leave the same way. The true attitude of a disciple is expressed in the apostle Paul's words:

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Philippians 4:11-13

For I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

A disciple is content with whatever God chooses for him. A disciple cannot choose those things he must have in this world. Christian discipleship is a complete surrender to the will and pleasure of God.

It is also recorded that one man who would be a disciple came to Him and said, "Lord I will follow You, but first permit me to bury my Father." This man loved his father, and the Scriptures state that it is God's will that we honor our parents. Yet Yahshua saw that there was more in this man's statement and request. This man placed the love of his father above a love of God. He was not willing to offend his father by openly following Christ while his father lived. Christ is very compassionate in nature and is near to those who suffer because of their obedience in following Him. Yet Christ will never give a man permission to avoid the cost of discipleship. All must take up the cross. All must bear the cost. God gave all for us, and we must give all for Him.

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Mark 10:17-25

As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And Yahshua said to him..., "You know the commandments, "DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'" And he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up." Looking at him, Yahshua felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property. And Yahshua, looking around, said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were amazed at His words. But Yahshua answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

We are told here that Yahshua felt love for this young man. This young man was doing many things correctly. He was fulfilling many of the commandments. He yearned to please God and to inherit eternal life. But despite the fact that Yahshua loved this man, He did not shrink back from putting the focus on the one thing that this young man was unwilling to give up in his devotion to God. This young man was wealthy, and Yahshua told him to sell all he had and give it to the poor, and then come and follow Him. Only in this way could this young man truly follow Christ with an undivided heart and a pure devotion. Christ would accept nothing less than absolute commitment and love.

The church today avoids teaching the same radical commitment and the same high cost of discipleship. The church is afraid it will run people off. The church has judged that there are few in this material age of ease and comfort who would be willing to make such a commitment to follow God. And they are right. The church counts there success by nickels and noses, rather than by the purity of a man's devotion to Christ. As long as the church can amass great numbers of followers it will be content with half-hearted devotion. Christ has never made the same judgment, not two thousand years ago, and not today. Although He loves you, He will put His finger on the one thing you fear to give up the most, and He will demand it from you.

If Christ were to enter one of the churches today and hear the masses profess that they wanted to follow Him, He would tell them straightway what following Him would cost them. The majority would go away grieved, not being willing to pay the cost. Only a remnant would remain.

We live in an age where being a Christian in the churches throughout the land carries no real cost. Other than attending services and putting your tithes in the offering plate, the church puts no other burden upon the people. Yet true discipleship has always been the costliest of pursuits. As Christ stated:

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Luke 14:25-27

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."

Yahshua declared who it was who cannot be His disciple. Can you be His disciple? Will you pay the cost? The church somehow believes that we live in a more civilized time when radical obedience is not required as it was in the day Christ spoke these words. They are greatly mistaken, though many will not realize the depths of their error until the hour when mankind stands before the throne of God and He separates the sheep from the goats.

The requirements of discipleship have never changed, because the manner of our purchase has never changed.

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I Corinthians 6:19-20

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price...

If you and I have been bought with a price, then how much of our lives belong to us? The mindset of most Christians is that they are still in ownership of their lives. They are pursuing their own goals and dreams. They are making their own plans, and living the lives they have chosen for themselves. Yet they seek to pay lip service to Christ and to attend the church of their choice. Their lives are their own, and their faith is merely an appendage tacked onto the perimeter of their lives. They are self-directed while manifesting a Christian flavor to their lives.

There is nothing in such a life that can be described as Christian discipleship. Christ defined the cost of discipleship. He said you must hate your own life.

You must give up all your own possessions. You must love God with every last part of your being.

The church of this hour explains away the true meaning of these words. The spirit in the church is “offend no one, and accept everyone.” Yet in seeking to make entrance into the kingdom of God easier on man, the church has offended God. If there are any of you here who have not actually taken the time to count the cost of discipleship, then I would encourage you to do so now.

If you love any person in this world more than Christ, then you cannot be His disciple. Meditate upon this for a minute.

Back in 1999 God’s Spirit led me to count the cost of following Him and to make a radical commitment to follow Him wherever He would lead me. Since that time my mother and father have rejected me, counting me as a fool. My brother and sisters have condemned me. My fellow ministers have separated themselves from me. Even my wife and son have separated themselves from me. I have given up house and land and material possessions.

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Matthew 19:27-30

Then Peter said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?" And Yahshua said to them..., “Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.”

The cost of true discipleship has never changed. The cost is not one thing for one man, and another thing for others. All are called to count the cost and to surrender ALL to Christ.

Because I have counted the cost and have given all things to Christ, being proven in this devotion through many losses of relationships and worldly possessions. I have no place in the church of this hour for as Paul testified.

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II Timothy 4:3-4

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

The preaching of the disciple's cross is sound doctrine. Yet the church will not receive it today. My message and my preaching are considered too radical. Yet, God has sent me to those outside the camp of mainstream Christianity to proclaim sound doctrine. The Spirit has determined that you should receive this message today.

What I want you to see is that nothing less than absolute and total commitment and devotion to Christ is acceptable unto God. If you offer Him anything less, He will despise your offering. He poured out the blood of His beloved Son, the most precious thing to Him, in order to purchase men for Himself. He will accept nothing less than the same unreserved love in return.

Do you fear that if you give all to God that you might somehow come out the loser in the deal? This is nothing less than the work of the enemy. He would use fear to turn men back from a wholehearted devotion to God. The apostle Paul said:

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II Timothy 1:12

For I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

God asked of Abraham a terrible sacrifice, even to give up his beloved son whom he loved. Yet this was nothing more than what God was willing to do Himself. Abraham was convinced that God was able to raise his son back up from the dead, and the apostles were told by Yahshua that all who gave up “houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life.”

I want to share with you my own testimony for in it you can see that the cost of discipleship has not changed since the day that Christ spoke His words to the multitudes gathering around Him.

I was raised in church. Baptized at the age of ten.

From my youth I was zealous for God and devoted to understanding the word of God. Yet into my adult years I was marked with the same compromising spirit that was present in the church in which I was a part. I loved God, but I also spent much of my life pursuing things I wanted.

There were areas of my life I had not surrendered to God. I was a covetous person, and got into debt in order to gain those things I desired, rather than submitting those desires to God and waiting on His provision, or the lack thereof.

God brought discipline to me over this area of my life that was not submitted to Him. Share story.

At the same time God had been teaching me to walk by faith. A life of faith is the heart of a disciple's life, for faith consists of hearing God speak to us concerning His will, and our response of trusting obedience. We cannot be a disciple without entering into a walk of faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God.

Share progression of faith.

Speak about opposition of faith and fear.

Share Prophetic word that Tina Ryals gave in 1998-1999 - God is about to take some of you through some very difficult experiences. They will be necessary in order to prepare you for even more difficult days ahead.

Share about two 40 day camping experiences and how they relate to the hour we now live in.

Share testimony of walk which began in 1999.

Emphasize the events and how a much larger remnant must now experience the same.

All will be called to count the cost.

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Luke 14:25-27

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."

Share about watching movie The Bible at Randy Barnes' house. Share how I was appalled at the cost of being God's friend.

Share the testimony of Nathan Leal and Benjamin Baruch and others that people's children will be taken away in coming days.



On July 15, 2004 my wife Tony chose to leave me. We had been living at the house of her aunt who had asked us to come live with her. Tony had been struggling for many months with issues of faith, and a spirit of fear that had been present in her family for generations. The Lord allowed me to see what was coming ahead of time, and I experienced many months of sorrow and difficulty as my wife's heart became more set upon turning back from a whole hearted devotion to Christ, to return to the ease of the lukewarm affection of the church.

We had just returned from Atlanta where we had put our daughter Kristin on a plane for the state of Maine to stay with a friend who was having a baby. My daughter is the joy and delight of my heart, and she is a child full of faith. She relentlessly encouraged her mother to walk in faith and to not turn back. When we returned from the airport, my wife, my son and my wife's aunt got in a car with a wealthy Christian woman who had been encouraging my wife to leave me, and they drove off. They told me they expected me to be packed up and gone when they got back.

I loaded the few possessions I had in my Ford Tempo, along with our two dogs which I was instructed to take with me. It was about 8:00 in the evening and I only had \$5.00 in my pocket. I drove to the Wal-Mart in Perry, Georgia and parked there.

You might expect that I would have been very troubled at my circumstances, and not knowing what lay ahead. In truth, I experienced a great peace settle upon me as I drove away from my wife's aunt's house. There had been such a spirit of fear manifested there that I felt almost suffocated by it at times. Fear is the antagonist of faith, and it ever seeks to drive us away from a life of trusting God. As I left the house I left behind the pervasive spirit of fear that was being manifested through my wife and her aunt.

As I sat in my car at Wal-Mart I sensed the presence of the Spirit of Christ along with me. The apostle Paul wrote:

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Philippians 3:8-10

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ..., that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings..

When we enter into suffering due to our obedience in Christ, there is a fellowship to be shared with Christ that is deeper than any other fellowship I know of. When we go through the fire, Yahshua is there walking in the midst of the fiery furnace with us. At the time the Lord had led me to read out of a devotional book every day called "Streams in the Desert." As I sat in the car I pulled out this book and read the day's entry.

"This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4)

Trusting even when it appears you have been forsaken; praying when it seems your words are simply entering a vast expanse where no one hears and no voice answers; believing that God's love is complete and that He is aware of your circumstances... desiring only what God's hands have planned for you; waiting patiently while seemingly starving to death, with your only fear being that your faith might fail - "this is the victory that has overcome the world"; this is genuine faith indeed. George McDonald

As I meditated on these words I was struck by the words about our only fear being that our faith might fail. This was truly my greatest fear at the time, and would be in coming days. That night, however, I experienced a great peace. God sent a cool breeze to blow in the evening and through the night, which was a blessing in the month of July in Georgia. I slept in the car that night and was comfortable.

The next morning I awoke and experienced the first real pangs of fear. I did not know what the future held for me. The only thing I had of value was the computer that I had used to carry out the Internet ministry of writing that the Father had directed me to in the previous years. I had concluded that I was to sell the computer to get some money to take care of my immediate needs. Yet as I thought of it that morning I had many doubts assail me. I worried that I might not find a buyer. I worried that I would be without direction in knowing what to do next.

I got out of the car and walked across the parking lot to the Wal-Mart store to use the bathroom facilities. I was praying for the Lord to give me some direction and encouragement of His presence with me. As I entered the bathroom stall and shut the door I noticed a sticker that someone had affixed to the back of the door. It was a small square sticker that had two words in large type printed on it. The words were "Fear Not!" followed by the Scripture

reference Isaiah 41:10.

I peeled the sticker off the door and took it with me back to my car. I then got out my Bible and looked up the Scripture verse. It read:

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Isaiah 41:10

Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

I knew the Lord had led me to the sticker, that He had ordered my steps and set this message before me. I was greatly encouraged and began thanking God for His presence with me. The Lord was walking me through one of the darkest periods of my life. My wife and son were separated from me. I was all alone with no money, and my pathway was uncertain. The only leading I had was to sell the computer in my possession, and this too was a momentous thing, for in doing so I was surrendering the ministry that I had labored in for the previous six years.

Once more I opened my devotional book, this time to the entry for July 16. The words were pregnant with meaning and application to my circumstances.

Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will... make your descendants as numerous as the stars of the sky... because you have obeyed Me. (Genesis 22:16-18)

From the time of Abraham, people have been learning that when they obey God's voice and surrender to Him whatever they hold most precious, He multiplies it thousands of times. Abraham gave up his one and only son at the Lord's command, and in doing so all his desires and dream's for Isaac's life as well as his own hope for a notable heritage, disappeared. Yet God restored Isaac to his father...

This is exactly how God deals with every child of His when we truly sacrifice. We surrender everything we own and accept poverty - He then sends wealth. We leave a growing area of ministry at His command - then He provides one better than we had ever dreamed. We surrender all our cherished hopes and die to self - then He sends overflowing joy and His "life.. That we might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10)...

Dear Soul, do you believe that Abraham's experience was unique and

isolated? It is only an example and a pattern of how God deals with those who are prepared to obey Him whatever the cost. "After waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised" (Hebrews 6:15), and so will you. The moment of your greatest sacrifice will also be the precise moment of your greatest and most miraculous blessing...

The entire devotion for that day spoke to my circumstances. I was giving up my son, my wife, and a growing ministry in obedience to God.



Share about time some months earlier in Montezuma where I was facing eviction and wrestled with the thought of having my children taken from me. Share about Josiah's prayer at that time.

Yahweh's promise was that He would give back to me multiplied times more than I had surrendered to Him. The voice of the Spirit rang out clearly through the words of this devotional book, and I understand now that this is part of the grace that God gives to all who freely surrender all to God that He might begin to work on them to conform them to the image of Christ. When we present ourselves as a freewill offering unto God, it is pleasing to Him and He provides extraordinary grace to help us through our trial. The cool breeze, the sense of His presence, the peace that had surrounded me as I left my wife's aunt's

house, the sticker on the bathroom stall, all were manifestations of God's grace.

God must deal with all those whom He has called to be sons. He must lead us through a death of all that is of the flesh. He must try our hearts and test our affections to see if there is anything we love more than Him. He will prove our faith which is more precious to Him than gold that is tried in the fire. Our way may be filled with sorrows, but we will also have the fellowship of "the God of all comfort."

Those who resist this perfecting work of the Father will not escape the purification process. They will be cast into the Lake of Fire and, because this is a mandatory offering, God does not find pleasure in it. The same grace is not afforded those who are purged in this way, neither is there any reward.

After I was made homeless, I spent five months living out of my car, and in a tent that a friend had given to me.

Share experience of going to Wyoming. The significance of the book "Hinds Feet on High Places." The point of having to surrender my daughter.

Share about having to give up my daughter.



One of the great difficulties of walking in faith, and bearing the cost of

obedience in this hour, is that we see nearly all other Christians avoiding suffering. When our obedience also causes those around us to suffer, even our loved ones, we experience anguish and are tempted to question whether it is a good thing to bring such suffering to those we love. The only thing that will keep you to the course is by taking a longer view of things.

We must understand that these are all momentary, light afflictions not worthy to be compared to the glory to be revealed in us. We must see that if we avoid suffering now, that we will forfeit reward and the pleasure of God, and that the purification will then come by a much more difficult process as we and our loved ones are cast into the Lake of Fire where there is limited grace and no reward.

Kristin today



Play song - I Want Your Life

Share about Kristin's struggles with Mary Beth. Speak of how it is a type of things to come as Christians will find their children taken from them and pressured to denounce the faith they were taught by their parents. Will your children have the strength to stand?

Share about living in a tent in the Oconee Forest.

Share about coming to the Macon Rescue Mission and the lessons learned there.

Share about being served with divorce papers on Good Friday, and going to court. Share about settlement.

Conclude that God gave me back my daughter, and He has promised to restore my wife. Share about Kristin's own struggles while walking in obedience to God.

I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am in. Peace comes from knowing that we are in the midst of God's will. If we are walking with God then we can have peace even if we are living in a tent in the woods with no food to eat. We can know that when God is ready, He will deliver us from our circumstances and He will make His provision known.

The Lord was led to the wilderness and knew hunger. Elijah was led to the wilderness where the ravens brought him his food while the brook dried up. God tested an entire nation during forty years in the wilderness, often testing them with hunger and thirst. His methods for perfecting men have not changed.

Do not receive the lie that we are too civilized today to live radically for Christ. Do not be deceived into thinking the cost of discipleship has somehow been lessened during the last 2,000 years. Christ still requires everything. Today He is asking you whether you will follow Him with a whole heart. Will you give up all you possess? Will you count the cost of even losing son and daughter and wife and mother and father and brothers and sisters and friends? Do you require a house like the birds and the foxes, and will this requirement keep you from living as Yahshua lived? I urge you to count the cost.

End with Encouragement.

God has chosen a very weak and timid man and He has encouraged me and enabled me to stand.

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I Corinthians 1:26-29

For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God.