

OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

DUE DILIGENCE

THE COST

NOVEMBER 8-14, 2015



MAIN POINT

Following Jesus involves continually evaluating our lives and considering the cost of being His disciple. Christ never promised that walking as His disciple would be easy, but we do not journey on our own.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. At the close of his sermon, Michael challenged us to spend time evaluating our relationship with Christ. What was that time like for you? Share what you determined were the costs of following Jesus.
2. In the last year, share something God has asked you to change. What has that process looked like for you?

Leader: German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate." Today, many have entered the church through "cheap grace" without ever really counting the costs of following Jesus. But true Christianity is costly because it always involves a cross (Luke 9:23). Jesus will not allow His disciples to remain as they are, rather His love for us causes us to renounce ourselves and our sins in order to serve Him alone.

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ COLOSSIANS 3:1-4.

3. In Colossians 3, Paul used language like "raised" and "died" to talk about what happens when a person follows Christ (vv. 1,3). What does God replace in us? What does He offer us in return?

Leader: When we enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ, we are raised with Christ and we die to sin. Jesus replaces our sin, our selfishness, and our misplaced priorities with His love, grace, compassion for others, and so on. With this change we become new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17) with new hearts and new desires. The love of Christ compels us to behave differently. Even though we have experienced new life, we continue to live in a sinful world, where we must daily choose to follow Christ and honor Him with our lives. Christ never promised that walking as His disciple would be easy, but we do not journey on our own.

4. Read Colossians 3:4 and Galatians 2:20. How does Paul describe the way we have entered into a relationship with Christ in this verse? What does this analogy teach us about both the cost and reward of following Jesus?

Leader: In both Colossians 3:4 and Galatians 2:20, Paul helps us understand that even though following Jesus is costly and demands much of us, we are able to follow Jesus because doing so flows out of joyful relationship with Him, not rules and regulations. When Paul makes the statement, "Christ who is your life" (v. 4), he means that Jesus permeates everything in our lives. Loving and serving Him becomes our focus because we are dearly loved by Him.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ COLOSSIANS 3:5-11.

5. In this section Paul listed several different kinds of sins many of us struggle with (vv. 5,8). What is the root of all these sins?

6. Pick one or two of the sins mentioned in verses 5-8 and discuss the impact that following Jesus should have on that specific sin. How does God's grace affect that part of human nature?

Leader: While the list of sins in these verses is not exhaustive, it does cover a wide range of sins that all share a common root: selfishness. Paul tells us that if we are going to follow Christ, then we must put to death everything associated with our worldly nature, from our passions like we talked about last week to our anger and our gossip.

7. In verses 9-10, Paul describes following Jesus like taking off an old shirt and putting on a new one. What does it look like to "put on the new self" every day?

8. While following Christ certainly means there are things we should no longer do, the Christian life is much more than a checklist of behaviors to continue or avoid. What is missing from our picture of the Christian life if we only see it as a checklist? What do we get in return?

Leader: Following Christ involves real sacrifice, and putting to death what is earthly in ourselves (v. 5) is not easy, because these former ways used to be a significant part of where we found our identity. But as we forgo what is worldly in us we take hold of Christ and the person He has empowered us to become. There is no such thing as discipleship without sacrifice. The call to follow Christ is also a call to "rid yourselves" of behaviors that do not honor Christ (v. 8). But as we take off the old self, we put on Christ, who is worth so much more than anything we have lost.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ COLOSSIANS 3:12-17.

9. While the previous verses highlighted what we are to give up in order to follow Jesus, verses 12-17 draw attention to what we gain. What does our new identity in Christ look like, and what is our motivation for living this way (v. 12)?

10. When you become a disciple of Jesus, you gain much more than you give up. How does what we gain aid us in leaving the old ways behind?

Leader: Paul described followers of Jesus as those who are “dearly loved” (v. 12). When we realize how much God loves us and the great lengths He has gone to in order to cover us in His grace, then we are motivated to make the sacrifices necessary to follow Jesus’ demands of discipleship. Our relationship with Christ is costly, but it also gives us much more than we could ever imagine. Realizing this should lead us to give thanks to God and encourage us to live every day for Him.

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

11. We began our time together sharing about weighing the cost of following Jesus. Share ideas about how to build this time and activity into your life on a regular basis.

12. As you have counted the cost of following Jesus this week, what is one barrier you have faced? What is the next step you need to take toward removing that barrier to discipleship, and how can we encourage and support you as you do?

PRAYER

Praise God for raising you with Christ. Ask for the strength to continuously count the cost of following Christ and for a willing heart to put on the new self. Pray that God would give you the wisdom to discern what you need to give up to follow Him, as well as the hope that comes with knowing Christ.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - **Consider several ways that discipleship is costly and several ways following Christ is worth the costs.**
 - **How can you cultivate a thankful heart toward God for all that Christ has done for you—His presence with you and the permeating love He shows you?**
- A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.
- The challenge to memorize Colossians 3:1.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

COLOSSIANS 3:1-17.

3:1-2. The phrase “if you have been raised” connects what follows with “if you died with the Messiah” in Colossians 2:20. The word if has the force of “because.” Believers had died to sin’s rule and had been raised with Christ to new life. Thus they were to seek (go on striving for) what is above—the lofty qualities of character that Christ revealed. He is seated at God’s right hand, the position of honor, majesty, and power. Believers consistently were to make the victorious, reigning Christ their priority—to center their lives in Him. Believers were to set their minds on what is above. The Greek word translated set your minds on has the idea of continually focusing total attention on something. Such focus involves affections, will, and intellect. The phrase “what is above” essentially refers to Christ’s character traits. The words what is on the earth refer to worldly goals and values.

3:3. Believers had died spiritually to their old, sinful way of life. Because of that complete break, their lives were hidden with Christ in God. Three interpretations of Paul’s statement are possible. (1) He may have had in mind their spiritual safety and security. (2) The words could have pointed to Christ as the Source (whom the world could not see) of believers’ new quality of life. (3) Paul may have meant that in the present they could not grasp the fullness of their life in Christ. In light of verse 4, a combination of (2) and (3) seems likely.

3:4. Believers’ lives were to demonstrate love for and faithfulness to Christ. His being revealed referred to His return, when all people will acknowledge His lordship (see Phil. 2:9-11). Also, Christians will realize the fullness of their new life in Christ. The phrase “in” glory refers to more than Christ’s (and believers’) radiant splendor. The term glory indicates God’s character revealed as redemptive. All people will see Christ for who He is and will recognize believers as reflecting His character. We live in accordance with new life in Christ when we consider Him and base our actions on what He has done and will do for us. For us, “living is Christ” (Phil. 1:21).

3:5. Because believers’ lives centered on Christ, they were to put to death (completely break with) worldly elements in their lives. They had to remove every facet—every expression—of the old, sin-dominated life. Worldly values, goals, attitudes, and actions were incompatible with their new life in Christ. Paul addressed sexual immorality and listed five vices believers were to eliminate from their lives. In his day, sexual promiscuity among pagans was rampant. Believers were to make a complete break with an immoral lifestyle. The Greek word translated sexual immorality was an umbrella term for all sinful sexual activity, whether by married or unmarried people. The word impurity expanded the range to include unclean thoughts and words as well as actions. Here, the term rendered lust has the sense of uncontrolled sexual urges. The phrase evil desire includes sinful sexual desire and broadens the scope to all evil passions. The word translated “greed” has the idea of a feverish desire for something someone else has or for something not yet obtained. Here, the term probably refers to unrestrained pursuit of sexual pleasure. Such greed is idolatry. Self becomes the center of life, and life’s energies are focused on self-gratification.

3:6-7. The vices listed bring God’s wrath on people who habitually practice them. God’s wrath is His settled opposition to sin, not the emotion of anger. If people choose to disobey God and insist on their sinful course, He will give them over to their choice. Evil, however, has within it the seeds of its own destruction and will work its way out to its inevitable result: death. Disobedient people make themselves God’s enemies. Before the Colossian believers became Christians, they practiced the vices Paul listed. The word “walked” means “lived.” The five sins were characteristic of believers’ former lifestyles. The phrase “when you were living in them” may refer to the inner principle of evil that generated their sinful practices.

3:8. The words but now contrasted believers’ old lifestyles to their new life in Christ. Paul listed five elements believers were to put away (lay aside, as soiled clothing). Three sins pertain to attitudes and two concern speech. Thus Paul emphasized that sinful attitudes and words are as serious as sinful acts. The Greek term translated “anger” is the same word Paul used in 3:6 for God’s wrath. When it refers to a human attitude, it has the sense of a continuing, seething resentment toward others. The word rendered “here” as wrath also can be understood as “rage”—a sudden, heated outburst of temper that dies down quickly. The term rendered malice conveys the idea of ill will that awaits an opportunity to inflict intentional harm. These attitudes have no place in believers’ lives. Paul urged believers to get rid of two kinds of speech. The Greek term translated

“slander” means “speaking critically of another person with the intent to hurt.” The Greek term rendered “filthy language” has the sense of obscene and abusive speech.

3:9-10. Paul stressed that truthfulness was to be a mark of believers’ lifestyle. The phrase “do not lie” can have the force of “stop lying.” The Colossian believers’ relationships with one another and their witness to unbelievers required truth and honesty. Lying, dishonesty, and deceit had characterized their pagan lifestyles; but because they had put off the old self (nature), they were to shed these practices (habitual actions) as they would discard old, ragged, filthy clothing. At conversion, believers had put on (as new, clean clothing) the new self (nature). In Greek, the tense of the verbs translated “put off” (3:9) and “put on” (3:10) convey once-for-all action. When believers placed their faith in Christ, He gave them a new nature governed by His grace. The new self is (continually) being renewed (transformed in quality) in knowledge. Christ works in believers to facilitate a process of renewal—of their continuing to gain new insights into and understanding of God’s will. False teachers in Colossae offered secret knowledge they claimed was necessary for people to be fully Christian. Paul countered that Christ in believers was progressively supplying them with the knowledge they needed. He was nurturing them in the process of spiritual growth.

3:11-12. The phrase “in Christ” refers to God’s new people. The phrase “there is not” has the force of “there cannot be.” It expresses the impossibility of humanly devised barriers among God’s new people. Christ is all and in all. He is the sphere in which all believers live, and He is all that ultimately matters. Also, He lives in each Christian, who represents Him to all other believers. Thus faith and love remove earthly categories in God’s new people. The result is His people’s oneness. New people in Christ were to put on certain virtues as they would don new clothes. Paul addressed them with three descriptive terms. They were God’s chosen ones. Through faith in Christ, they had taken their place among God’s people. Believers were holy—set aside for God’s service and for moral purity. They also were loved; they lived in God’s love. Paul listed five attributes of believers as new people in Christ. The phrase “heartfelt compassion” conveys the idea of feeling so deeply with others who are hurting that a person shares their pain. The Greek word translated “kindness” has the idea of goodness, of considering others’ good to be as important as a person’s own. Humility is a healthy view of oneself in which a person thinks neither too highly nor too negatively of self. It also involves willingness to forgo rights and privileges to help others. Gentleness has the sense of strength that is controlled and channeled constructively. Patience literally is “longsuffering.”

3:13-15. Paul added two character qualities to his list. The Greek term rendered “accepting” means “putting up with.” Believers were to endure offenses patiently. Forgiving has the sense of pardoning others as a gift of grace. If a believer had a complaint (grievance) against another Christian, the offended person was to take the initiative to forgive the offender as (in the same manner) the Lord graciously had forgiven the one offended. Christians were to take the initiative to forgive others because of their personal experience of Christ’s forgiveness. Above all literally is “over all.” As an outer garment covering the items Paul had listed, believers were to put on love—agape, determined good will that seeks others’ best interests. Such persistent good will is the perfect bond of unity. Christ had called believers to His peace—spiritual wholeness under His lordship. The phrase in one body implies believers’ oneness under Christ’s rule as the Head of His body, the church. They were to allow Christ’s gift of spiritual health to exercise control (literally, “act as an umpire”) at the center of their lives (in their hearts). Gratitude was to be a continuing characteristic of their life together. The exhortation to be thankful applied especially to corporate worship.

3:16. Christ’s word—the genuine message as opposed to the false teachers’ empty substitute—was to continue to have priority in the church. The word “richly” has the idea of flourishing or being abundant. Paul pointed to three ongoing activities that should issue from Christ’s indwelling word or message. Teaching referred to instruction in Christian living. Admonishing involved warning against false teachings and encouraging one another. Mutual instruction and encouragement were to be offered in all wisdom—carefully, tactfully, and with the right motive. Singing joyfully expresses worship and praise. Psalms were Old Testament songs of faith that originally were sung to musical accompaniment. Hymns were songs of praise and probably were Christian compositions. Spiritual songs may have been spontaneous melodies or compositions similar to today’s gospel songs. Believers’ joyful singing was to express to God the constant gratitude that flowed from their hearts.

3:17. Paul urged believers to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. “Name” is a synonym for person. Thus the phrase is the same as “in Christ”—in close relationship with Him. The words “in the name” of can mean “in the authority or power of.” Jesus supplies power for Christian living. The title “the Lord Jesus” stressed

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

that they were to represent their Savior and Master well in their daily lives. Paul again emphasized believers' expressing gratitude to God the Father. God was believers' Father in the sense that they were members of His family through faith in Christ. Their joyful gratitude was channeled through Christ, who made possible their relationship with the Father. We live in accordance with new life in Christ when our behavior reflects our relationship with God. He provides us with daily power to live for Him.