

Counting the Cost

How many times in your life have you signed up for something only to find that it's a little more than you bargained for? Maybe a gym membership, or monthly subscription? There are sometimes hidden costs or fees. It might be in the small print that you didn't bother to read.

If you are easily guilted into things or swayed by emotion, you often don't really even consider the cost. You sign up and then later regret it and spend days and nights trying to figure out a way to get out of it.

If you are like me, I want to know the cost, the WHOLE COST....even little things that most people assume are included. If we need to pick stuff up from the store, I figure up the cost in town (assuming you can get it here) vs the price in Effingham PLUS fuel. It costs money to drive there and back. If I save \$5 but I spend \$6 in fuel plus an additional 45+ minutes of my time, that's not worth it to me.

When I get quotes to order something, I want to know tax, shipping, setup fees, etc. I want to know the WHOLE COST.

Imagine seeing a baby. It is this little, beautiful, and sweet bundle of joy. This baby rarely cries, it just looks so cute! If you decide you would like your own baby based on only that.....good luck! You have to consider the times of endless crying, waking up in the night, changing diapers. They don't play according to your schedule, babies interrupt your life all the time.

BUT if you have considered the WHOLE COST and you want to proceed, great! Babies are wonderful blessings from God! But you would be foolish to make such an important decision without carefully considering the cost. Right?

PRAY

Mark 10:17-22 (NKJV)

17 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

18 So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. 19 You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'"

20 And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth."

21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

22 But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

We see this account in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It's a story of a man who hears about something that interests him, and he wants to know the cost.

Matthew tells us this man was young, Luke tells us he was a ruler or leader probably in the synagogue.

So he was rich, he was young, and he was a leader. He also was religious. What more could he possibly want. Most people want nothing more than to be young, rich and in charge, and if you can be religious on top of all of that, you are pretty well set....right???

But this young rich ruler was in search of something more....aren't we all? How many times have you gotten to the top of the mountain, reaching a set goal only to find discontent. Money, success, recognition, title....none of those things can completely satisfy you.

I suspect that this young man realizes that, sees Jesus and wonders, how can I have what He is offering!

Mark 10:17 (NKJV)

17 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

What a great question! Consider the humility of this young man, we all could probably learn a couple things from him. This guy is religious, but he knows that head knowledge and rituals and tradition alone do not lead to eternal life.

You can see that his question is sincere. "I don't know the cost. What do I have to do?"

But you can also see that he is steeped in legalism. He is looking for some religious deed that will grant him eternal life. "What can I do?"

How many times have you looked at your eternal security and thought "What can I do?" There are people right now in this very room who think they are in good shape because of what they do.

Listen, I'm all for church attendance, I believe it is important, very, very important. But you can be here everytime the doors are open and it does not grant you eternal life. You can take communion, you can tithe and give in offerings. You can serve the church. These are all great things, (even necessary I believe) but none of them can save your soul.

The young man says "Good teacher, what can I do" and Jesus responds.

Mark 10:18-19 (NKJV)

18 So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. 19 You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'"

I love the way Jesus was with His words. He's so smooth. He says to the young man "Why do you call Me good, no one is good but God", Why does Jesus say this? He is testing the young man.

This young man wants to know how he can earn eternal life and Jesus just gave him an opportunity to get it!

No one is good except God. That was true then and it's still true today. So if Jesus was only a teacher, He did not deserve to be called good. But if He is actually good, then He is God. Jesus was giving this man the opportunity to see who Jesus truly is....He is God!

Jesus says - you know the commandments. You have the knowledge of the scriptures. You know the deeds that you should do. You go to church, pay your tithes, but do you know who I am? Are you prepared to acknowledge me as Lord?

Mark 10:20 (NKJV)

20 And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth."

This man was religious, he knew the law. He says "yeah, I've obeyed the law, I know the ten commandments, I've obeyed them since I was a little kid" "So what else do I need to do"

How often are we blinded by our own flaws, how often do we deceive ourselves? I think this man really thought he was in good shape because he had obeyed the law. He didn't see the flaw in his plan. He was relying on his own righteousness.....even when he had the Savior standing right in front of him!

Mark 10:21 (NKJV)

21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

Ouch! That seems pretty harsh right? To have eternal life he has to sell all of his stuff and give the money away? Is that the cost? That seems a little steep.....

This verse is sometimes used to say that Christians should be poor and not have anything "too nice", but that is not at all what Jesus is saying.

After all he desires to bless us....

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Malachi 3:10 (NIV)

10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

So Jesus is not saying you can't have anything and that you must be poor and lacking and in need of daily provision.

Mark 10:21 said "Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him". This young man is blind to his present condition. He's dead in his religion. And the response of Jesus is that He looked at him, and loved him.

Jesus brings forth the straight, honest truth. He is getting ready to point out the flaw in this man's thinking. Jesus is going to show the man his true heart, not what the man perceives his heart to be.

You know every single time that you are in prayer, you read the Word, you have a dream or vision from the Lord, EVERY TIME that it involves correction or conviction, it's out of love.

Jesus loved this man, and loves you so much that He just wants you to know truth even if it hurts, even if it stings a little. How good is our God? One of the greatest displays of love is correction.

Proverbs 3:12 (NKJV)

12 For whom the Lord loves He corrects,
Just as a father the son in whom he delights.

I correct my children because I love them, because I want them to grow, I want them to succeed.

Letting someone continue in error is not love, it's selfishness. **Really!** When we think "I don't want to be rejected, I don't want to be the one to tell him, I don't want to be laughed at".....it's selfishness

Jesus loves this man, the same man who just said that he has followed the commandments since his childhood.....Jesus out of love, tells him what he lacks.

There is one thing that the man fails in.....and Jesus calls him out on it. Not to embarrass him or prove him wrong, but to open his eyes.

"Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven"

What this man lacked was a whole hearted allegiance to God. So Jesus **tests** him "sell all your stuff and give to the poor".

Do you know that when there is a test, it's for a reason. A test proves something. That is why teachers give tests. It's not because they are mean, they want proof that you have studied and learned the material.

This test to sell everything is not a poverty gospel test. It's a test of the heart. It proves to the man that he has in fact violated part of the law.

Exodus 20:3 (NKJV)

3 "You shall have no other gods before Me.

This man's riches are an idol. His riches have his heart! It's a test to prove that he is not willing to pay the price of having a heart for God. The very thought of giving everything up probably made this guy sick to his stomach.....

Jesus knew the man's dilemma right from the beginning. He never condemned him but instead He loved him. He gave the man the opportunity to respond. The man made a choice and by that choice he condemned himself.

Jesus wants to know if you will submit to His lordship no matter what He asks of you.

Mark 10:22 (NKJV)

22 But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

He went away sad. He wasn't prepared to let go because he had another god. There was something else that had his heart.....

He loved his riches more than he loved the Redeemer so he failed to experience true riches in Christ and receive the very eternal life that he came asking about.

Although the young man knew there was more, he couldn't part with the present to gain the future.

Who/what is your first love?

There is a story of a south American Indian who was being shown around New York by a friend: There is a rush of commuters, the taxi and car engines screeching and blowing horns, street vendors shouting out their merchandise, the noise of all the people.

People on a mission, in the midst of busyness and noise, they are all zoned in on getting somewhere fast, often lacking awareness of their surroundings. Kind of like school between bells....get to the locker, put away books, grab books, get to the next class....

But this Indian in NYC surrounded by busyness and noise, in the midst of it all the Indian stopped. And said, "so do you hear that?"

"What?" says the friend

"The singing of bird in the tree. "

His friend said, "how can you hear anything in all this noise?"

The Indian said, "it's a question of where your heart is! Watch this....."

He threw a quarter onto the sidewalk, half a dozen people turned around as they heard the quiet drop of the coin amongst all the noise. One even tried to grab it but it rolled into the drain.

"You see its dependant upon what our hearts are fixated upon."

WORSHIP TEAM

It's time for a heart check. What is your heart fixed upon? If it's anything other than God, it's time to repent. It's time to ask the Holy Spirit to help you.

God does not desire any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

Jesus never came into the world to condemn the world but to save it.

Just like the rich young ruler....we all get a choice.....a choice to receive eternal life or reject it. Have you counted the cost, and are you willing to follow Christ? FOR REAL?

Sometimes we can look around and see the world around us, we see a nation of compromise, we see a world of hate and terrorism, we see people dying of illness and disease.

It can be easy to forget that everyone is dying.....these bodies, they are dying.....even the healthy ones.

The same body that we spend so much time and money to bring pleasure to....they are in a state of decay.

I don't know when the last time was that you counted the cost of following Jesus.....it's steep, it costs you everything.

But there is no greater short or long term return on any investment in the history of this world.

You can receive eternal life today....knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior, but you also are sealed with the promise of the Holy Spirit.....a promise that you will spend eternity in heaven with Jesus!

If you already know Jesus as Lord....repent of not putting Him first. recommit your life today!