

Cost Of Living

What is the cost of living?

It costs something for each person just to simply survive. In fact it costs a lot. Over 78 years, a person spends an average of about \$1.6 million dollars just to survive.

Just to survive...that's housing, food, and transportation. The minimum of each of those. The cost of living is pretty high isn't it?

When you look at living in different areas, you have to consider the cost of living. It costs a lot more to live in New York city than it does to live in St. Elmo, IL. You'd be crazy to take a job there for the same amount of money you make here and think you'll have anywhere near the same lifestyle. You have to factor the cost of living into your employment decisions.

We consider the cost of living in our life plans. But do we consider the cost of living for Jesus?

Does living for Him have a cost?

"A religion that gives nothing, costs nothing, and suffers nothing, is worth nothing." ~ Martin Luther

Church, there is a cost to following Jesus...

Luke 14:28-30 (NKJV)

For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it— 29 lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him,30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish'?

Jesus shares this example with the multitudes of people who just started following Him. So picture the scene, Jesus had just healed a man and told a couple of parables, and the multitudes literally began to go WITH Him.

He tells them, that whoever is not willing to give up every earthly relationship and even yourself, can't be His disciple. And that if you aren't willing to take up your cross and follow Him, can't be His disciple.

And I can imagine, in the heat of the moment...people begin to respond "I'll do it, Jesus! I can give it all up for you. I will follow you anywhere!"

It's easy to say in the excitement of it all! It's easy to say when things are going good!

But Jesus knows that it won't always be this easy. He knows it won't always be just healings and thought provoking stories. But hard times are coming.

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it"

If you're **intending** to build...this means you're thinking about it, dreaming about it, you're in the planning stage...what would it be like? What would it look like? What do I even want?

He says if you are intending to build, you'd **sit down** first...you'd take a minute and pause, you don't get in a hurry to make a huge time consuming, money consuming decision. You wouldn't just make a rushed decision...you wouldn't just immediately say "I'll do it no matter the cost"

Instead you would **count the cost** - what will it require? finances, time, mental capacity, not to mention all of the decisions that have to be made during the process. Is this even something I can do? Is this even something that I really WANT to do?

And the biggest question is do you have **enough to finish**? Because why would you want to start if you don't have what it takes to finish?

Guys, this is what Jesus is saying to the multitudes. You could paraphrase it as if He's saying to them: "If you're going to follow Me, make sure you're willing to give up everything to keep following Me because it's going to cost you."

There are a lot of people who decide to follow Jesus because of the miracles and the great words...but they never really sit down and consider what it's going to look like further down the road!

Why do so many people "get saved" and within months, they are no longer at church and they're living the same life they had before meeting Jesus?

They hadn't counted the cost...and there's a danger in not counting the cost...at some point it all starts adding up and many people realize they are not willing to pay the price to follow Jesus.

He said people that do this...they lay the foundation and when they are not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him or belittle him.

John 14:6 (NKJV)

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Jesus is the life. He says that if we accept Him as Lord and Savior, then we too will have life IN HIM.

So what is the Cost Of Living?

Matthew 16:24-26 (NKJV)

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Deny yourself and take up your cross...

We look at the cross and we see salvation. We view the cross as a good symbol. But the cross, to these disciples, it was a symbol of execution, it was a symbol of someone losing their life!

Church, this is the cost of living...losing your life... but also to gain it back again through Jesus!

See it's one thing to know who Jesus is...to recognize that He is the Christ, the Son of God. It's another to accept that as fact and say you'll follow Him. And it's yet another thing to identify with Him in an intimate way.

I wonder how many Christians' friends and family would have NO IDEA that they were a Christian if they didn't know they went to church!

How do you identify with Jesus? How should people recognize that you are with Him?

Sometimes when someone is going through chemo and they begin to lose all their hair, the people that are with them, their team, group, classmates, co-workers, all shave their heads. And while part of the reason is so they are not alone in having a bald head, it's also their way of saying "I am with him, I identify with him." They look like him.

In what way do you identify with Jesus? We need to do something that says to the world, "See Jesus there? I'm with Him!" How do we do that?

Deny Self

Here's what a lot of people miss...it's not "deny yourself of stuff"...it's deny yourself. This is something much deeper.

When Jesus was headed to the cross, He told Peter, you will deny me 3 times before the rooster crows. Peter denied that he would deny Jesus. But after Jesus was taken by the soldiers, someone recognized Peter.

Luke 22:54-62 (NKJV)

Having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest's house. But Peter followed at a distance. 55 Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. 56 And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, "This man was also with Him."

57 But he denied Him, saying, "Woman, I do not know Him."

58 And after a little while another saw him and said, "You also are of them."

But Peter said, "Man, I am not!"

59 Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, "Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean."

60 But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are saying!"

Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. 61 And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." 62 So Peter went out and wept bitterly.

I do not know Him. I am not one of them. I do not know what you are saying.

This is how you deny someone. Not to have acquaintance with someone.

"I'm NOT with him, I don't identify with him."

But then this Greek word for deny, has a secondary meaning when applied to yourself: to forget one's self, lose sight of one's self and one's own interests

So when you deny yourself, you act in the way Peter did toward Jesus, but instead of directing it at Him, it's directed at YOU.

"Tim? I do not know him. I am not him. I do not know what you are saying."

See in Christ I'm made new...I'm not who I was...I'm a new creation in Christ Jesus. The old has passed away, all things have been made new!

I deny myself because I have a new identity. Child of God. Saint. Chosen. Jesus follower.

I've given up my rights because Jesus is my Lord. This means I lose sight of my own interests because I'm living for the Kingdom of God!

It's like going into the witness protection program. I got a new identity, a new plan, new responsibilities, and I have to let the past life fade away...there's no going back because if I go back...I'm dead.

Church, that's the cost of living!

The cost of living is greater than the cost of dying. Because it requires a conscious decision each day to deny self and identify with Jesus.

It requires you every day to go into the throne room of your life and drag yourself off the throne and let Jesus sit there.

When Satan says to us, "Why worry about God's plans? Take care of yourself!" we need to be able to say "Self? Who is self? I really don't know him; don't know who you're talking about!"

Take up your cross and follow Him

Jesus said if you want to be one of His, this is what is required.

Yes, you are saved by grace, through faith...but this is that faith in action. Take up your cross...but what does that mean? I'll tell you that the cross is heavy...

Having a hyperactive 2 year old isn't your "cross."

Having a car that requires a tetanus shot to drive it isn't your "cross."

Having really bad seasonal allergies isn't your "cross."

Having a nagging spouse, or a crummy job, or a mortgage on your house isn't your "cross."

Jesus was talking about identifying with Him to the fullest extent – to be willing to lose our life, no strings attached, the way He did.

Jesus carried His own cross, even though His physical body was too weak. A man named Simon helped Him carry it.

I see this as a physical example of what the Holy Spirit does for us spiritually. If you are willing to take up your cross, give up your life, identify with Jesus...there are times when that will become heavy...too much for you to bear...you won't be able to continue on your own.

But the Holy Spirit will help you! He will come alongside you and be your helper!

The issue with the cost of living, is it keeps going up. It keeps requiring more. And if people don't make more but the cost is more, it gets harder and harder to keep up. Our government has set us up to fail by not having the future in mind.

But a good employer gives you a cost of living raise each year because each year it costs more to stay the same. If you don't get a raise you are actually making less at the end of the day.

And spiritually...it requires more of you each day. The good news is that the more you deny yourself, the more you allow the Holy Spirit to work in your life. And the more He works in your life, the more you tap into the blessing of God for your life.

Then you have more than enough.

So what is the cost of living? Everything.

It's identifying with Jesus. Giving up your life. Letting Him rule on the throne of your heart as LORD. Every day. Every situation. No matter what.

That's the cost of living. It's not being ashamed of who Jesus is, nor of you who you are in Him!