

The Cost of Discipleship

Mark 8:34-38

There are a great number of people who claim to be Christians or followers of Christ, who think they can follow Jesus in their own way, in their own terms. This is the kind of people that Kyle Idleman calls “fans” of Jesus, not followers of Jesus. Francis Chan says it this way. *“There are people who truly believe to be followers of Jesus but their lives look nothing like His”*

There were lots of people seeking Jesus during his ministry. The crowd, but how many of them became true disciples? Jesus left it all out for the crowd and for us: we cannot just follow him whichever way we want. Jesus has some expectation for those who want to truly follow him. **Many people aren't true disciples of Jesus because they are not willing to do what Jesus is calling them to do.** *People like the benefits of being in a relationship with Jesus, but they don't like the commitment such relationship entails.*

In **Mark 8:34-38** Jesus talks to the crowd regarding what it means to become his followers.

Verse 34 Calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them. *“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”*

-A call to self-denial: disown, disregard

Denying self means that we reject our natural feelings about ourselves; our right to ourselves, our right to run our own lives. We are to deny that we own ourselves. We do not have the final right to decide what we are going to do, or where we are going to go. Jesus has that right.

If you are going to follow Jesus, you no longer own yourself. You have to surrender your rights to God; he has Lordship of your life. So you no longer belong to yourself, *“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself”* -- deny our self-trust, deny our self-sufficiency, deny our feeling that we are able to handle life by ourselves and run everything to suit ourselves.

-A call to take up your cross.

To take your cross; it's interesting that Jesus used something not very appealing. He could have used a fishing net, shepherd staff, a dove, or scroll. But he used a cross. The cross is an instrument of death. An invitation to take up a cross would have been offensive and repulsive to the audience.

The cross was a symbol of humiliation: crucifixion was used as a means to publicly humiliate the person being crucified. **Php.2:6-8** tells us that Jesus humbled himself to the point of death, death on a cross.

-The cross also represented pain and suffering. Jesus is calling his followers to la via dolorosa, the way of pain. Following Jesus may cause you discomfort, suffering, pain, ridicule. To take up your cross isn't comfortable. Jesus is not calling you to be comfortable, but to be willing to experience, pain and suffering for him. ***Ask yourself, am I really taking up a cross if there is no suffering and sacrifice in my relationship with God?***

-The cross symbolizes death: To carry a cross meant you were on your way to death. Jesus is inviting his followers to die. **A follower of Jesus must realize that to follow him may cost you your very life.**

Verse 35 **whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.**

To truly lose your life for Jesus is to find it. To gain the whole world and forfeit your life gets you nothing. What can you give for exchange for your soul?

It is truly dying to self, dying to our own desires, to our lives for the sake of Jesus that we truly find it.

Pau had this in mind when he said that for him to live meant to live for Jesus and if he died it would be gain. His life reflected the passion of a sold-out, unashamed follower of Jesus.

True followers of Jesus are never ashamed of him and his words: (v.38) If you are ashamed of Jesus, he will be ashamed of you; if you deny him; he will deny you **(2 Tim.2:12)**

Jesus defines the relationship he expects of his followers. He lays out the expectation for those who want to follow him. If anyone wishes to follow me, they must deny themselves, take up their cross and come after me. **Are you following Jesus in your own ways or are you counting the cost, living for him or for yourself? Is Jesus truly Lord and owner of your life? Your finances, your time? Fill in the blank _____**

Is Jesus reflected in the way you live? If you were accused of being a follower of Jesus, would people find enough evidence in your life for such accusation? I hope they do.