

The Cost of Following Jesus Is Everything



Foreword

Cost of Following Jesus

This essay is written for those who have heard the invitation of Jesus and have begun to sense that it is not an invitation to addition, **but to surrender**. The modern church often presents discipleship as enrichment: extra peace, extra purpose, extra community, while leaving the old life largely intact. Scripture does not. Jesus never hid the terms. He spoke of crosses, of hating father and mother, of selling all, of losing life in order to find it. The cost of following Christ Jesus is not a portion of one's time, money, or reputation. **It is the whole self**. Nothing may be reserved. What follows is an attempt to state that claim without softening it, and to show from the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament why anything less is not discipleship at all.

The Cost of Following Christ Jesus

Jesus did not recruit admirers. **He called disciples**, and He defined the call with a severity that still offends. "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 bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple" (**Luke 14:26–27**). The word "hate" here is relative, not absolute: every other love must be so far beneath love for Christ that it looks like hatred by comparison. Family, vocation, safety, and life itself are placed on the altar. No clause exempts the reasonable, the gifted, or the already religious.

He immediately adds the two parables of the tower-builder and the king going to war (**Luke 14:28–33**). Both stories end with the same demand: "Any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple." The point is not careful budgeting. It is total divestment. The man who keeps a private reserve—an unyielded relationship, an unexamined ambition, a secret sin, a reputation he will not risk—has not yet begun.

The same total claim appears in the Synoptic parallel: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (**Matthew 16:24–25; cf. Mark 8:34–35; Luke 9:23–24**). Self-denial is not an ascetic technique. It is the death of the self as lord. The cross in first-century Palestine was not a piece of jewelry; it was the instrument of public, shameful, irreversible execution. To take it up daily is to live as one already condemned, already belonging to Another.

The rich young ruler learned this when he asked what he still lacked. Jesus did not congratulate his law-keeping. He said, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (**Mark 10:21**). The man went away sorrowful because he had great possessions. Jesus then told the disciples that it is hard for the wealthy to enter the kingdom—not because money is uniquely evil, but because whatever we will not release becomes our god. Peter’s protest—“**We have left everything**”—receives both a promise of a hundredfold return *with persecutions* and the reminder that many who are first will be last (**Mark 10:28–31**). The cost is everything; the reward is Christ Himself, and that reward is given on the far side of loss.

Paul understood the same arithmetic. After listing his impeccable credentials, he writes: “But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ” (**Philippians 3:7–8**). The word for “rubbish” is crude. Everything that once defined him is dung beside the knowledge of Christ. **There is no leftover identity.**

The early church lived this. Believers “were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need” (**Acts 2:45**). They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name (**Acts 5:41**). They loved not their lives even unto death (**Revelation 12:11**). The martyrs did not calculate a percentage. They laid the whole life down because they had already given it.

This is not a call to hate good things. Marriage, work, art, and friendship are still gifts from God. But you hold them as a steward, not as the owner. The moment you refuse to give one of them up for Jesus, it has become an idol. Jesus is not one commitment among many. He is Lord. A Lord does not share His throne.

The cost, therefore, is everything: reputation when truth is costly, comfort when obedience is hard, relationships when they demand compromise, plans when they collide with the will of God, and finally life itself if that is required. There is no fine print that says “except this.” The man who holds back has not followed. He has only admired from a safe distance.

Conclusion

The gospel is free, **but it is not cheap**. Grace cost the Son of God His life; it costs the disciple their lives. To follow Christ Jesus is to transfer ownership of every faculty, relationship, possession, and hour.

That means your thoughts, relationships, possessions, and hours are no longer yours to rule. They belong to Christ. If you hold any of them back, you are still treating them as your own. **Jesus will not share His place as Lord.**

The invitation is the same as it has always been: come, take up the cross, and lose your life for Him. Those who do find they have not lost what they were meant to keep. They have gained the only life death cannot take.

The cost is everything. If you truly follow Jesus, you give Him your life. Nothing less matches who He is.

