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What Does It Cost To Follow Jesus?



Luke 14:27: (NASB) *Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.*

Here we are in the 21st century and Christianity has really taken on a different look than when it all began. So, what is following Jesus all about? Is it costly? Is it pleasant? Can we customize our following of Jesus to our personal preferences? How do we know if we are really following him or if we are following our own idea of what we would like Jesus to be? Stay with us as we try to get our arms around what true discipleship is and how we can be fully immersed in the footsteps of our Lord!



To figure what the cost of discipleship is, let us focus on one teaching of Jesus throughout the program and expand from there: **Luke 14:25-35:** Large crowds! That's good because bigger is better, right? But yet Jesus seems to discourage them telling them to hate their families?!? Jesus said *what?!?* We will take a closer look at that shortly.



Introduction, Not a Fan, (Trailer for Christian movie based on a book of the same name)

- *This isn't church, it's business. The sooner you learn that, the better.*
- *(Crowd cheering) A fan is simply defined as "an enthusiastic admirer." So let me just come right out and ask you a question. Are you a follower of Jesus or are you really just a fan?*

Hate: Strongs #3404 *miseo* (mis-eh'-o); by extension, to love less

Disciple: Strongs #3101 *mathetes* (math-ay-tes'); a learner, i.e. pupil

So, Jesus was teaching perspective. He said that if we don't love family, friends and others less than him, we cannot be his disciple. A disciple's intention is to grow up to become like the teacher - a true follower and not just a fan. **Matthew 10:24-25:** He warns that his true followers will be maligned. This certainly doesn't seem to be describing a path of ease, comfort and popularity! There is a cost to discipleship that is not necessarily a ticket to popularity. We are to put our family second, and we are warned of a difficult path. **So, how do we harmonize these hard statements with the following?** **Matthew 11:28-30:** To help illustrate true sacrifice and discipleship, we have a story for you. It is a simple yet dramatic story that we will use to illustrate sacrifice and discipleship throughout this program.



- *It's opening day of the 2012 Wake Forest baseball season. Twenty-year old Kevin Jordan is a redshirt freshman, set to start in left field.*
- *We were really, really excited to see what he could do, once he's finally on the field. He was under a microscope at that point.*
- *It's a day that almost didn't happen. A baseball dream that almost wasn't realized, until a gift from someone willing to risk everything...someone Kevin Jordan barely knew.*
- *In April 2010, after more than twenty doctors' appointments and five months of uncertainty, Kevin and his family finally received a diagnosis. ANCA Vasculitis is a rare autoimmune disorder that causes kidney failure and is fatal if left untreated. To save his kidneys, doctors started Kevin on an intensive course of dialysis three times a week, along with steroids and chemotherapy treatments. Two months after the diagnosis, Kevin, once projected to be a first round pick, was taken in the nineteenth round by the New York Yankees.*
- *(Kevin) When I was drafted, I was in a hospital getting the tubes put in me to do dialysis. I wasn't worried about college or pro, I was kind of worried about how I'm going to get back and healthy.*

As a high school athlete, Kevin Jordan became very ill and no one knew why. We use this as a metaphor for mankind being stuck in the disease of sin. To follow Jesus, we are to carry a cross, but what exactly does that mean? **Back to our theme text:** **Luke 14:27:** The Jews understood that phrase in the very literal sense, but what about today's Christian?

What and who do we follow? He who took up his cross - this is what it means: **Isaiah 53:3-5:** It is easy to appreciate what he did and be a fan, but are we actually trying to be a follower that walks the same steps? Am I a fan or a follower?



- *He was taking thirty-five pills a day. The doctor walked through all that. He said, "Look, medication is not going to fix this. You're going to need a kidney transplant."*
- *I think they were a little startled and we were a little worried too, because we worried about maintenance of the scholarship.*



- *I remember that conversation very specifically. He said, “Is Kevin’s scholarship going to be good?” And I said, “Absolutely! There isn’t any question Kevin’s scholarship is going to be good.”*
- *At Wake Forest in between classes, Kevin had to hook himself up to a dialysis machine in his dorm. His parents and brother underwent a series of medical tests to determine if any of them could donate a kidney to Kevin.*
- *(Kevin’s mom) As long as I live, I’ll never forget that day. But I got the call. It was out of my control and I couldn’t.*

This sounds like the need that humankind has being in sin, sickness and death. We cannot bail ourselves out of it. John 4:34: Jesus isn’t looking for us to cheer him on for his accomplishments. He is looking for us to be involved. According to Jesus, we must carry our own cross! God’s will is to be primary. We are to focus on the labor and leave the results to God. Matthew 20:20-23: They were willing to follow him, but would they be willing to be tested? So, the only sure thing for us is to drink the cup of sacrifice, meaning for us to carry our cross! The cross meant death. True Christianity is intense! It means sorrow and suffering. Jesus used the cross as a symbol of what Christianity was to be.



- *No one in Kevin’s family was a viable match. He was placed on the National Organ Donor wait list, which has an average wait time of four to five years.*
- *(Coach Walter) I pulled his dad aside and I just said, “Hey look, if you need me to get tested, just let me know where to go and what to do. I’ll get tested today.”*

Matthew 20:24-28: So, to carry our own cross is to willingly embrace a life of humility, servitude, suffering and sacrifice.

If carrying a cross is SO difficult, what should we do to prepare for it? Luke 14:28 Luke 9:57-62: Jesus gives fair warning of the *conditions* that discipleship might bring. Sounds harsh, but in fact the “follower” was saying my father is old, let me see him through to his end, and Jesus was showing him the *priorities* of discipleship. ⁶¹*Another also said, I will follow you, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home.* ⁶²*But Jesus said to him, No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. This follower simply had great attachments to his earthly ties. Jesus was saying that discipleship requires attachment to the cause first and foremost!* We are instructed to count the cost - understand the conditions of discipleship - so we can be sure our priorities are in order so we can release any unnecessary attachments. It is fun to be a fan and to revel in the accomplishments of another, but being a follower changes your life for the better.



- *Coach Walter underwent a six-week battery of tests to determine if he was a viable match. But January 28, 2011, he was running the first team practice.*
- *I had my phone with me that day because I was waiting for that call. About an hour into practice I stepped aside. She said, “Coach we found out you’re a match,” and I said, “Thank God!”*

He barely knows this young man, but he is willing to do it anyway. Jesus was willing to lay down his life for us at any cost. Romans 12:1-2: *Reasonable service* literally means a logical service of spiritual worship. This makes perfect sense because Jesus is the Savior of all mankind and is calling out certain ones to follow him. It is your logical service of spiritual worship to be able to follow along and walk in his footsteps. We do this by the transforming of our minds.



- *I called Kevin and I just said, “What are you doing February 7th?” He said that his calendar was free and I said, “Well, I’ll meet you at Emery and we’ll get this thing done.” He said, “All right. I’ll be there.”*
- *It was really hard to control emotion when you know you’re about to get like a second chance. I just ended the conversation with like a thank you. Like, I wasn’t expecting this, but thank you.*
- *This seems like a simple question. Why donate?*
- *Why donate, you know, is a simple answer, because there was just no way I was going to sit on the sidelines and watch this young man fight for his life when I could help.*

Isaiah 6:8: This was prophetic of Jesus volunteering to save the world. It is also how we are supposed to respond to discipleship. **It is not for us to sit and watch - it is for us to stand and fight!** That is the difference between a fan and a follower. **It is not for us to hope for ease and comfort - it is for us to spread the hope and comfort of the Gospel!** That is the difference between a fan and a follower. **It is not for us to treasure our temporal blessings - it is for us to**



give our temporal lives for the cause of a treasure in heaven! That is the difference between a fan and a follower. This is a very serious subject. We are removing all of the fluff and the excitement and asking what is the cost to you as an individual to follow Christ?

We look around and see that much of Christianity is like being a member in the “Jesus Fan Club,” where people cheer for all the wonderful things he did for us and will continue to do. But following Jesus - discipleship - is not being a fan of Jesus, but rather a footstep follower. It is being “in the game” and not just watching the game.

Luke 14:31-32: Realize this is a major, life-altering commitment. Are you willing to alter your life the way Jesus is asking or do you want to do it only on your own terms?

Do we sometimes like to make for ourselves a “Designer Jesus,” a Jesus that fits our lives just right and makes us look really good?!?! We are supposed to fit *his* life and look godly, not worried about looking good in the eyes of men.

Romans 8:35-39: A fan would NOT be led as a sheep to slaughter! These texts describe a hardened follower! Only a follower would have this conviction and focus on their purpose.



- *On the morning of February 7th, 2011, at Emory University Hospital in Atlanta, forty-two year old Tom Walter gave a kidney to his nineteen-year-old outfielder, who had never played a single game for him. After a five and a half hour surgery, coach and player awoke.*
- *(Kevin) Hey, I just remember not feeling sick. It took me probably about fifteen minutes to realize that this surgery saved my life.*
- *(Coach) The kidney was functioning beautifully. So, it was a pretty emotional moment to know that the kidney was doing what it was supposed to do.*

The incredible irony of all this is that a true disciple must be hardened and tough relating to the battle at hand so they can successfully be kind, loving, generous, giving and selfless.

A true fan prepares to watch and enter into the event emotionally as a spectator. A true follower prepares to fight, actually be in the event and lay everything on the line.

Ephesians 6:10-13



- *Now that Kevin has had the transplant, what does he expect from life and what does he have to live for?*
- *His coach and his family have been blessed and it's possible this kidney will go a very, very long time.*
- *(Kevin's mom) Our prayers have been answered. So, we will always be eternally grateful to him.*

Luke 14:33: This surely weeds out the fans! Should we live in a cardboard box or give that up too? What is Jesus asking us to do? 1 Corinthians 4:1-2: Scripturally, a steward cared for his Master's goods as though they were his own. What are the *mysteries of God* and will that help decipher how we are to live? Colossians 1:27: If one of the mysteries is *Christ in you, the hope of glory*, this mystery we are to care for is within us. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: So, essentially all that we have, all that we are, all that we say, all that we do does not belong to us. We have been bought with a price. The idea of stewardship helps us to understand that we don't have to literally sell every possession that we have, but that every possession we have is to be used in his service to bring honor and glory to God. Most of us would look at that and think, well that's unreasonable! But that's discipleship!



- *Just over a month after the surgery, Kevin returned to Wake Forest.*
- *(Kevin) It was a lot of motivation to see all my teammates and see everybody that I used to play with right next to me, and I'm a hundred and seventy pounds and they're as healthy as ever. As soon as my doctors told me that, yeah, you can work out, there was two workouts a day. I was doing everything I could do to kinda catch up.*
- *Over the next eleven months, through strength and conditioning, Kevin regained nearly all of the forty pounds of muscle he had lost.*

To love and serve is one thing, but to sacrifice is another thing: Mark 10:17-23: Remember, the design of Jesus is much different than a Designer Jesus. The truest test of discipleship is that of loyalty - what do we hold closest to our hearts? We should not be attaching ourselves to “things.” True discipleship is not just being a fan of the goodness of Christ, but is to be willing to give everything to participate in executing the works of Christ. This is beyond just looking at them and appreciating them from afar. It is not just going to church on



Sunday...what about the other six days of the week?



After missing his entire freshman season, just over one year after the transplant, on February 17, 2012, with his father in the stands, Kevin Jordan suited up for his first ever college baseball game. "Introducing #21 left fielder Kevin Jordan."

By the way, he struck out his first time at bat!

Mark 12:41-44: Christian sacrifice is costly - notice Jesus didn't say that the other contributions were worthless; he said that the widow's contribution was priceless because it was her all.

Luke 14:34-35: If the salt of the earth, which is a preservative, has lost its flavor, than it is useless. It is possible to decide to follow him but lose that desire for discipleship and then it is worthless. **Here are some of the facts for followers:** 1 Peter 4:12-16: Discipleship requires contrary thinking. It requires being able to look at the difficulties of life (if for the sake of Christ) and see the blessing in them. It puts a new label on the experiences so that they are blessed experiences. A fan will quickly get discouraged when his or her team is not winning. A follower is in the game saying, I've got to do better and work harder.



- *(Announcer) He lines it into right field. The first college hit for Kevin Jordan.*
- *It's a day that almost didn't happen. A baseball dream that almost wasn't realized, until a gift.*
- *(Coach) It's the best decision I've ever made. Not even close.*
- *(Kevin) Coach giving me the opportunity to do whatever else I want to do in my life is what that transplant meant. It's a lot bigger than baseball. It's my life back.*

Romans 5:1-5: Suffering is fertile ground for great growth. We learn by mistakes and difficulties.

Some of the aspects of our Christian sacrifice:

- Persecution: *people singling you out and not necessarily with kindness*
- Suffering: *having difficulties and trials in life*
- Reproach: *meaning to be defamed, chided, taunted*
- Tribulation: *literally means pressure; we are under pressure because our lives are supposed to be changing, and we should be growing spiritually on a daily basis.*
- Temptation: *one Greek word used scripturally means to endeavor, scrutinize, entice, or discipline*
- Temptation: *another Greek word used scripturally means a putting to proof or by implication, adversity*

So there are many aspects to Christianity that a fan would never go near. A fan watches the game but a true follower is in the game. Romans 8:14-18: The reward of discipleship today is not getting a bunch of stuff! The idea of a Prosperity Gospel is not Christianity. The reward in this life is the privilege of calling God "Abba Father," a term that literally translates to "Daddy," signifying a very close relationship.

We are promised to inherit something - we don't have it yet. This inheritance comes through discipleship - through changing our lives and walking in his footsteps - because that is how Jesus inherited his position. Our suffering is just a short time compared to eternity.

True following of Jesus is a lifetime event and requires a lifetime of discipline.

What does it cost to follow Jesus? What is it we are supposed to do? How is it we are supposed to think? What is it that we are supposed to be? The answers are all given to us by Jesus himself, and all we must do is decide to dedicate ourselves to the answers. It doesn't mean we are a fan of the answers; we don't cheer them on, but instead we live them. This is not just on Sundays but every day of our lives, because that is what Jesus did and that is what he called us to do. Give your life in sacrifice to God through Christ and the rewards and the blessings will be more than you can count!

***So, what does it cost to follow Jesus? (EVERYTHING...pay up!)
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!***