

What Does It Cost To Follow Jesus?

<u>Luke 14:27</u>: (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:

<u>Luke 14:25-35</u>: (NASB) ²⁵Now large crowds were going along with him; and he turned and said to them, ²⁶If 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.

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.

(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: (NASB) ²⁴A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. ²⁵It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they (the spiritual leaders of the day) have called the head of the house Beelzebul, (a very idolatrous false god) how much more will they malign the members of his household!

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: (NASB) ²⁸Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you gest ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for Lam gentle and humble in

give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

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.

)) Introduction, E-60 Sacrifice, The Kevin Jordan Story

- 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.

Philippians 2:7-9: (NASB) ⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹For this reason also, God highly exalted him, and bestowed on him the name which is above every name.

Diagnosis, E-60 Sacrifice, The Kevin Jordan Story

- 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: Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

The Jews understood that phrase in the very literal sense, but what about today's Christian?



Quick side bar as to where the label "Christian" (a disciple of Christ) came from:

Acts 11:19-26: (NRSV) ²⁵Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for an entire year they met with the church and taught a great many people, and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.

What and who do we follow? He who took up his cross - this is what it means:

<u>Isaiah 53:3-5</u>: (NASB) ³He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face he was despised, and we did not esteem him. ⁴Surely our griefs he himself bore, and our sorrows he carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵But he was pierced through for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our wellbeing fell upon him, and by his scourging we are healed.

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.

<u>John 4:34</u>: (NASB) Jesus said to them, my food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to accomplish His work.

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: (NASB) ²⁰Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of him. ²¹And he said to her, What do you wish? She said to him, Command that in your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on your right and one on your left. ²²But Jesus answered, You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink? They said to him, We are able. ²³He said to



them, my cup you shall drink; but to sit on my right and on my left, this is not mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.

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.

))A volunteer, E-60 Sacrifice, The Kevin Jordan Story

- 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."



<u>Matthew 20:24-28</u>: (NASB) ²⁴And hearing this, the ten became indignant with the two brothers. ²⁵But Jesus called them to himself and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. ²⁶It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, ²⁷and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; ²⁸just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for

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?

<u>Luke 14:28</u>: ²⁸For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, ³⁰saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish.



<u>Luke 9:57-62</u>: (NASB) ⁵⁷As they were going along the road, someone said to him, I will follow you wherever you go. ⁵⁸And Jesus said to him, The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

Jesus gives fair warning of the *conditions* that discipleship might bring.

⁵⁹And he said to another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father. ⁶⁰But he said to him, Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God.

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.

⁶¹Another also said, I will follow you, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home. ⁶²But 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.

))A match, E-60 Sacrifice, The Kevin Jordan Story

- 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: (KJV) ¹I beseech (urge) you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. ²And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

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.

))A date and a why, E-60 Sacrifice, The Kevin Jordan Story

- 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.

<u>Isaiah 6:8</u>: (NASB) Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I. Send me!

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.

Is discipleship as serious as a battle?

<u>Luke 14:31-32</u>: ³¹Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³²Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.

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?





We are supposed to fit *his* life and look godly, not worried about looking good in the eyes of men.

Be like Mike, Kyle Idleman, Not a Fan, Life Today

• ...knowledge versus intimacy - where you could know a lot about Jesus. You could like Jesus in those terms, but that's different than truly knowing him. So, for example, when I was growing up I had above my bed a poster of Michael Jordan, and you know you've probably seen the one with the tongue out. So, I had this poster of Michael Jordan, but next to it I had this big picture that my grandmother had given me of Jesus. So, literally I had Michael Jordan and Jesus. And I think that captures, especially when I was growing up, how I approached my relationship to Jesus, but in the larger context, how many people approach their relationship with Jesus. They want to "be like Mike;" they want to "be like Jesus." You know, they knew all about Michael Jordan. They could tell you stats. They know a lot about Jesus, but that's different than truly knowing him.

Fan or follower?

Romans 8:35-39: (NRSV) ³⁵Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶As it is written, For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered. ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

A fan would NOT be led as a sheep to slaughter! These texts describe a hardened follower!

³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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: (NRSV) ¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

Eternally grateful, E-60 Sacrifice, The Kevin Jordan Story

- 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.

<u>John 15:12-13</u>: (NASB) ¹²This is my commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this that one lay down his life for his friends.

Do we REALLY have to give up ALL?

<u>Luke 14:33</u>: So then, none of you can be my disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.

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?

<u>1 Corinthians 4:1-2</u>: (NASB) ¹Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ²In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.

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?

<u>Colossians 1:27</u>: (NASB) to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

If one of the mysteries is *Christ in you*, the hope of glory, this mystery we are to care for is within us.

<u>1 Corinthians 6:19-20</u>: (NASB) ¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

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!



(1) Comeback, E-60 Sacrifice, The Kevin Jordan Story

- 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: (NASB) ¹⁷As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to him and knelt before him, and asked him, Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? ¹⁸And Jesus said to him, Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. ¹⁹You know the commandments, Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother. ²⁰And he said to him, Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up. ²¹Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me. ²²But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property. ²³And Jesus, looking around, said to his disciples, How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!

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?

Collegiate debut, E-60 Sacrifice, The Kevin Jordan Story

- 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."
- (Announcer) It's Kevin Jordan. The redshirt freshman from Columbus, Georgia making his collegiate debut.

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

Mark 12:41-44: (NASB) ⁴¹And he sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. ⁴²A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. ⁴³Calling his disciples to him, he said to them, Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; ⁴⁴for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.



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.

How do we know that we are followers and not just fans?

<u>Luke 14:34-35</u>: ³⁴Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? ³⁵It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

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.



• Let me share with you something that I see in the youth group, but I also see in the church at large; individual congregations. Because we have dumbed down the gospel, because we are not preaching the true gospel and we are using carnal means to attract people, if you use carnal means to attract man, you're going to attract carnal man and you're going to have to keep using greater carnal means to keep them in the church.

Jesus never candy-coated discipleship.

Here are some of the facts for followers:

<u>1 Peter 4:12-16</u>: (NASB) ¹²Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; ¹³but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. ¹⁴If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; ¹⁶but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.

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.

Bigger than baseball, E-60 Sacrifice, The Kevin Jordan Story

- (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: (NIV) ¹Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into



this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ³Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because **we know that suffering produces perseverance**; ⁴**perseverance**, **character**; **and character**, **hope**. ⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

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: (NRSV) ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, Abba! Father! ¹⁶it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. ¹⁸I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.

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!

WANTED

PECULIAR PEOPLE FOR UNUSUAL POSITION

Not necessarily wise, noble, successful or socially accepted. Physical infirmities and heavy personal burdens an asset.

The training for this position requires a commitment of all your time and all your effort for the rest of your life. Your training instructor will at all times insist upon absolute obedience while causing you to lose friends, reputation and personal fortune. These will be replaced by friends not of your choosing, reputation not esteemed by society, and personal fortune not negotiable.

Your success or failure will be measured by how carefully and diligently you follow your instruction manual - a book which the greatest minds in the world cannot understand and have dismissed as "foolishness."

Your course will inspire many hatreds for which you will be obliged to offer a sacrificing love in return; and the more of this love you master, the more of its servant you will become.

Wages received during your training period will consist of a few promises considered by most as highly doubtful of fulfillment.

Anyone who faithfully completes his course is guaranteed a position as an administrator in a small but growing Kingdom - a Kingdom expected, shortly, to "bless all the families of the earth."

1 Peter 29 Titus 214

So, what does it cost to follow Jesus?

(EVERYTHING...pay up!)

For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions.

Think about it...!

And now <u>even more</u> to think about... only in the Full Edition of CQ Rewind!



Let's look a little more closely at self-denial:

<u>Matthew 16:24:</u> (NRSV) Then Jesus told his disciples, If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

Deny: Strongs #533 aparneomai aparneomai *ap-ar-neh'-om-ahee*; to deny utterly, i.e. disown, abstain:—deny. 1) to deny 1a) to affirm that one has no acquaintance or connection with someone 1b) to forget one's self, lose sight of one's self and one's own interests

A few other uses - this word was only used by Jesus:

<u>Luke 12:9</u>: But he that denieth me before men shall be <u>denied</u> <533> before the angels of God.

<u>Luke 22:34</u>: And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny <533> that thou knowest me.

(Source: Biblical commentator C. Russell) "His words imply that it is a matter of choice with the individual, and not a matter of compulsion in any sense of the word."

In a nutshell, we can see the core of what Jesus was laying out as requirements to follow him, just by the definition of and use of this word.

Now let's see if this thought carries through the rest of the New Testament:

<u>1 Corinthians 12:26</u>: (NIV) if one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

2 Thessalonians 1:3-5: (NIV) ³We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. ⁴Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. ⁵All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.

<u>1 Peter 3:14:</u> (NIV) but even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.

<u>1 Peter 5:10</u>: (NIV) And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

We have the ability to think and choose to be a fan or a follower:

<u>Proverbs 23:7</u>: (KJV) For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.

<u>Joshua 24:14-15</u>: (NRSV) ¹⁴Now therefore revere the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.

<u>Philippians 4:8</u>: (KJV) Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

So let's think and choose!

Top priority: Conformity to the will of God by conforming to Jesus!



Conform: Strongs #4964 suschmatizw suschematizo soos-khay-mat-id'-zo to fashion alike, i.e. conform to the same pattern (figuratively):—conform to, fashion self according to.

Romans 12:2: And do not be conformed <4964> to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

<u>1 Peter 1:14</u>: As obedient children, do not be **conformed <4964>** to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance

Top priority: Realize the difficulty of the "battle:"

<u>1 John 1:9</u>: (NIV) if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Ephesians 6:12: For our struggle is not against flesh <4561> and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

<u>1 Corinthians 10:13</u>: (NIV) No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Matthew 10:23-24: (NIV) ²³When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. ²⁴A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.

<u>2 Corinthians 4:8-10</u>: (NIV) ⁸We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. ¹⁰We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.