

INTRODUCTION

Once there was a dairy farmer who went to buy a new pickup truck. He had seen an ad in the paper about discounts and factory rebates, so he decided to trade in his old clunker. He chose a new model and was ready to write a check. The salesman said, "Wait, I haven't given you the final cost yet." The farmer said, "I saw the price advertised in the paper." The salesman said, "Oh, that's for the basic model, all the options cost extra." So the farmer drove off in his new pick-up. A few months later the salesman called the farmer because he wanted to buy a cow for his son's 4-H project. The farmer assured the car salesman he had several good milk cows for sale for \$500. The salesman drove out and selected out a cow and took out his checkbook. The farmer said, "Wait. I haven't given you the final cost yet." Then he handed the salesman a bill that read:

BASIC COW	\$500.00
Two-tone exterior	45.00
Extra stomach	75.00
Milk storage compartment	60.00
Straw recycle compartment	120.00
Four handy spigots @ \$10 each	40.00
Leather upholstery	125.00
Dual horns	45.00
Automatic rear fly swatter	38.00
Fertilizer attachment	<u>185.00</u>
GRAND TOTAL	\$1233.00

Whether you're buying cars or cows, it's important to get to what we call "the bottom line." What is the "bottom line" of following Jesus? You may go into "sticker shock" when you discover it. Many people are only interested in the basic model of Christian living. They want just enough Christianity to keep them out of hell without intruding on their fun. You don't find the full cost of discipleship advertised very often these days. Few preachers discuss it because it is unpleasant; it doesn't fill pews.

Sometimes merchants will use a "bait and switch" advertisement. That's when a business advertises a super low price on an item and then when the buyer gets to the store, they are told they are all out of that particular model. Some churches are using this marketing approach to get "buyers" in the front door but they never tell them the full price of discipleship. I love and admire any and every church and preacher who is proclaiming Jesus, but I'm aware some churches either don't teach or don't ever talk about the full cost of following Jesus. These churches may have a lot of attendees—but few disciples. I once heard a pastor of one of these churches say, "When someone comes to our church we don't require them to say anything, sing anything, sign anything, or sacrifice anything. We just want them to feel good about their experience." I try to understand where they are coming from, but compare that attitude to Jesus in Luke 9:18-27. You'd better be prepared for "sticker shock" because I want you to know the high cost of following Jesus:

Luke 9:18-27. "Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, 'Who do the crowds say I am?' They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life.' 'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?' Peter answered, 'The Christ of God.' Jesus strictly warned them not to Tell this to anyone. And he said, 'The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.' Then he said to them all: 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.'"

At this point in His ministry, Jesus was at the pinnacle of His popularity but He didn't come to earth to be popular; He came to die for us. Starting with this passage until the end of Luke we are going to see the crowds start dwindling when He starts talking about things like suffering and the cross. Those who followed Him to get a free miracle or a free meal soon lost interest. When some of you discover the cost of discipleship, you may lose interest, too. In this pivotal passage, Jesus outlines five steps you can take to become a real disciple. How do you measure up?

STEP 1: BELIEVE AND CONFESS THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST OF GOD

Jesus and His disciples retreated about 30 miles north of the Sea of Galilee to a place called Caesarea Philippi. Jesus decided it was time to evaluate His ministry. The disciples reported some people were identifying Jesus as John the Baptist returned from the dead or Elijah or even Jeremiah. That probably caused a laugh or two. But the laughter got stuck in their throats when Jesus asked, "But who do YOU say I am?"

Peter said, "You are the Christ of God." That was a powerful confession. The word "Christ" is a title meaning, "anointed king." It's the Greek form of the word Messiah. Peter was acknowledging Jesus was the King who fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies. Then he said, "of God." That tiny preposition "of" is a powerful Greek grammatical expression called a genitive absolute. Peter was saying Jesus not only came "from God" but He shared the Divine nature of God—He was part "of God. At this point, Jesus gave them a summary of their future travel itinerary. Notice how Jesus uses the word "MUST." This was His divine obsession. He had to go to Jerusalem to suffer, die and be resurrected.

Who is Jesus to you? Don't quote what someone else says or even what Peter said. Who do *you* say Jesus is? There are a lot of groups and people in our culture who have some strange ideas about Jesus. Let me give you a few quotes from some of these groups often called cults:

UNITY: "Jesus is the human man and Christ is the divine ideal."

HARE KRISHNA (New Age): "Christ is considered to be one of a long line of 'masters' who had themselves realized divinity." (He's right up there with Luke Skywalker and Yoda).

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES: "The evidence indicates that the Son of God (Jesus) was known as Michael before he came to earth. Jesus received His messiahship at age 30, on the day of His baptism. Following His ascension, Jesus, once again as Michael the archangel, returned to heaven and sat down at Jehovah's right to await the end of the 'times of the Gentiles.' This means that Jesus Christ began to rule as head of God's heavenly government in 1914."

MORMONS: "Jesus is the among the spirit children of Elohim, the firstborn, to whom all others are juniors. He visited the Israelites or Indians of North America after his resurrection and established the true church among them."

Can you honestly say, "I believe Jesus is the King and He came from God and is God, that He died for my sins and was resurrected? I believe He has ascended into heaven and is going to come again?" Do you say that because you heard your pastor, your parents or your Sunday School teacher say it? Or is it something you can confess personally, like Peter? That's the first step of discipleship.

In the New Testament, people openly confessed their belief in Jesus by being baptized. Christian baptism is your confession of faith. Have you done that? If not—why not? Look again at the strong words of Jesus in verse 26, "If any man is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father and of the holy angels."

\$STEP 2: DETHRONE YOUR SELF-CENTERED EGO

Verse 23 is one of the most important verses in the New Testament because it contains the essence of what it costs to be a disciple. Jesus said you can never be a disciple unless you "deny yourself." That doesn't mean you have to deny yourself something like sweets, sleep or food. It means you deny your Self. Think of your "self" as your "ego" or the "Big I." Because we are sinners, our human nature makes us self-centered. We put the "Big I" at the center of our own little universe and everything revolves around our "ego."

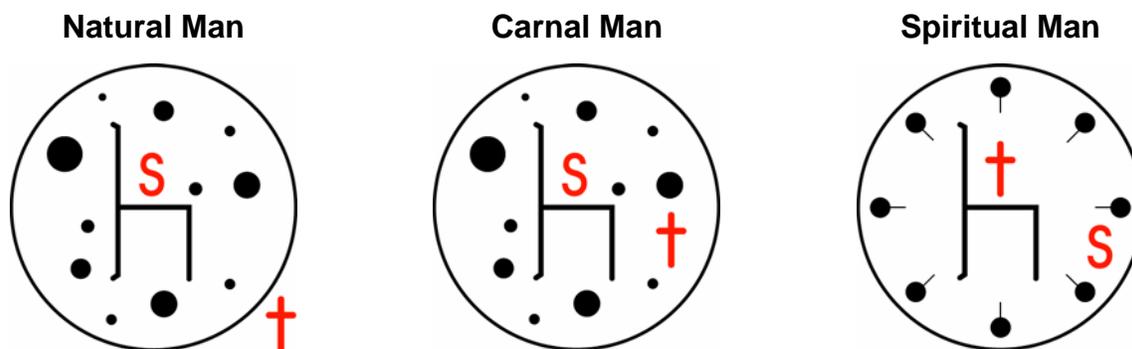
We are like the little nursery rhyme:
I had a little party this afternoon at three
'Twas very small, three guests in all;
Just I, myself, and me.
Myself ate up the candy;
And I drank up the tea;
'Twas also I that ate the pie and passed the cake to me.

By nature, the only people we really care about are I, myself and me. When C Construction built this worship center, the frame was constructed with massive steel "I-beams." I-beams are strong enough to support the rest of the materials. Our personalities are made up of one huge, strong, massive I-beam. I am in charge and I call the shots.

I can't help but remember the final lines to the poem "Invictus" Timothy McVeigh left before he was executed. I have quoted that poem before because it reflects the attitude of a life separated from God. Although they would never consider killing 168 people, many others share McVeigh's attitude. The poem ends, "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul." Contrast that with the unselfish life Jesus taught.

In a month, our new bookstore will be opening and we are going to offer some great Christian classics for you to purchase. There will be a section entitled, "Pastor's Picks." Here's one I hope everyone will read. It is *The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He was a pastor in Germany during the horror of Hitler. Because of his opposition to Nazi tactics, he was put into prison and later hanged as a traitor. He understood something about the cost of following Jesus. He wrote, "Self-denial is never just a series of isolated acts of mortification or asceticism. It is not suicide for there is an element of self-will even in that. To deny oneself is to be aware only of Christ and no more of self, to see only who goes before us and no more the road which is too hard for us."

Denying your Self is not thinking harshly of your "self" or hating your "self." It is just not thinking of your Self at all. Look at these three graphics. They are from a Campus Crusade for Christ booklet entitled "Have you made the wonderful discovery of the Spirit-filled life?"



The first circle represents a Natural Man or a person without Christ. Self, represented by a big S on the throne. The cross, or Christ, is outside the person's life. The smaller black circles represent different interests like family, work and hobbies. See how unbalanced they are? That's a self-centered life.

The second circle represents a Christian but he is a Carnal Man. The cross (Christ) is in his life but "self" is still on the throne. He is still self-directed because he hasn't "denied" himself as Jesus instructed. He is basically miserable. See how the interests are still unbalanced?

The third circle represents a Spiritual Man or a Spirit-filled person. Self has been dethroned and Jesus is on the throne. This person has made Jesus Lord by denying Self. See how balanced his life is? Think of it this way: As long as Self is on the cross, Jesus is on the throne. Whenever Self climbs back up on the throne, we put Jesus back on the cross. You see, the throne of your life is a single-seater; there's only room for one at a time. Which circle represents your life right now? Many people want Jesus in their lives so they won't burn in hell, but they still want to call the

shots. They want to maintain control. But Jesus insists that self be denied and dethroned. Will you do that?

STEP 3: AGREE THAT YOUR SELF IS DEAD—EVERY DAY

Next, Jesus says we must take up our cross daily. The meaning is so simple it has often been missed. A person carrying a cross had only one destination: Death. It was always a one-way trip. For you to take up your cross doesn't mean you carry a cross in your pocket or wear one around your neck. It doesn't mean you carry around a large wooden cross as some have done. Other people think their "cross to bear" is some kind of physical ailment. I've heard people complain about their ingrown toenail or migraine headache and say, "But I guess it's just my cross that I'll just have to bear."

Jesus isn't talking about ingrown toenails or migraines. He is talking about dying. It isn't physical death but death to self. After you have denied self, you must constantly subject your "Big I" to death. Actually, since all our sins were nailed to Jesus on the cross and since our ego is the essence of our sin problem, our "Big I" was already crucified with Jesus; we just have to acknowledge it.

One of my all-time favorite verses which I recite almost daily is found in Galatians 2:20. Every time the word "I" appears, you could substitute "self" or "ego." "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."

In other words, my Self was put to death when I identified with the death of Jesus but there is a real problem: Our self has more lives than a lucky cat. Crucified self keeps wanting to jump down from the cross and step up on the throne of your life. That's why Jesus said taking up your cross was a daily discipline. Actually, I have to quote and claim Galatians 2:20 several times a day and even several times an hour! Because Christ is living in you, Jesus wants to express His personality in your life. He wants to fill you with His love, His patience, His forgiveness, His peace, His wisdom etc. That can only happen when Self is off the throne and dead. When you make this discovery, the Christian life becomes an exciting experience of surrendering to the life of Jesus within you rather than trying to imitate the life of Jesus.

Jim Elliot is one of my spiritual heroes. On January 8, 1956, he and three other men were attacked and killed by the Auca Indians in the jungles of Ecuador. Elliot and a few others went to take the gospel to these primitive people. The story about their deaths captivated the nation because of a story in *Life Magazine*. Jim's wife, Elizabeth Elliot, wrote about the event in *Through Gates of Splendor* (another Pastor's Pick). Although it was a tragedy, Jim was ready to die. In his journal, Jim Elliot wrote: "God, I pray Thee, light these idle sticks of my life that I may burn for Thee. Consume my life, my God for it is Thine. I seek not a long life but a full one like You, Lord Jesus." ... "He is no fool to give up that which he cannot keep in order to gain that which he can never lose."

They didn't kill Jim Elliot because he was already dead before he got to South America. It's like the other paradoxes of Jesus but the only way you can truly experience life is by dying to Self. A

real disciple is a dead man walking. He has died to the charms of the world and to the lusts of the flesh.

Being dead has its advantages. For instance, you can't really bother a dead person. Go down to the funeral home sometime and walk into a room where a body is lying in rest and try this. Wait until the room is empty and walk up to the corpse. Compliment him. "You look wonderful today!" He isn't moved by flattery or the praise of men. Try criticizing him. "That tie looks awful." Does it bother him? That's a good thing about being dead, compliments or criticism don't affect you. Try to bribe him. "Here's a hundred dollar bill, do you want it?" I bet he won't even glance at your money, much less take it. Try to tempt him. Pull out some illegal drugs, "Here do you want to shoot up?" Get the point? When you are dead to Self, flattery, criticism, money and temptation have no appeal to you. That's what it means to take up your cross.

STEP 4: CHOOSE TO OBEY GOD 100% OF THE TIME

Jesus said, "Deny yourself, take up your cross, and FOLLOW ME." That means to walk the way Jesus walked. In May, I went to Destin with Cindy, Jenni, Laura Grace and Jenni's fiancé, Jason. One morning we were walking on the beautiful white sand. I looked back and Laura Grace was intentionally stepping in the footprints I left in the sand. So, I started taking giant steps and going around in circles. She laughed as she tried to copy my crazy movements. By the way, Dads and Moms, your little kids are walking in your footprints whether you realize it or not.

Following Jesus means to walk in His footsteps. Now this doesn't mean you have to live a perfect life to be a disciple—that's impossible. But you must desire to follow Jesus. It means a will to choose to obey God in every area. You see God is able to judge us on the basis of our desire and our direction rather than on our actual performance.

Sometimes following Jesus involves leaving where you are. In I Kings 19 there is a great illustration of discipleship. Elijah, the national prophet, was coming to the end of his ministry. God told him to choose Elisha to be his disciple and his replacement. Elijah found Elisha hard at work on the family farm, plowing with twelve yoke of oxen (24 oxen). There were eleven other men Elisha was supervising as he plowed with the last pair. So we may infer he came from a wealthy family with a large farm. Elijah walked up to him and threw his cape over him, saying, "Come on, follow me." Elisha agreed but he first did something very important. He slaughtered his oxen and used his wooden yoke as fuel to cook the beef. They had a good old barbeque. Do you see what Elisha was doing? He was cutting ties with his past so he wouldn't be tempted to go back to that life. It was his way of showing he was totally committed to following his new Master. That's discipleship.

A few months ago, at Fish the Planet, teenagers brought hundreds of CDs, drug paraphernalia and other junk and threw them away. Good for them! Some of you may have some things in your house that are keeping you from following Jesus. Some of you may need to empty your bars, some of you guys need to burn your pornographic tapes; you need to burn the phone number or email address of that person who is taking you away from your mate. You can't follow Jesus and blaze your own trail at the same time. I told you this wouldn't be a popular message—it wasn't popular 2,000 years ago either!

Another one of my spiritual heroes or heroines is Florence Nightingale. Although she was raised in great wealth and privilege in England, she experienced the call of God to help suffering people at age 17. She became known as the founder of modern nursing. While serving during the bloody Crimean War, she treated the wounded even after she contracted a deadly illness herself. She was the first female to be awarded the British Order of Merit. What made her life so exceptional? She was a serious disciple of Jesus Christ. She wrote in her diary, "I am 30 years of age, the age at which Christ began His mission. Now no more childish things, no more vain things." Late in her life she was asked to explain how she had accomplished so much, she said, "I can give only one explanation and that is this: I have kept nothing back from God." Are you holding back anything from God?

STEP 5: LOSE YOUR LIFE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Look at the last part of verse 24. Jesus said, "Whoever loses his life for me will save it." This doesn't mean to lose your life like we talk about soldiers losing their lives in battle. It means to become so immersed in something that you "lose yourself" in the task. What is the glorious obsession of a disciple? The kingdom of God. All you need in order to have a kingdom is a king: That's Jesus. My life verse says, "seek *first* the kingdom of God and *His* righteousness." (Matthew 6:33) Why doesn't it say, "seek first the kingdom of God and *its* righteousness?" Because the Kingdom of God is King Jesus.

British pastor Henry Drummond said to a group of young seminary students: "Don't touch Christianity unless you are willing to seek the Kingdom of Heaven first. I promise you a miserable existence if you seek it second."

There are two aspects to the Kingdom of God. There is the present kingdom of God. Romans 14:17 says, "The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." We sometimes sing a chorus quoting that verse that also asks, "Don't you wanna' be a part of the kingdom?" I do! But there is also a future aspect to the Kingdom of God. In verse 26 Jesus speaks about coming in the glory of the Father and the angels—that's what we call the Second Coming. Jesus is coming again and will one day set up a literal Kingdom. "Don't you wanna' be a part of that kingdom?" I do, but you must lose your life in the Kingdom of God now in order to find your life in the Kingdom of God to come.

That's the cost of following Jesus. It's pretty high isn't it? Salvation doesn't cost you a thing—it's a free gift. But the demands of discipleship are a different matter. As I close, let me ask you:

WHERE ARE YOU IN THE PROCESS?

There are at least five different levels of spiritual commitment. Are you:

1. Uninterested?

This would be a person who is not a Christian, someone who has no desire to know God. They are so controlled by Self and sin they don't really want to follow Jesus. Not many of them are present here today unless someone dragged them to church with them.

2. Seeker?

This would be a person who is not yet a Christian but is really interested in knowing God. These people are on the right path to meet Jesus and be saved. The Holy Spirit will be drawing these people to trust Christ in a few moments when we extend the invitation.

3. Believer?

You are at this level if you have repented of your sins and received Christ. You may or may not be baptized yet, but you have gotten your ticket to heaven punched. However, this person may still be controlled by Self.

4. Disciple?

A disciple is one who is denying Self, taking up his cross daily and following Jesus. He is not so interested in getting into heaven when he dies as he is pleasing and following his Master.

5. Disciple-maker?

There is at least one level beyond a simple disciple. Jesus didn't call us to be disciples but to be disciple-makers. In other words, a real disciple is someone who has led someone to Christ and has nurtured and mentored him or her to become a real disciple as well. Where are you? Where would you like to be? If it is not your obsession to become a disciple and a disciple-maker, you probably need to examine whether you are even a believer.

CONCLUSION

Many of you recall the movie "Chariots of Fire" about Eric Liddell running in the 1924 Olympics in Paris—and refusing to run on a Sunday. After his gold medal in the 400-meter race, he didn't return to Scotland to have his picture on a box of Wheaties and to live off his endorsements. I think the movie ended much too soon because the best part of Eric Liddell's life occurred after his Olympic medal. Eric accepted God's call to serve as a missionary in China during the 1930s. During the Japanese invasion, Liddell was arrested with other Chinese Christians and placed in a prison camp. Even in the camp, He led other Chinese to Christ and disciplined them. Months before China was liberated, Eric Liddell was lined up with others and shot by the Japanese. At the young age of 43 He met his Master. He had run another kind of race, for another kind of prize and he received another kind of medal—more priceless than gold.

Are you a disciple? Are you running the right race? Jesus isn't after attenders or spectators. He doesn't want 10,000 well-dressed carnal believers to gather here every Sunday. He is still calling us to be disciples and to be disciple-makers. Do you hear His call? Do you understand the cost? Now, will you make the commitment?

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Where are you in the process?

1. Uninterested?
2. Seeker?
3. Believer?
4. Disciple?
5. Disciple-maker?



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes