



## Counting the Cost – Our Investment

### Spiritual Exercise

<sup>1</sup> James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.

<sup>2</sup> My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, <sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. <sup>4</sup> But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. James 1:1-4

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure. Phil 2:12-13

Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Luke 12:32

### Prayer

Father God, finding joy in trials and tests is counter-intuitive in our culture. We confess our fear and avoidance of all things difficult and uncomfortable. Give us grace to welcome the trials and tests You bring our way. Give us wisdom and understanding to count the whole of each trial as a joyful exercise. Give us the grace and courage to walk through each trial with patience – that we may be found perfect and complete, lacking nothing. Do this Father for Your Name's sake and for Your Kingdom. In Christ's name, Amen.

### Introduction

After we discover and surrender to God's purpose, He begins to show us His plan for accomplishing it. Some He can trust with the whole plan; but for most, He reveals just enough of the plan to allow us to count the cost. This is in accordance with Luke 14:25-33, which we will cover later. For now, suffice it to say that weighing the cost of discipleship is at least a strong recommendation of Jesus Christ (if not a command).

A significant portion of that cost comes in the form of tribulation and trial that produce suffering and require sacrifice. Many Christians are prevented from finding joyful, Spirit-filled ministry by their misunderstanding of the sacrifice and suffering that accompanies the normal Christian life. Poor teaching and self-deception have led many to believe that their walk in Christ should be filled with blessing and happiness. To think that our loving Father would allow tribulation, trial and persecution is difficult for many that claim to be Christians. Even those that have heard the truth hope that it will not come to them.

As we search out this matter of suffering and sacrifice, we will discover that it is not only a requirement for all that would lead a righteous life, but something that the Bible suggests is a blessing that should be pursued. It is another of the kingdom's mysteries – something that is foolishness to the world, but grace and liberation to the children of God. Yes, even the truth about suffering and sacrifice will make us free.

Being made free in this area is critical to our transformation. The cost of discipleship can then be seen as our investment into the kingdom. In a sense, it is the toll we pay on the way toward joyful, Spirit-filled ministry. As disciple makers, our faith encourages others when they face the tests and trials, sufferings and sacrifices.

# Counting the Cost – Our Investment (continued)

## Definition

**Tribulation** (*thlipsis*): primarily means a pressing or pressure, anything which burdens the spirit. It is used of: The calamities of war; want; the distress of woman in child-birth; persecution; the "afflictions" of Christ, from which his followers must not shrink, whether sufferings of body or mind; sufferings in general.

*Vine's Expository Dictionary*

**Disciple** (*mathētēs*): lit., "a learner" (from *manthano*, "to learn," from a root *math--*, indicating thought accompanied by endeavor), hence it denotes "one who follows one's teaching"; it is used of the "disciples" of Jesus: of Jews who became His adherents, some being secretly so; especially of the twelve Apostles; of all who manifest that they are His "disciples" by abiding in His Word; in the Acts, of those who believed upon Him and confessed Him. A "disciple" was not only a pupil, but an adherent; hence they are spoken of as imitators of their teacher.

*Vine's Expository Dictionary*

## Searching Out the Matter

*(All Scripture references, but those noted, are NKJV; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; footnotes excluded)*

### If It Doesn't Kill You... Or, No Pain, No Gain

Matthew 5:4, 10

Matthew 10:22

John 16:33

Acts 14:21-22

Romans 5:1-5

Romans 8:16-18

Romans 8:28

2Corinthians 1:5-7

Colossians 1:24

2Timothy 3:12

1Peter 4:1-2

1Peter 4:12-14

### Sources of Suffering

1. Our own foolishness.
2. A loving Father.
3. Living in a fallen world.
4. Suffering with Christ.

How did He suffer? How should we share in His suffering now?

Philippians 2:5-8

Isaiah 53

# Counting the Cost – Our Investment (continued)

## Conclusion

John 13:34-35

John 15:13

Galatians 6:2

John 13:35

Galatians 2:20

## The Cost of Discipleship

Suffering and discipleship are more closely tied together than one might think:

1. We cannot be a disciple of Christ if we do not take up our cross daily.
2. Suffering must be taught as an important component of the normal Christian life.
3. Sharing in the sufferings of Christ is a significant part of "being like Christ."
4. One way we can share in the sufferings of Christ is to enter into the suffering of the brethren ("...whatever you do for the least of these, My brethren, you have done it unto Me.").

There are many good reasons for counting the cost:

1. It reaffirms my commitment to the Lord
2. It reminds and encourages me that He is in charge and in control
3. It protects me from presumption and a false discipleship
4. It is a gracious invitation and a necessary step of entering into the work with Him
5. It protects me from the embarrassment of not finishing what I have started
6. It reveals my dependence on Him
7. It keeps me from paying a cost that is not required of me

As Marketplace Leaders, it is important to recognize that we are responsible to help those we are discipling through this decisive step. It is much easier to teach something that we have experienced ourselves. "Do as I say, not as I do" won't cut it with this one. So, let's look at a few of the costs of discipleship:

John 13:35

John 15:7-9

John 8:31-32

Luke 14:26

Luke 14:27

Luke 14:33

## Assignment

1. Review your notes and the Scripture passages from this week's module. Share the ones that are most meaningful to someone you are discipling.

## Counting the Cost – Our Investment (continued)

2. What are your convictions and fears about suffering and sacrifice? Share these with someone you can trust to pray for you. For any fears you have, remember, "Behind every fear is a lie. Deal with the lie, and the fear will fly."
3. Using the passages provided, count the cost. Decide if you are willing to pay it.
4. As we begin this section on "Sacrificing for His Plan", consider your propensity to own the plan. What motivates this response?
5. Consider the following devotion and hymn.

### Devotion

#### **Fortitude (Come Away My Beloved, pg. 170)**

Through a multitude of tests, you will learn courage. It does not matter the price you pay, but at any cost you must obtain strength of character and the fortitude to endure. I would build your resources until you are able to carry unusually heavy loads and withstand intense pressures.

You will become an ambassador of the Kingdom of Heaven to whom I can assign critical missions, confident that you are equipped to fulfill them.

It will be in vain if you anticipate resting in a comfortable place. Zion is already filled with those who are at ease. No, you will find yourself put in a place of training and discipline, so that when the moments of crisis come you will not become fainthearted, and you will not be the victim of unwonted fear.

Trust My instruction in all of this, as you have in various past experiences. I am faithful and loving, and I am doing this so that you may meet the future days and not be found wanting.

#### **I Surrender All (written by Judson W. Van DeVenter, 1896; Performed by Vineyard Worship)**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7x2lpLSfq8&feature=related>