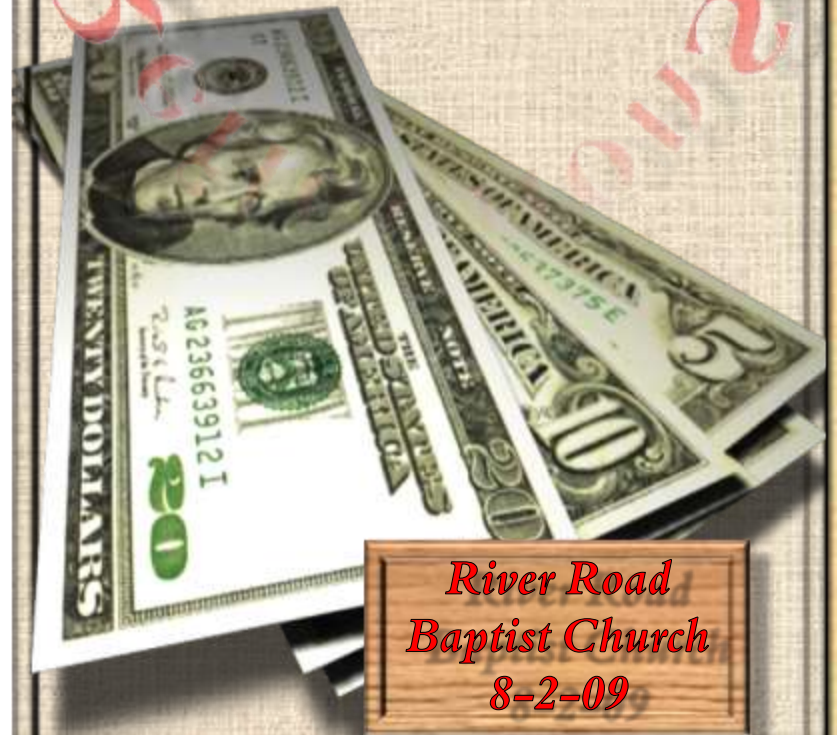


Sermon Notes

Reflections
At What Cost
Discipleship?



*River Road
Baptist Church
8-2-09*





Reflections

How much will it cost? *"For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it--²⁹ 'lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him,³⁰ 'saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish?'" (Luke 14:28-30 NKJ)*

Counting the cost is common practice when a project is being considered. The cost of materials is carefully assessed along with the labor expenses required to bring the task to completion. Effort is made to anticipate even the types of problems that might occur and make allowances for their likelihood in preparation for the work to be done. Care is then taken to assure that the project remains within the cost parameters established before the start of work. In spite of these measures, costs do often exceed anticipated levels. If, however, the builder has been judicious in planning then the project will still become a finished reality.

In life, as in creating a building, decisions are made that have certain costs, or consequences, associated with them and these choices may have not been analyzed carefully before making them, resulting in unexpected outcomes. Young people frequently make what turn out to be life-changing decisions based on the pressures of their peer group. The results can be devastating to a life just getting started. Drug use, alcohol abuse, sexual activities that result in disease or pregnancy that too often end in abortions can produce damages that have life-long impacts on a young person.

In a new marriage uncontrolled spending can result in debt burdens that exceed a young couple's ability to cope. What seemed to be important purchases at the time can afterwards become enormous, and sometimes overwhelming, pressures that can destroy a marriage.

Counting the costs of our choices is a skill best learned in our youth from parents who use God's wisdom in teaching us to acknowledge God in all that we do and say. We need to learn to govern our choices in life based on the way in which they will benefit or harm our relationship with God, with our wife or husband, or others that we value. We need to consider the

scriptural admonitions that call us to be good stewards of the provisions that God has given us in the talent, skill, and strength that allow us to develop and utilize our wealth. We are called on to acknowledge Him with the firstfruits of our labors. *"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows."*

(Malachi 3:10 NAS) The term firstfruits indicates that we must first acknowledge God with our wealth before all other obligations are met. If our financial cost-counting begins with God and His Word, we can count on Him to bless our lives with His wisdom on how to utilize the wealth that flows through our hands.

Another area of life that we are called on to count the cost of, is becoming a disciple of Jesus. He indicates clearly what it means to be His disciple when He says... *Now great multitudes were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them,²⁶ "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.²⁷ "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:25-27 NAS)*

Jesus, communicating in the language and nuances of language in His time on Earth, was making the point that to be one of His disciples required that He be first in their affections so that their love for Him exceeded their love for even wife, family, and children. His disciple's love must be of a kind that made their love for the others appear as hate by comparison. It seems that many of those who had followed Him, because of the signs and wonders He demonstrated, began to fall away and quit as His followers when He pointed out the cost of discipleship.

In counting the cost of being true disciples of Christ, the Church today appears to be ineffective. We have accepted a fleshly, indulgent lifestyle while still claiming discipleship with Jesus. We have found other things that have become foremost in our thinking and Jesus has become secondary in our life's choices and decisions. When we consider the testimonies of God's people in Hebrews chapter 11, it becomes evident that their love for God exceeded their love for anything else. *They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated³⁸ (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. (Heb 11:37-38 NAS)*

By comparison, have we even considered paying such a cost?
Pastor Doug