

Group Notes 29 January 2012
Discipleship 4: Commitment

Welcome - Ice Breaker

What play or picture would you pay to go and see? Or what band or musical piece would you pay to hear?

Word – Matthew 10:37-42

Love is costly. God is love, and the Bible tells us that His love was given its fullest expression on the cross. How costly was that! We have been looking at discipleship in terms of growing to be more like Jesus. If God is Love, then Jesus is Love incarnate in human form. To grow more like Jesus means growing in love. Since that love is ultimately displayed on the cross, Jesus' disciples have to be people of the Cross. So Jesus commands us to take up the Cross (v.38).

Question 1: Sometimes people talk about some problem as "We've all got a cross to bear." Do you think we can call any kind of problem a cross?

Let's avoid the misconception that Jesus is telling us not to love our families in v.37. Jesus is well aware of the commandments to honour our father and mother and love our neighbour, see for example Matthew 19:19. He is talking about whether we love them more than we love Him. In fact the more we love the Lord, the more we will love our families, because God is Love. But nothing may take the place only God should have in our lives.

Nor should we think that this verse means we should put the church before our families! Doing church things is not the same as loving the Lord with all our hearts. To devote so much of our time to church activity that our families feel neglected and rejected is not honouring to God. Instead we should work out what it means to be a disciple in our family life, our work life, our social life and our church life.

Question 2: What are people's experiences? Has growing as a Christian made you love others less? or more?

It's costly to be a disciple, but then, so is every worthwhile thing. Marriage, raising children, getting an education, career goals, sporting or artistic excellence – none of these can be achieved without making sacrifices. But we make these sacrifices gladly because we do it for love. We love our kids our art or our career so much that we happily give them our time and effort. We should not be surprised then that our ultimate endeavour, to know God through Christ and grow to be more like Him, is also costly. It needs work, passion, commitment and sacrifice. But we can only give of ourselves in this way when we love the Lord. And we will love Him if we remember that any sacrifices we make to follow Jesus are only a tiny fraction of the sacrifice He made for us. We will never be able to out-do his amazing act of love on the cross. There is a great beauty to this sacrifice in verse 29. Jesus promises that if we lose our life, we will find it again. Out of the Cross comes resurrection. The more we let go in surrender to God the more He can fill us with resurrection power!

Question 3: What sort of things have you made sacrifices for in your life? Have they been worthwhile?

Here are some statements about what it may mean in practice to take up our cross:

- put God first in major decisions – what job I do, where I live, whom I marry – just as Jesus surrendered to God's will on the cross
- live each day for Him by putting yourself at his disposal. This is dying to self and living for Him.
- forgive others as we ourselves have been forgiven through the cross
- being ready for a bit of ridicule or even opposition – Jesus died at the hands of sinful men
- the cross was very public: keeping a low profile as a Christian is not an option
- making sure possessions don't rule your life: they'll be "crossed out" if they become idols.
- loving others as ourselves – the cross was an act of love
- obeying the Scriptures, just as Jesus was convinced His death was to fulfil Scripture

Question 4: Which of these statements do you find most meaningful? Or most challenging? Can you come up with your own statement about what it means to take up your cross?

Worship ideas for groups with no musicians.

Reflect on the following statements:

When Jesus asks us to take up the cross for Him, it is because He first took up His Cross for us.

In following Jesus we will never go through the tiniest fraction of what He went through for us.

He asks us to be committed to Him, but He gave Himself totally for us.

Turn down the lights. Spend a few minutes in quiet, picturing ourselves sitting at the foot of the Cross, perhaps touching His wounded feet. Close by giving thanks for His awesome love.

Works/witness.

Wear a cross, a fish badge or some other Christian symbol when you go to work or to the shops and be prepared to take up your cross by making yourself known as a Christian.