



THE GREAT EXCHANGE: Counting the Cost

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In 1911, Ernest Shackleton set out on an expedition to be the first to cross Antarctica from sea to sea. Their ship got stuck in the ice and sank before reaching Antarctica. With sled dogs and lifeboats they were able to overcome some of the harshest and deadliest conditions on earth. Together they persevered. They ultimately reached land and were rescued without a single fatality. It was a dangerous journey, and some might say foolish. However, when people heard of the expedition some 5000 people are said to have wanted to join!

A famous advertisement is traced to Shackleton but still being debated...

"MEN WANTED for hazardous journey, small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful, honor and recognition in case of success. Ernest Shackleton."

- 1. What type of expedition would be worth risking your life for? Would you sign up for this?**

Sometimes, I'm not sure if we help our case for Jesus when we make it so easy and convenient to follow him. It's time for complete honesty: Following Jesus will cost you... everything you have! READ Luke 14:25-33.

- 2. What do you think Jesus means when he says we should hate our family (and ourselves) in order to follow him?**
- 3. What is a time when you started a project without considering the cost? Ever bite of more than you could chew?**

This is about who we are following and recognizing the cost to leave everything else behind. You can't follow two things. At some point your family or your other passions will lead you in a different way than Jesus. Who do you choose? God wants to lead. He is a jealous God because he knows that anything less than him would be a poor substitute and lead to death. He says, "In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples."
(v33)

- 4. Why do you think Jesus says we "cannot" be his disciples if we don't give up everything?**

We are starting to look ahead toward Easter and thinking about Jesus going to the cross. Here's one of the things Jesus said as he was thinking about what was ahead for him...

There's one other cost to consider, by the way: The world won't love you for following Jesus. READ John 15:18-21.

One thing I love about Jesus is that he doesn't ask us to do anything that he hasn't already done. He gave up his life and he was hated. He was persecuted. As he says, "A servant is not greater than his master." We will be treated the same.

5. What are some ways that you've experienced persecution or hate from the world because of your faith?

Jesus was upfront about the costs to follow him. He was probably more clear about the costs than the benefits sometimes. There's a story in Matthew about a teacher of the law who came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." (Matthew 8:19) Instead of encouraging him, Jesus just laid it out there replying, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." (vs.20)

The man wanted to wait until after he had "buried his father." He basically says, "Yes, but..." (Commentators suggest that it's likely that his father hadn't died yet, implying that he would follow later.) Whatever the case, he had other priorities. Jesus replies with, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead." (v22)

Jesus doesn't exactly make it easy! He's not sugar-coating things. Following Jesus might be difficult and there's a cost involved! Yet what do we get in return? Jesus himself. Life with him. Freedom. Real life. REAL life.

6. What do you think about what Jesus said here? Does it feel a little harsh?

Jesus doesn't give us the option to tiptoe into the water and do this half way. It's like there's a high-dive and we're asked to leap when we don't see the pool at the bottom. We have to trust him. We leave everything that we have and we place it in his hands. We say yes to him.

Billy Graham describes it like 3 calls on our life: First, we are called to Jesus. We come to him to receive forgiveness for our sins and are washed clean. Next, we are called to be distinctive from the world—to make Jesus Lord of our lives. Finally, we are called to training. We begin a process of growing to be more like him, but there is a steep cost involved. We give him everything. Jim Elliot, missionary to South America who was martyred in the 1950's is famous for the quote, " He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

7. What are ways that people try to partly follow Jesus? How have you seen that work?

8. What does it mean to you to make Jesus Lord?

9. If you are "in training" with Jesus what does he have you working on right now?