

Yes, It Is Worth It!

You have a chance to move to Hawaii. Who wouldn't want to move there? But before you get hypnotized by thoughts of exotic coconut trees, luaus on the beach, beautiful sunsets and perfect weather, remember that moving to Hawaii will mean you have to give up some things. Chances are you will see your family less; who can afford to fly to Hawaii a couple times a year? The cost of almost everything except pineapple will be high. Most milk and meat has to be shipped to Hawaii. You can't build snowmen in the winter and singing Christmas carols around a decorated palm tree dressed in flowered shirts just isn't the same. Hawaii would be great, but you will have to give up some things.

It is great to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Who wouldn't want to be? It means we will leave this fallen world. It means that when we die, we will be raised to eternal life. It means sins are forgiven. But there is a cost. Today Jesus shows us that cost, then he will show us the reward, and in the end, it is our prayer, we would all certainly say without hesitation, "Yes, it is worth it."

I. The cost of being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.' Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

This doesn't sound like Jesus. Isn't he the Prince of Peace? Yes. Didn't the angels sing at his birth peace on earth? Yes. Didn't Jesus say to his disciples, "Peace to you?" Yes. Now he says he did not come to bring peace, but a sword that will literally cut families into two.

Don't worry. He did come to bring peace, peace between a hostile, condemned sinner and a holy God in heaven. In order to do this he must take a sword and cut us lose. If you were on a sinking ship, we must remove you from that ship in order to save you. So Jesus removes us from several things.

He takes a sword and removes us first from the guilt of our sin. The Bible describes it in many ways: our sins are as far away from us as the east is from the west; a clean conscience; covered over; washed away. Because Jesus died as our sin, we are forgiven.

He separates us from death. Even if our bodies cease to function and we die, he will raise us up on the last day. And because he died for our sins, the second death, as the Bible calls it, is not our future. We will not go to hell, but to heaven.

He separates us from the devil. He separates us from the world. As a result, we have lost our lives. We live a new life in Christ. We don't think, talk, crave as everyone else on earth; we desire to love and serve and act like God with happy and willing hearts.

But there is more. Because of Jesus, we may even be separated from our own families. In Corinth, some women heard Paul preach and believed in Jesus. Their husbands didn't, and when these husbands didn't like being married to Christians, they threatened to leave. Paul told these women, "let them go." If these women had not believed, they would have remained married. But because of Jesus, they must go through the pain of divorce.

Let me put it this way. There is peace in a family when everyone believes in Jesus and his Word. They may argue over sports, politics or whether organic food is better or not, but they are one. They pray together, Commune together, worship together. You can also have peace and harmony when no one in the family believes in Jesus. They may argue over sports, politics, or organic food, but they are united in their unbelief and there is peace.

But in a family where some, but not all, believe, then the battle begins. The believers want share Jesus with their family. They wisely warn their sons and daughters of the dangers of worldliness. And when they do, sides are taken. Sons and daughters who do not want to abandon their worldly lifestyles get mad at mom and dad. Daughters-in-law who try to lead their mothers-in-law away from a false god, or no religion at all, will be faced will coldness, ridicule or hatred.

And now Jesus tells us something we are afraid of hearing. If there is conflict in your family over the Bible, we cannot stay neutral. To say nothing would be like telling an alcoholic to grab another whiskey for the road. We do them harm. We might as well close the door to heaven for them and tuck the key into our pockets.

And we are in danger. ***"Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me."*** The devil presents a choice to us: Jesus or family. Our own faith and salvation is now in jeopardy.

II. The reward of being a disciple of Jesus.

Is it worth it? Is Jesus worth death and persecution, suffering and even a split in our families? I told you before about my mother who spent a couple years in an orphanage. Did her parents die? No, it was worse. They not only lacked parenting

skills, they were leading her down the wrong path. They gave her an overcoat, sent her into a grocery store, and told her to stuff food items into that coat. She was arrested and the state took her away from her parents and placed her in an orphanage.

Another family, the Summerfelts, saw her there and took her home and raised her as one of their own. But for years she was faced with a choice. Sometimes her parents would call and tell her to come home. When the Summerfelts wanted to officially adopt her, her parents refused unless money was given to them. Lawsuits were threatened. At any time my mother could have walked out that door, hopped on a bus and returned to her family. She didn't. Weighing what she had with what she had in the past, she stayed. It hurt.

Friends, the devil is no longer your master, but while we live on earth, he will do all he can to make us choose between Jesus and another. And he will even use family and hold them hostage over us. The only problem is, if we give in to the devil for the sake of loved ones, he will not let them go, but grab us, too.

Is it worth it? ***"He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward."*** Look at the prophets, Moses, David, Isaiah, Matthew, Luke, John, Paul. Where are they now? In heaven.

You hear and believe the prophets. You share their reward in heaven. Don't throw that away. If a rich man gave up all he had to live with his family who were poor, that is noble. In fact, Jesus did that for us, leaving heaven to be with us on earth. But if a girl leaves a home where she is loved and returns to a family who leads her down a path of crime, abuse, maybe even drugs and alcohol, that is not noble; it is foolish. This is what Jesus meant when he said in Luke, ***"I tell you the truth, ... no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come, eternal life,"*** (18:29-30).

In fact, staying with Jesus shows how much we love him. ***"Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."*** Read these words carefully. It doesn't say that loving Jesus means you don't love your loved ones. Oh, the devil and those who reject Jesus will claim that you don't love them. Rubbish. You love them. You only love Jesus more. In fact, your love for Jesus means you will love your family, friends, strangers, even enemies more than before. ***"If anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."*** Salvation and love go hand in hand. You enjoy serving others. Your love for them only increases. That is because you love them as God loves you.

It is because you love them that you speak up. ***"He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward."*** You are now the prophet. Your goal is to share your reward with them.

I don't know about you, but this text is emotionally draining. We have been to the heights of the gospel and eternal life. And we have plummeted to the reality that Jesus may mean our children or parents may never speak to us again. I don't know of a family who is not torn over Jesus. It's in my family. It hurts.

What are we to do? First, love Jesus more than anything else. The devil will use family to drive a wedge between Jesus and us. Don't let him do it. Second, families, if you are not doing daily devotions, start now. Third, speak. I know there is a fine line between nagging and speaking the truth in love. So, don't speak as one who is better, but as one who is just as sinful and let them know what it means to be saved. But understand you can say and do things in love; they may still blame you. Fourth, be patient. It may take a lifetime. And fifth, pray.

This is a cross we must carry. But that cross means one thing: we are with Jesus. It means we are saved. Carry it to the glory of God and for the benefit of others. INJ Amen.