

4: THE DISCIPLE TRAIL: WHY SURRENDER COMES BEFORE GROWTH

By John Leavy

In Week 1: What is a Disciple?

3 Min read



“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost...? — Luke 14:28

Jesus never hid the cost of following Him. He made it clear: discipleship will cost personal comfort, control, and convenience. What it gives back is life.

Most men approach faith like a casual hike—no commitment at first. They say to themselves, *“We’ll see how things go, how much effort and sacrifice are needed, then they’ll decide whether or not to finish the hike.”* Jesus described finishing the trail more like building a tower or setting out on a long expedition. Before you start, you need to understand what it will cost.

Following Jesus means leaving the trailhead. It means carrying weight you didn't plan on, walking terrain that isn't always comfortable, and choosing a path that doesn't always make sense to the crowd. Discipleship isn't an accessory to life; it reshapes life's trail.

When Jesus told men to count the cost, He wasn't trying to scare them away. He was inviting them into honesty. He was saying, *"Don't step onto this trail casually. Know what you're saying yes to."* Because halfway commitment makes for a miserable journey.

APPLICATION

Ever think about enjoying the benefits before considering the amount of work required? Many men want the benefits of discipleship without the surrender it requires. They want peace without repentance, purpose without obedience, and identity without submission. But Jesus forms men by asking them to let go—not to tighten it.

Counting the cost means asking hard questions before leaving the trailhead. What habits need changing? What relationships need honesty? What priorities need reordering? What comforts need to be surrendered?

On a trail, you learn to carry only what matters. Discipleship is the same. Some things have to be laid down so you can walk freely. Pride, secrecy, control, distraction—these distractions slow a man's progress.

Counting the cost is sound preparation. Following Jesus isn't taking anything from you—He's trying to give you life, clarity, and direction. But He won't drag you down the trail—it's your choice.

LIVE IT OUT

Today, ask God plainly what He's asking you to lay down right now. It might be a habit, a secret pattern, a misguided priority. Don't rationalize it away. Just name it honestly and offer it to Him. Laying something down is often the first real step forward on the trail.

PRAY THIS...

"Father, show me that surrender is a step toward You on the trail, not a step away."

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Practice builds the man.***

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