

Seeking to Serve Christ: The Cost of Following Him

By Kimberly Sowell

"Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, 'Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.' And Jesus said to Him, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.' Then another of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father.' but Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.'" (Matthew 9:19-22 NKJV)

As a child, I always wanted to be a country-western singer. I never cared that much for the music, but I can still remember how I admired stars like Barbara and Dolly shining like stars up on stage. They would sway to the music, and their rhinestone jackets would glisten in the spotlights while the tassels on their sleeves would keep time with the music. And who wasn't mesmerized by those gorgeous high-heeled cowboy boots and the suede hat that fit so beautifully atop big waves of hair daring not to move under the influence of a full can of hairspray. What a life of glamour! I never made it to the Grand 'Ol Opry, but you may catch me occasionally wearing a rhinestone jacket.

Appearances can be deceiving. Many jobs seem glamorous when we watch others do them, but we find out once we begin the work ourselves that the task is not so glamorous after all. Jesus wasn't wearing fancy clothes, and he was never on stage in the spotlight, but He was admired by many and inspired them to want to serve Him. Jesus gladly welcomes loyal followers, but He is very upfront—serving Jesus was never intended to be glamorous.

Jesus calls each one of us to be His follower. He carries us higher and higher to new stages of ministry, to venture into new territory in service to Him. Listen to Jesus count the cost of following Him.

First, there is no promise of financial gain. Jesus' message is plain—do not seek or expect personal gain, whether it be money or prestige, from ministry in the name of the Lord. You will reap your rewards in Heaven (Col. 3:24), and we can praise God for His trustworthiness in this great promise.

Most Christians do not expect to be paid for their acts of ministry unless they are called into vocational ministry. Jesus said in Luke 10:7 that a minister is worth his gain, but the Scripture gives no assurance that Christian service will reap financial reward or even compensation. (Remember, Paul was also a tentmaker.) We know that God takes care of His children's needs (Matthew 6:26-29), but that provision may not come directly from ministry performed. Likewise, serving Jesus is not exactly glamorous in most cases. Jesus set the example by washing His disciples' feet. Serve the Lord with a humble heart, knowing that God is pleased with a gentle and quiet spirit (1 Peter 3:4).

Next, Jesus answers a disciple who wants to delay his commitment until he can bury his father. We don't know from Scripture if the man's father had just passed away, or if the man intended to care for his father's needs until his death. Jesus' answer is not a harsh mandate to abandon your family. Instead, Christ looks into the disciple's motives and sees an unwillingness to surrender all to Him. When we tell God when we are going to begin serving Him, we are failing to relinquish control and also failing to realize that God is in complete control of every circumstance of our lives already! Have you allowed a relationship or a circumstance to limit your surrender to serving Christ? Have you told God, "As soon as (blank) happens, I will (blank)"? As soon as I get my kids in school, as soon as I get these bills paid off, as soon as the summer is over, as soon as ... you fill in the blank. God is a jealous God, and He tolerates no god, no problem, no circumstance, and no person to come before Him in our priorities. I have often said, "If you're comin', come on." Jesus says, If you want to serve Me, come on!