



WHEN CHRIST CALLS US

Every child of the king or queen of England becomes a member of the royal family when he or she is born. But before they can rule England, they go through an extensive training period. They don't train in order to become princes or princesses; they already are, simply by being born. They train so they can rule properly and effectively. The preparation of a monarch's children for their royal duties is long, arduous and painstaking. There is no easy path of preparation for future rulers.

After a person is saved (forgiven, born-again, given a new spirit, and given eternal life), God can now work on him to restore him to His original purpose for humankind. The question of his legal status is already a settled issue. He is now a full-pledged royal child of God and he has been qualified for the next phase of God's Kingdom life process – training for reigning. While it is true that the new believer still has a long way to go before he can actualize his true destiny, the work of preparation, growth and maturity now takes place within the secure environment of the Kingdom – inside, not outside.

When a person receives Jesus, he is also called to become His disciple. What is a disciple? A disciple is one who receives instruction from another, a learner, a follower (**Webster**: Latin - "*discipulus*" - root word "*disco*" - to learn). Christ calls all believers to follow Him, to learn from Him, to work for Him, and to be like Him.

What do you want to achieve in life? Success? Fame? Wealth? Possessions? Whatever it is, there's going to be a cost. It's going to cost you something. What are you willing to give up to achieve your goals? Have you done a cost-benefit analysis? Have you counted the cost? Is it going to be worth it in the end?

When you count the cost of following Jesus, what value system are you going to use? Following Jesus means believing His values. And His value system is exactly opposite that of the world's. He said, "*If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it in the end. If you give up your life for Me, you will find true life in the end.*" (**Matt. 16:24-25**)

Jim Elliott, one of the missionaries to an Amazon River village who were martyred for Jesus, wrote in his journal before leaving for the mission station: "*He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.*"

Too often, we give up our souls for something that won't last,

something that we cannot keep. Jesus asked, "*How do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul in the process? Is anything worth more than your soul?*" (**Matt. 16:26**)

Following Jesus means loving Him more than our spouse, our children, our parents, our family. Why? Unless Jesus becomes first priority we remain self-centered and thus, we are not really loving spouses, parents, children or siblings. But if we follow Jesus first, He makes us loving spouses, parents, children or siblings. By putting Jesus first, we end up much more able to love our families.

Following Jesus also means carrying our own cross. What did Jesus mean? Our submission to Jesus will bring us at cross-purposes with our own desires, which are opposite to what Jesus wants for us. Every time we follow Jesus in a particular area of our lives we must be prepared to suffer the pain of our own opposition and loss.

Following Jesus means that we don't hold anything back from Him. Christ becomes the most precious thing to us, that we count what we have to give up to follow Him as having no true value. Salvation is God's free gift – something of immense value, but discipleship will cost us everything we possess – things of no eternal value.

God saved us for a grander purpose than merely avoiding eternal punishment. We were saved so we could be restored to God's original purpose for humankind – ruling earth. In the place of Adam, we now have Christ to rule with us. And after our legal restoration to God's Kingdom, we are called to discipleship – a process of growing, maturing and equipping for our royal duties in this life and for eternity. This process involves increasing levels of commitment – as our value system is transformed – until Jesus becomes our first priority in life, above all of the things of this world.

Discipleship, at its bottom line, is about loving Jesus. That was what God wanted at the very beginning of human history. If we make relationship with Jesus our priority, everything else will follow – becoming like Jesus and ruling earth with Him – because we have the ever-present help of the Holy Spirit.

When Christ calls us to follow Him, there's only one answer we can give Him if we love Him. When we accept His call to discipleship, God will help us to keep choosing Christ as our first priority in life, until nothing on earth is more precious to us than our relationship with Him, until we are willing to lose everything, even our very lives. For it is only by losing our lives that we fulfill God's destiny for us of ruling with Him forever.