

Count The Cost

Zech. 7:12,13 “They made their hearts *like* flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets; therefore great wrath came from the LORD of hosts. “And just as He called and they would not listen, so they called and I would not listen,” says the LORD of hosts;

In this article, I would like to look at some serious considerations you may have to “buy” into before you continue to walk in a Torah submissive way. One the one hand, scripture such as Isaiah 55:1 (See also Rev. 21:6 & 22:17) says there is no cost for Living Water:

“Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.”

On the other hand, Yeshua tells us to “count the cost” (Luke 14:25-35) of discipleship before embarking. So, God doesn’t charge us anything, but people will. Below is a partial list of some of the costs you might have to pay.

Self Image. Ooh, this is a hard one. James (1:22-27) tells us that hearing and doing Torah is like looking into a better and more perfect mirror. What we see is what we get. Ouch. Sometimes this isn’t very pretty. As a matter of fact, in the current vernacular, it sucks. The mirror don’t lie too good. But on the bright side, whatever is not supposed to be there becomes illuminated and subject to change. We get to see exactly what we are, and learn what to change through humility. Fasten your seat belts, it’s going to be a bumpy ride, but He promises to be with us and help us (Mat. 28:20; Acts 2:25-28 from Psalm 16:8-11).

Weakness. Okay, this is not such a bad cost. Through obedience we “work out” our faith muscles by action (Philip. 2:12), which will build us up both individually and as a body. So we get a little sore sometimes too. This is part of the process of building. When you work out with weights, the trainers will tell you that tissue is “broken down” so it can be rebuilt even stronger. And sometimes this will happen in the spiritual realm also. As we work out with the Word, we are strengthened. We learn the difference between clean and unclean (Is. 52:1, 65:4; De. 15:6,16,19; Hag. 2:10-14); how not to mix worldly things with Yahveh’s things (De. 22:9,11); and rightly divide the Word of Truth (Eph. 4:21; 2Tim 2:15). If you don’t use your physical or spiritual muscles, they are useless (Ja. 2:26).

Effort. Our walk will cost us a lot of effort, but there is a difference between “work” (Phil. 3:7-14; 1Cor. 9:24-27; II Tim. 2:5), and “works salvation.” It’s not easy to realize something is true and then discipline the flesh to submit. A big part of submission is the acknowledgment that obedience to the Word of our Father is not elective, even though He is gentle in His requirements. Romans 6:15-20 tells us that we are either “slaves to sin” or “slaves to righteousness” and there is nothing in between.

Feelings. Pardon me while I vent a little. I am so tired of hearing “I don’t feel led” when contemplating something the Word requires of us. Feelings don’t generally have anything to do with love (loving God is doing His Word – John 15:10), although good feelings can come from performing a loving action (a redundancy - Love is an action

word as in “for God so loved the world”). The Spirit will never lead apart from the Word (John 16:13, truth = Word); He will lead through the revealed Word (John 15:26).

I remember hearing a woman say one time that she “felt led” to divorce her current husband and marry another guy who was “more Spiritual.” I’m sorry if this offends someone, but I have to say this woman raised stupidity to an art form. Even after it was explained to her where she was wrong, she did it anyway. I think sometimes we need to just turn on the garden hose and cool them off.

The Flesh. It may seem humorous, but I had to give up things like sausage links and clam chowder (I especially like the New England style). However, if God says those things are “not food,” then it’s harmful for me to continue eating them even if they taste good (or are less filling). I know without a doubt that since I gave up pork and shellfish I have been very, very healthy. And who knows what the long term effects are of consuming these things? Who’s to say that pork doesn’t react with ultra-violet light to cause cancer or something? But one thing I do know, it is God who is telling me this, and nothing that comes out of His mouth is bad for me. (This pun is also intended - get it? Pork + shellfish = flesh? Oh, never mind. It is better to have punned and lost than never to have punned at all).

Family and Friends. Family is another area that might cost you, especially if they are Christians. For some reason non-Christians just don’t seem to be bothered as much by this. Some of you might be treated in the same fashion as a Jew sometimes will who accepts Yeshua as his or her Messiah (their families act as if they’re dead).

Friends may be affected as well, in similar ways. If they are non-Christian you might not even get a blip on their radar screen. But if they are Christian, they will probably scramble the F15’s. (What’s that beeping? Uh oh, they have radar lock!) Yeshua tells us there will be costs such as division between families because of Him (Mat. 10:31-39). But He also told us to be kind (Prov. 25:21,22; Rom. 12:20). This will be a very severe test for some – to respond “in kind (ness)” instead of “in kind” (tit for tat). I know it is for me sometimes. I’d just as soon step outside and go a few rounds on the lawn, or trade missiles with them. Hah, hah, just kidding Father, I’ll move my thumb away from the fire button.

Church. If you are presently part of a standard “Christian” church, you most assuredly will be in for a difficult time. My family has already experienced ostracism in the form of loss of position; loss of friends; loss of respect; loss of teaching opportunities; and loss from people who left the church in anger against us; I have been called a “heretic,” “false teacher,” and “false prophet” without cause. My children were given similar treatment from others in their age groups for no other reason than I was their father. Some of the ostracism is very quiet and you would never know but for the sudden drop in social invitations or the glacial looks across the church. Some hostility will be open and some will go on behind your back; but mostly behind your back because they have no scriptural reason at all for their feelings or actions.

Some of these Church people will contentedly munch their crackers and grape juice and not even notice that they are ignoring their own teachings on judgment and forgiveness. They will cheerfully exclude you from their music groups because you think they should practice what they sing, but they prefer to sing one thing and do another. Others will not even think twice about booting you out of their home fellowship (or refusing to come while you are there), in the name of “peace.” These types of hypocrisy may be difficult to adjust to. But many people outside the so-called Church can see this also, which is one of the reasons they do not attend.

Realization. Another item that might cause you some frustration (it did for me), is the realization that people have lied to you for years. When I first started my “hear and obey” process, and the blessings of obedience began to flow and the Word opened up like the Star Gate, I was amazed and delighted. My relationship with my Father was broadened and deepened, and the Spirit was able to begin making some changes in my character that I had struggled with for years under conventional Christian teaching. I wondered why these benefits had been withheld from me. To add to it, there were leaders who wanted to continue preventing others from hearing the truth and becoming free also. So they restricted my sharing opportunities for fear of “disturbing” the flock.

Leaders. Speaking of leaders, don’t be surprised that some leaders or pastors may not be all that thrilled with your discoveries. See, the job they hold is based on keeping knowledge about the Word from the sheep so they can keep getting paid (see references on the religious leaders in the gospels). It’s a form of job security to have weak sheep. You will hear these sorts of leaders constantly talking about how “immature” the sheep are; how the “timing” of your teaching isn’t right; about trying to teach “too much too soon;” and how concerned they are that the sheep not hear your “disturbing” doctrines. Of course, none of these objections are from the Word. The Word of God is not bad for people and never hurt anyone, no matter how much they got or how soon (I Cor. 3:1-9). *Withholding* the Word does the real damage.

Dependence. As you study (hear) the Word and practice (obey) it, you will find that your dependence on others is replaced with a dependence on Yahveh (God). Your relationship to Yahveh will change in such a way as to strengthen your faith and understanding, and you will answer directly to Him rather than to a go-between. This will not sit well with the hierarchy (the man-made chain of command) because their authority will be limited. They will use all sorts of arguments that sound good but have no scriptural basis to attack and try to discredit you, so they can hang on to this authority. To a large extent Yeshua was executed for this reason, so we are in good company.

As a body we learn “interdependence.” Rather than the weaker practice of depending totally on somebody else to tell us everything, we exchange dependence with each other and the Spirit in order to develop the unity that is Yahveh’s.

May the Father bless and keep. Bruce Bertram