



COUNTING THE COST

Open it

1. Describe something that cost you greatly. What was it? How did it cost you? Was it worth it? Would you do it again?

Daily devotions

Day 1

TODAY'S THEME: EXPLORE IT

Read Acts 21:1-14

2. How would you summarize this passage?
3. What is the main idea, or the purpose, of this passage?
4. What do you learn about God's will from this passage?
5. What questions do you have after reading these verses?

Day 2

TODAY'S THEME: THE JOURNEY

Read Acts 21:1–19

We'll often times read verses like these and wonder, "Why in the world did this make it into the Bible? There's nothing to learn from these words! They're just traveling details." And in many ways, I understand the thought and have shared in that thought many, many times. But if all Scripture is inspired by God, there must be some benefit to these words. As Luke writes these details down for his friend, Theophilus, I'm sure he had a reason for it. As I prayed about this, the Lord encouraged me that perhaps if there's something to gain it's that the journey in the Lord's path for your life might be tedious and long! Paul and his travel companions have traveled for many days and spent weeks in different cities. It wasn't a "hop in plane and get there in an hour" type of travel. But they stuck with it and made the absolute most of the journey along the way.

You may be wondering in your life right now why God seems to be moving so slowly. Who knows why! I can't answer that question. But I can tell you, it isn't a mistake! The grind of life and following Christ is so worth it all! Look for the opportunities all around you right now to minister to other people and point them to Christ. God has put you right where you are for a reason. Don't be too quick to wish it away!

6. Why does God sometimes make us wait longer to get to the next step of the journey?

7. How can you stay on fire in the midst of the journey even when it's slow? How can you stay on fire for God right now instead of buying into the idea that "I'll be on fire for God when I get to high school or to college or have a family"?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✎ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here are some things you could pray for today:

- That God would help you be patient and wait on Him!
- That you have faith to trust God even when things don't seem to be happening.

Day 3

TODAY'S THEME: COUNT THE COST

Read Acts 20:10–13

Paul was convicted of his calling. Despite knowing exactly what awaited him in Jerusalem—suffering, arrest, bondage—he was still committed to his call to go back there and take the gospel of Jesus Christ with him. See, to Paul, preaching the gospel of Christ and seeing people come to faith in Jesus was worth more than his own life. He would rather preach Christ and lose his life doing so than to bail on his calling.

Following Jesus and His plan for your life is going to cost you greatly. In Matthew 16:24–25 Jesus teaches very clearly about the cost of following Him. He says that if anyone should come after Him, he's gonna have to pick up his cross daily and follow Him and that if anyone wishes to save his life, he must first lose it. To follow Jesus isn't to just find a magic genie to make all your life problems go away. For some, following Christ literally means to lose their life. But they have all found it worth it. Have you? Have you counted the cost of following Christ and found it to be worth it all?

8. Read Matthew 16:24–25. What does it mean to take up your cross daily and follow Jesus?

What does Jesus mean that if anyone wishes to save his life, he must first lose it? What does that look like?

9. Imagine if the church were filled with people who had counted the cost and were ready and willing as Paul was to “be imprisoned and even to die” for the sake of Christ? How would it look different? How would YOU look different?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here is something you could pray for today:

- Surrender your life to Christ! Give it to Him, trusting that He will lead you where He wants you to go and to do the things He wants you to do.

Day 4

TODAY'S THEME: COMFORT, AN ENEMY OF THE GOSPEL

Read Acts 21:10–14

Man, what an encouraging word to receive before going into a city to preach the gospel. “By the way, yeah, you’re going to be bound and handed over to the Romans, Paul. Still wanna go?” Paul knew his calling. He had already counted the cost and found it worth it in the end. But his friends hadn’t quite determined the same thing. When they heard what was awaiting Paul in Jerusalem, they urged him not to go there! That seems fair. I mean, they love the guy, and what kind of friend wants to see their friend wrongly arrested and suffer? But imagine if Paul listened to their counsel here? He would never make it to Jerusalem and would never finish the mission God had sent him on!

Our culture today is very much like this! We have come to idolize comfort and convenience to the point that sometimes we will not serve in a ministry, go on a mission trip, or share the gospel with a friend because it’s “uncomfortable” to us or there is risk involved. We have come to love what this world has to offer far more than what God’s kingdom has to offer at times. We need to win back the battle for the gospel! Count the cost and take a leap of faith! Who knows what kind of blessings you’re missing out on by just doing what is easy and comfortable for you now?

10. What calling has God put on your life right now? If you aren’t sure, how could you find out what calling He has for you?

11. How do you reconcile being called to do things that are uncomfortable and to use your God-given gifts to do your part in the church with the skills He has given you?

12. I want to be clear—comfort is not a bad thing. But too much of any good thing can become a bad thing. How do you know if comfort has become too important in your life, to the point that it’s now bad?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here is something you could pray for today:

- That God would give you boldness to do what He has called you to do, even if it’s scary or uncomfortable!

Day 5

TODAY'S THEME: TAKE A LEAP OF FAITH

Read Acts 21:4

Paul's friends learned that he was committed to the mission and they weren't going to change his mind. So, they simply submitted to the will of God. They weren't sure exactly how everything was going to go down, but they were willing to trust God in it.

For as much as we complain about math, we kind of live by it. Sometimes we live our lives like a basic algebra equation. Let's say $A+B=C$. We like to know exactly what A and B are because then we can know exactly what C is going to be. But a relationship with God sometimes looks more like $Ax+By=C$. In this spiritual equation, A and B are things that we know God has called us to, and we know we are supposed to do those things. But x and y are things that God is doing. They are variables that we don't always understand, and they can really change what C is going to be. And sometimes since we don't know exactly what x and y are, we choose to not even do A+B and we never get to know what C is!

Wow. I bet you're thinking, "I never thought I'd use math to understand God!" Me neither! At the end of the day, the point is to take a leap of faith. If you know what God has called you to, do it! You don't have to know exactly what the outcome is going to be. Just be obedient to God and He will take care of making things work out how they're supposed to.

13. Have you ever in the past had to take a leap of faith? How did it turn out?

14. What is it about our fallen nature that makes taking a leap of faith and trusting God with the outcome so difficult?

How can we combat that struggle?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here is something you could pray for today:

- That you would have the faith to trust God when the outcomes are uncertain.