

# Crisis of Faith

## “What’s It Gonna Cost Me?”

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I will warn you upfront, I am coming for you today. I hope to leave you feeling disoriented and wondering if maybe the way you have thought about life has been totally wrong all the way up until this point. That’s the only disclaimer I am giving you. The particular crisis of faith that we will be looking at today is not one that someone comes to Jesus with, it is one that Jesus creates. My hope is to leave you today with a bit of a crisis. Our topic today is money, possessions, and career. Our question is, “What is following Jesus going to cost me?” The answer is “everything.” Let’s go.

Turn to Luke 18. Hold that spot. Flip to Luke 14. We will start here.

### **Luke 14**

33 So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Just so that we are clear, the Greek words for “all that he has” there literally mean “all that you have.” You’ll note that Jesus does not leave this open ended. He does not leave room for negotiation. He says “here are the terms. You follow me and you renounce every single thing you have.” ‘Renounce’ meaning you begin to operate as though everything you currently have actually belongs to God. That’s what the scripture says. “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it.” Jesus says we must begin to operate like that. Your car is not yours and it is not for you. It’s for God. Your house no longer exists for your purposes, it exists for God’s purposes. Your career is not for you, it’s for God. Jesus says, “If that is not a deal you are willing to make then you cannot follow me.

**Spring break trip-** if someone says they like something of yours give it to them.

Don't necessarily think we always must do that but there's an attitude that's right. It's all at God's disposal.

34 “Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? 35 It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Jesus says “If you will not begin to operate as though everything you have belongs to God, including your very life itself, then you cannot be useful to me in what I am trying to accomplish. ”Actually, the exact quote is, “You would be of no use even for a manure pile.”

Here is a picture of the resulting community that Jesus intends to create, and I think you’ll understand why he says you must renounce your possessions to follow me. Here is the community he intends to create...

### **Acts 2**

42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Had all things in common. Shared way of life. Homes were constantly open. Selling possessions to meet needs. Consistent behaving as though people are more important than possessions and that the kingdom of God comes first.

#### **Acts 4**

32 Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. 33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold 35 and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

No one considered any of the things that belonged to him his own. No one was needy among them. They had renounced all that they had. They said, "It belongs to God now." They behaved with one another like a family. If one sibling drives a Mercedes while another can't afford to feed their kids, that's a dysfunctional family. You would say something has gone wrong in those relationships. The potential problems that great discrepancies in income can create ought to be muted by radical generosity becoming normalized in the body of Christ. "I care about Jesus and you more than I care about money, possessions or my career."

And the result is that people were trusting Jesus and getting saved and the Lord added to their numbers daily.

Jesus says, "If you are not willing to renounce all that you have, renounce money and career as the defining pursuits of your life, then I cannot create the kind of community that I want to create." If money, possessions, and career are more important to you than people then you cannot be useful. The pursuit of money and possessions will mark your life instead of the pursuit of my kingdom being advanced. Because all it would take is for someone to make a mess in your house and you will stop having people over for ministry. All it would take for you to leave this community is for someone to dangle a little bit better job offer in front of you...you're gone. Instead of thinking about what the group needs and what advances the kingdom, you'll prioritize what you need.

Ok, that's the backdrop for an encounter Jesus has with a man in Luke 18. Jesus is about to create for this gentleman a crisis of faith.

#### **Luke 18**

18 And a ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 19 And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. 20 You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.'" 21 And he said, "All these I have kept from my youth." 22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." 23 But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. 24 Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, "How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! 25 For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."

Ostensibly this is exactly the kind of person you would want to recruit to your cause: a wealthy, young man. This is the demographic that marketers want. But this young, wealthy, powerful man comes up to Jesus and indicates interest in joining him and his cause and yet Jesus doesn't recruit him. In fact, he does the opposite. He raises the standard in such a way that it turns the young man away. Jesus told the rich young ruler that he wouldn't be able to enter life until he sold everything and gave it to the poor.

Why would Jesus tell the rich ruler give everything to the poor when the same was not demanded of Abraham or Job or Zacchaeus?

It was because the rich ruler didn't really have money. Money had him.

This man thought he needed his wealth to truly have life. Jesus knew that his wealth was the thing keeping him from really having life.

## 1 Timothy 6

8 But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich (notice the definition of rich here. Rich is contrasted with having food and clothing. If you have more than food and clothing then you are rich according to bible definitions) fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith (you might say, have had a crisis of faith and walked away) and pierced themselves with many pangs.

Money can have a corrupting effect. Paul says that people who desire to be rich, they fall into a trap. An out of proportion desire to have and keep is at the very root of all kinds of evils, and it has even caused some to reject the faith.

Even secular society is picking up on the effects that money can have on people.

**Paul Piff, a psychologist at UC Berkeley**, published research that correlated wealth with an increase in unethical behavior: “While having money doesn’t necessarily make anybody anything, the rich are way more likely to prioritize their own self-interests above the interests of other people.” this guy did research that showed people with newer/more expensive cars were less likely to stop for a pedestrian and more likely to drive dangerously close to pedestrians on sidewalks and crosswalks.

**The Atlantic - “Why the Rich Don’t Give to Charity”** In 2011, the wealthiest Americans—those with earnings in the top 20 percent—contributed on average 1.3 percent of their income to charity. By comparison, Americans at the base of the income pyramid—those in the bottom 20 percent—donated 3.2 percent of their income.

**psychiatrist Madeleine Levine. book “The Price of Privilege”**: “America’s (most) at-risk group is preteens and teens from affluent, well-educated families. Despite their economic and social advantages, “children of affluence” experience among the highest rates of depression, substance abuse, anxiety disorders, somatic complaints, and unhappiness of any group of children. . . Twenty-two percent of adolescent girls from financially comfortable families suffer from clinical depression. This is three times the national rate of depression for adolescent girls.”

Horrifying. But it supports what the Bible says. The things we really need in life, peace, deep relationships with others, hope, purpose, a deep sense of identity and who we are...money cannot buy any of those things. In fact, money is often used as distraction from knowing we lack those things. Until Jesus is enough for you, nothing will be. And potentially your pursuit of money and advancement is keeping you from having peace, deep relationships, etc.

So, Jesus tells this rich young man to get rid of it.

This is how Jesus talks about it in Matthew 6...

## Matthew 6

24 “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

The Bible doesn’t present this as a metaphorical dilemma. It presents it as a concrete, real problem. You can make money your purpose and identity, or God. You can’t love them both because they both want the same thing...controlling interest in your life. You must decide. One of them will be priority.

Priority means first thing. You cannot have multiple. We like to use the term “priorities” but that is actually not a proper use of the word. You have one and only one first thing.

A priority is something that all the other things are built around and must conform to. It's non-negotiable. And other things can hold value but they must be modified in such a way as to fit under your priority.

As a silly example, if a Tuesday night TV show is your priority. Your boss says she needs you to stay late Tuesday night. You'd say I'm really sorry but I can't. I'll come in early Wednesday morning and stay late then. But I cannot be in Tuesday night. A friend calls on Tuesday and asks for help with something. You say I'm free until 8pm and then I have to leave. You are working on your budget and what you can afford and you say, "I have to have Internet so I can stream my show. There might be other things I cannot afford now, but that's ok."

This is how a priority works. It's the non-negotiable in your life that you build everything around.

You cannot have Jesus and money as our non-negotiable. Our priority. It must be one or the other.

To prioritize Jesus means that all that he calls us to, his vision for life, is our non-negotiable.

So, pursuing my love for him. Walking in obedience. Actions that serve to share the gospel. The community of believers that I've committed myself to who have likewise committed themselves to me. The Bible says these our non-negotiable. Our priority. And there will be times in life where we're going to have to pick between Jesus and money or possessions.

- In your business, there will be times where you will have a decision to make. You can remain faithful to Jesus by being honest and forthright. But it will cost you some money. Or, you can misrepresent and mislead. Be slightly less than fully honest and benefit financially from it. What will you do? There will be times where you can harm someone else financially but you would gain from it.
- We say don't do business with friends but really that's because we put money ahead of relationships and we don't want to stop doing that. Your friend might love money more than you and take advantage of you. Or you might love money more than your friend and you take advantage of them. But if we all cared more about people than money it would be great to do business with friends. The problem is, we will do whatever helps us come out better financially, even if it hurts people.

Is Jesus your priority or is money? It cannot be both.

Jesus goes on...

#### **Matthew 6**

31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'  
32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

**I will tell you something that Matthew 6 changes...the way we think about our careers.** Jesus says don't seek what you will eat and drink, instead seek the kingdom. He says the world seeks provisions, we are to trust God for provisions and seek the kingdom. Here is what I hear people saying, "Hey I took a new job in wherever...Nevada...Do you know of any good churches there?"

What does that mean your priority was? "Well I'm gonna go here because it's the best career path and I'll trust God to provide the community and mission opportunities that I need." That's opposite what Jesus says. Jesus doesn't say, "Pursue provision and assume God will provide the kingdom opportunities," he says, "Pursue the kingdom and assume God will provide provisions through whatever work you have."

People say, "there are churches everywhere." Well, yeah, I guess. And some are good and some are bad. But why think like that? Shouldn't we say, "There are jobs everywhere, but I want to be where I most belong and can contribute and where I can make the biggest dent in the domain of darkness with the limited number of days that I have!"

Way too often to we don't even realize that we are chasing career success in such a way as to limit our impact for Jesus kingdom and our own joy.

There are some studies that say we make all our friends in college and for the rest of our life we lose them. A lot of Americans get very lonely in their 30s when this reality hits them.

Current Surgeon General Vivek Murthy has said "the most prevalent health issue in the country is not cancer or heart disease or obesity. It is isolation."

I've had too many people email me after a move for a better career path saying, "I have a great job now but I am just floating through life. I don't have close community, I don't have a great church. I am not serving or doing ministry at all, I'm just sort of drifting."

### **Let me say it differently. Possessions aren't our purpose, they help us serve our purpose.**

Rich young ruler's possessions became his purpose so Jesus said get rid of them. They are in the way.

- I know a couple who bought a nice couch. I love couches. They provide opportunity for so many God glorifying things. Couches are for conversations. Rest and replenishment. Cuddling. Community. Instead, these folks said it was too nice for anyone to use it. Now don't let anyone with kids over because might mess it up.
- Possessions became purpose instead of serving the purpose. The couch is in the way. Sell it.
- Guy bought vacation home. Useful for family time. Getaways. Offer to others to get away Who can't otherwise afford it. All sorts of God glorifying reasons to have a vacation home and use it.
- But, he spent so much on it he felt like he needed to go all the time. So, he wasn't connected to anyone deeply. Wasn't serving. Using his gifts. He was just always gone.
- But I know another older couple that bought a vacation home and used it to provide free vacations for people who couldn't otherwise afford one, and then every now and then they go and have a vacation as well. That's how you use possessions to serve your purpose.

God loves others. I can't help but wonder if we've said, "God loves you" so much that we created Christian narcissists. Some of us need to hear "God loves other people."

If you have bread he wants you to share it.

If you have time he wants you to use it love people.

Whatever you have, God intends for you to bring it to him so he can bless people that he loves.

#### **1 John 3:17**

God's love cannot be in you if you have a brother or sister in need and refuse to help them when you could have.

To follow Jesus is to join him in his love for others.

**Gracepoint** - single guys buying mini vans so they can go on trips with their bible study guys. outings, give them rides together.

- I have to buy a car. What's best for ministry?

- I have to buy a house. What's best for ministry?
- I have to get a job. What's best for ministry?

It was the closest thing to Acts 2 that I have ever seen. And it would not have been possible had they all not said, "I renounce everything for the sake of Jesus kingdom."

Some of us have never had a crisis of faith over this and we should have. Our lives are currently not compatible with following Jesus. We have centered on our jobs and family activities, particularly our kids' activities. And that determines where we live, how we live, what our schedules are. We value privacy instead of community. Our standard of living slowly creeps up as our income goes up and we are living the American dream instead of following Jesus. And you cannot follow the American dream and follow Jesus. Your way of life is not compatible with the Christian life. Jesus says you and I must renounce everything or this will not work.

### **Luke 18**

26 Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?"

Oh, man I am glad that the disciples were real people, just like you and me. If after this call of Jesus, if after this sermon, your response is any form of "yeah you tell 'em!" then you are either not listening or you are not very self-aware. Your response to what I've said to you, to the gauntlet that Jesus has laid should be some form of, "Oh no. This is not good and I am in trouble. I must have no traces of selfishness, no semblance of greed or materialism? I must always be ready to give things away and use all my possessions to advance the kingdom no matter the cost to me? This is gonna be a problem."

That's the disciples' reaction. They were listening. Their response to all of this is, "Well then how can anybody be saved? Jesus, we have no chance! Unceasingly generous and giving, not ever even for a second thinking that anything we own, even our very lives, are for us...but always knowing and acting like everything is for you? We're in trouble."

Jesus responds with two things. You'd better hear them or you will leave today sad, just like the rich young ruler.

27 But he said, "What is impossible with man is possible with God."

### **1) God has made a way for us that was humanly impossible.**

Did you know that it is possible to earn salvation? Salvation can be earned. You must be perfect. That's how you earn salvation. Though perfection is impossible for us as sinners, Jesus lived the perfectly generous life. He considered not even his life to be his own, but he gave it up. Jesus through his perfection has earned salvation, and through his death he offers it to us by grace through faith. When we trust the work of Jesus we are accepted by God and credited with Jesus's record despite our own record. What is impossible with man is possible with God.

Now, just so we are clear, this way that Jesus has earned for us to be saved by grace does not negate the call to renounce everything. It means that now instead of immediate perfection required of us we can be in process.... gradually but continually loosening our grip on everything that we have as we walk in the reality that the earth is the Lords and everything in it. Including our very lives.

And here is the second thing Jesus says...

28 And Peter said, "See, we have left our homes and followed you." 29 And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, 30 who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life."

## **2) The return/reward is worth it.**

Jesus says what he offers us is more valuable than what he calls us to give up.

We never seem to realize that bigger, better and more cannot fix what's wrong with us. We keep thinking it will solve our inner discontent yet getting bigger, better or more is never enough. At best, it's a temporary distraction. In calling us to renounce everything

Jesus is just calling us to turn away from bread that cannot satisfy and find him to be the bread of life.

He says that in doing this we gain a family. That in opening our hands we position ourselves to become the new family of God.

The years we have together make life and ministry a joy. Life is stressful, hurried, scattered. So, we help each other.

My wife and another mom in our LifeGroup buy each other things all the one from the store. If one is making a trip they just ask the other, "Do you need anything?" We don't keep up with how much one of us owes the other, we just assume it will all even out over time. Our hands are open, and in that small way we get to be family with each other.

We host LG. Our group has 21 kids. My house is never cleaner when they leave than when they got there. We like to cook so kids will be playing and we'll be in the kitchen buzzing around. Everyone knows where all the things are and where everything goes, so we're all grabbing things, using all the pots and pans and dishes. It's one of my favorite times each week, where we're all working together to cook and catch up. Yeah, it's wear and tear on my cookware. Yeah, the house will need to be cleaned up afterwards...but in opening my house and stuff, I gain a family. That's worth it.

There are better jobs available for me in other places, doing other things. But I am not willing to give away what we have here just because there's a better job somewhere. There are jobs everywhere. This kind of community with this shared history isn't everywhere. Anything that I have given up to stay and serve in ministry, I have gained back by having a church family. And it's worth it.

As a church, I want us to do some dangerous things for the Kingdom of God - multiply groups, plant churches, send missionaries, see the fostering crisis in our region decimated, present a beautiful and compelling counter-cultural way of life - like Acts 2 - to our community who most often looks at Christianity as simply a way to vote and just something you do on Sundays. But that won't happen if we don't become a people who are willing to renounce all things and prioritize the kingdom above everything else.

I know that our church isn't for everybody. If you like to keep your life private, you aren't gonna like it here. If you don't want to give of yourself and serve and work to build the kingdom, you are probably gonna leave. And I want it to be that our normal is so open-handed and sacrificially generous that stingy people cannot stay here without changing.

This is what we are called into together...renouncing all that we have for Jesus sake. He has made a way for us to be made right with God that would otherwise be impossible, and anything we give up for his sake will ultimately be worth it.