



Counting the Cost:

learning to suffer well...

Misconception about the Christian life...

1. When we dedicate our lives to Christ, our lives become easier.
 - John 15:18; John 16:33
2. It is always God's will to deliver us from persecution, trials and hardship.
 - 2 Corinthians 6:1-10; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Daniel 3
3. If difficulties come it can be traced back to sin, or something we've done to deserve it.
 - John 9:1-3

Jesus' posture to suffering...

- As [Jesus] went along, he saw a man **blind from birth**. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, **who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?**" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "**but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.**"

— John 9:1-3

Human nature has us focus our attention on the cause of our suffering, Jesus would have us look to the result.

BITTER OR BETTER?

- Psalm 71:20 (NIV)
 - *Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter,
you will restore my life again;
from the depths of the earth
you will again bring me up.*

We think suffering robs us of options. But we always have the choice to become bitter or better.

GREED OR GRATITUDE

- Psalm 13
 - *How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and every day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph over me? (v2)*
 - *But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation. (v4)*

**Suffering involves loss. When we lose we often forget to remember what we have been given.
When we suffer we have a choice to become greedy or grateful.**

CLOSED OR OPEN

- John 9 (The Message)
 - "You're asking the wrong question. You're looking for someone to blame. There is no such cause-effect here. Look instead for what God can do."

Amidst suffering we tend to universalize our experience, and let an experience colour the rest of our lives. When we suffer we have a choice to become closed or open.

Reflection Questions:

- Do I have the right posture towards hardship? (looking at the results rather than the causes?)
- Have I allowed a difficult experience make me bitter?
 - How could that time of suffering have made me better?
- Have I allowed a difficult experience produce greed in my life?
 - How could I have responded in gratitude?
- Have I allowed a difficult experience to close me off in any other areas of my life?
 - What do I need to do to open myself back up?