

## Are You Committed to the Work of Christ?

Have you ever committed yourself to something and then changed your mind? Have you ever thought, “This is going to take more time, more energy, more of me than I expected”? Joan of Leeds had made a commitment to devote her life to God and the work of the church, but as the time came for her to join the convent, she had second thoughts. Not wanting to embarrass her family or keep her commitment, she unsuccessfully tried to fake her own death to get out of her commitment to the church. Joan “crafted a dummy in the likeness of her body in order to mislead the devoted faithful, and she had no shame in procuring its burial in a sacred space amongst the religious of that place.” We all have trouble following through with our commitments sometimes. But few of us quit in such a spectacular manner as Joan of Leeds did. To fake your own death to get out of a commitment is a clear sign that you were never really committed to begin with. Many people want to benefit from Jesus, but few want to fully commit to Him. If they do not have to worship faithfully, live a devoted life to Christ, serve in the work of the church, tithe, or be a witness for Christ to others then they are just fine with lip service when it is convenient. If you claim Christ as your Lord and Savior, we must ask ourselves, do we understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus?

Jesus challenges us in Matthew 10, “Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.” For Jesus, the cross meant death. But because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, the cross is a new life for us. And that new life isn’t conventional or comfortable. It will separate us from the values, priorities, and rewards of our culture. It may separate us from the people we love the most. Your own family and loved ones may come between you and your commitment to God. The way of the cross is incompatible with the ways of the world. Unbelievers should look at you like you have lost your mind. Our commitment to God’s purposes, and our trust in God’s plans, should make us look radical and foolish and out-of-step with our culture. Ask yourself – Just how well do you fit into the things of this world? Jesus also challenges His disciples when He says, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, revere the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are two sparrows not sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.” And that’s why Jesus can tell us to not be afraid, even in the face of challenging and uncertain circumstances: “. . . even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.” Your life is not meaningless or random. The God who created our vast and awesome universe knows you individually. And God values you. The God who made you in His holy image will never leave you or forsake you. If we really believed this, our fears would evaporate. We could take up our cross and follow Jesus with confidence, knowing that a God who loves us enough to count the very hairs on our heads has a purpose for our lives.

In Matthew 10:39 Jesus states: “Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.” There is joy and peace in living for God’s purposes, a joy and peace that no earthly rewards can match. There is a reason that this verse is quoted in all four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It’s an ironclad promise from the God who willingly chose to give up his own life to save us. God created us for a life of abundant joy, peace, and purpose that can only be found in knowing Him and living for His purposes. If you have put your trust in Jesus, confessed your sins, and made Him your Lord and Savior, I want you to meditate on these questions: Is what you’re living for worth dying for? Does your life reflect the priorities and purposes of God? Are you living out your faith with boldness and confidence, even when that separates you from the surrounding culture? Finally, do you trust Jesus’ promises enough to take up your cross and follow him? If so, you will discover a joy, hope, and peace that only come from living a fully surrendered Life for Jesus.