

COUNTING THE COST

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SEEK GOD AND FOLLOW JESUS?



COLLEGE MINISTRY

#1 | SEEKING GOD

Read Jeremiah 29:11-14 | Seeking With Your Whole Heart

According to these verses, what kind of future does God want for you? Do you believe this to be true?

How does that make you feel?

What does Jeremiah say God will do?

What does he say we must do?

Jeremiah 29 says we will seek God and find him when we seek wholeheartedly.

What is something you have sought after with your whole heart? What sorts of things did you do to seek that wholeheartedly?

How can you apply that to seeking God with your whole heart?

Read Acts 8:26-40 | The Ethiopian Eunuch

What are some ways the Ethiopian was seeking after God?

What caused Philip and the Ethiopian's paths to cross? Why do you think that is?

What do you think caused our paths to cross?

Read Matthew 13:44-46 | The Kingdom of Heaven

What did this man give up in order to get the field/pearl? Why would he do that?

He gave up everything because he knew if he didn't sell out, he would miss out.

What might the man's friends or family have thought about his actions?

Read Matthew 6:33 | God First

What does it mean to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness?

Commitment

Will you commit to seeking after God with your whole heart? What will that look like over the next week?

Challenge

Set up another time to meet for the next study together. Memorize Matthew 6:33.

Take action on your commitment from above.

#2 | GOD'S WORD

Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17 | Usefulness Of The Word

What does it mean that "all Scripture is God-breathed?"

Definitions:

Teach: to impart knowledge of or skill in; give instruction in

Rebuke: to express sharp, stern disapproval of; reprove; reprimand

Correct: to set or make true, accurate, or right; remove the errors or faults from

Train: to develop or form habits, thoughts, or behaviors by discipline and instruction

Why is studying the Word important in serving God?

How has the Bible been useful in your life?

Read Hebrews 4:12-13 | Relevance Of The Word

What does it mean that the word of God is living and active? What does it mean that it is sharp?

How do you usually feel about being cut? Is there ever a reason you would let someone cut you?

What judges our thoughts and attitudes? Is anything hidden from God's sight?

Read Acts 17:10-12 | The Bereans

Why were the Bereans considered to be of good character here?

Why is it important to examine God's Word for yourself?

How often should you examine the word of God?

Read Matthew 15:1-9 | Traditions vs. The Word

What is the problem with the Pharisees here?

What are the dangers of following traditions, feelings, and creeds over the Word of God? How can you prevent this from happening?

Read Joshua 1:7-9 | Meditating On The Word

What is the Book of the Law? What must you do with it? What is the result?

Read John 12:44-50 | Judgment By The Word

Does Jesus claim to judge us? What judges us?

COMMITMENT

Will you commit to knowing God through his Word by exploring scripture on your own? What will you read?

CHALLENGE

Review this study, keeping a journal of what stands out to you and any questions you have.

#3 | SIN AND REPENTANCE

How would you define “sin”? Transgression? Iniquity?

Sin is anything that damages the connection between us and God or His creation. Transgression and iniquity are more severe and intentional forms of sin committed with full awareness of wrongdoing.

Read Isaiah 59:1-2 | Separation From God
What has separated you from God?

Read James 1:13-15 | Progression To Death
What is the progression to death?

What can you do to halt this progression?

Read Romans 7:7-11 | The Effects of Sin
What does sin do to us?

Read 1 John 1:8-10 | Cleansed Of Unrighteousness
How can we deceive ourselves?

What’s the result of deceiving ourselves?

What will God do when we confess our sins?

How do we make Jesus a liar?

Read James 5:16 | Confession Of Sin
Who should we confess our sin to? Why?

How would you define ‘repentance’?

Read 2 Corinthians 7:8-12 | Worldly Sorrow
What are the two types of sorrow/grief described here? How do they differ?

Read James 2:14-24 | Proof of Repentance
How is repentance/faith proved?

Read John 8:23-24 | Repent Or Die
What will happen to you if you do not repent?

Read Acts 2:36-41 | Repentant Response
What was the crowd’s initial response to Peter’s message? What was their ultimate response?

COMMITMENT

Will you commit to open, honest confession and repentance by turning away from sin? This isn’t about perfection; it’s about direction!

CHALLENGE

Write a letter to God detailing your sins and asking for his forgiveness. Be ready to share this letter and any questions with your study partner at your next study session.

In Sin	In God
Deceived	Enlightened
Guilty	Forgiven
Dead	Alive
Enslaved	Free
Hopeless	Hopeful
Lost	Saved
Separated	Near to God
Living for Self	Living for God

WHAT AM I REPENTING FROM?

Read through these passages: Galatians 5:19-21, 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Research the sins mentioned using the verses referenced below. Use this form to make notes on what the Bible says and examples of these sins in your life. Then write a letter to God detailing these sins and asking for his forgiveness. Be ready to share this letter and any questions with your study partner at your next study session.

Sin	What does the Bible say about this sin?	Examples from Your Life
Sexual immorality <i>1 Corinthians 6:18</i> <i>Ephesians 5:5</i> <i>1 Corinthians 7:1-3</i> Sexual immorality is any sexual activity outside of God's plan, which is within marriage between a man and a woman.		
Impurity, unholiness, debauchery, sensuality <i>Ephesians 4:18-20</i> <i>Deuteronomy 23:14</i> Impurity is anything you do or think that makes you unclean before God. This can include things like watching porn, getting drunk, telling crude jokes, or chasing after pleasure in wrong ways.		
Idolatry <i>Colossians 3:5</i> <i>Exodus 20:4</i> <i>Romans 1:21-23</i> Idolatry is putting anything before God in your life. If you turn to something else instead of God when you're stressed or anxious, that could be idolatry. Trusting in anything more than God is idolatry.		
Witchcraft <i>Leviticus 19:31</i> <i>Deuteronomy 18:10-11</i> <i>John 10:1</i> Witchcraft is giving power to something other than God or trying to access the things of God through another means. Examples include crystals, spells, astrology, tarot cards.		
Hatred, hostilities <i>Leviticus 19:17-18</i> <i>1 John 3:15</i> <i>1 John 4:20</i> Hatred/hostility is an intense dislike for a person or group, or a tendency toward ill-will.		

Discord, strife <i>Romans 12:18</i> <i>Matthew 5:23-26</i> Discord, or strife, is when you purposely create conflict in relationships.		
Fits of rage <i>Ephesians 4:26-27</i> <i>Proverbs 14:17</i> Fits of rage happen when anger explodes violently and hurts others.		
Selfish ambition <i>Philippians 2:3-4</i> <i>1 Corinthians 10:24</i> <i>Romans 12:10</i> Selfish people only care about themselves. Selfish ambition just wants to get ahead, even if it hurts others.		
Lovers of money, greed <i>1 Timothy 6:10</i> <i>Proverbs 28:25</i> <i>Luke 12:15</i> Greed is never being satisfied and always wanting more - whether money or anything.		
Envy, jealousy <i>James 3:16</i> <i>James 4:2-3</i> <i>1 Corinthians 3:3</i> Envy and jealousy happen when you want what someone has or you want someone not to have what they have.		
Abusive, brutal <i>Colossians 3:19</i> <i>Proverbs 15:1</i> Abusive and brutal people are physically violent with others for their own benefit.		
Orgies, carousing <i>Romans 13:13-14</i> <i>1 Peter 4:1-4</i> <i>Exodus 32:3-8</i> Orgies are wild parties with heavy drinking and sinful sexual activity. Carousing means taking part in those kinds of parties.		
Proud, boastful, arrogant <i>Proverbs 16:18</i> <i>James 4:6-16</i> Pride or arrogance is thinking you're better than others and always right. Boastful people love to brag on themselves.		

Disobedient to parents <i>Exodus 20:12</i> <i>Ephesians 6:1-3</i> Disobedience to your parents is refusing to follow their instructions or not submitting to their authority.		
Ungrateful <i>Philippians 2:14-15</i> <i>Romans 1:21</i> Ungrateful people believe that they are owed everything. They do not appreciate the things they have been given.		
Rash, reckless, without self-control <i>Titus 2:11-13</i> <i>Proverbs 13:3</i> People without self-control may commit rash or reckless acts without considering the consequences.		
Slander, gossip, deceit, treachery <i>Exodus 20:16</i> <i>Proverbs 10:18</i> <i>Proverbs 12:20</i> <i>Psalms 25:3</i> Slander spreads lies about others, while gossip tells confidential information about others. Deceit intentionally conceals, distorts or manipulates the truth. Treachery betrays trust.		
Unforgiving, merciless <i>Ephesians 4:32</i> <i>Matthew 18:21-35</i> <i>Luke 6:36</i> Unforgiving people show no mercy or compassion to others who have wronged them.		
Dissensions, divisions, factions <i>Romans 16:17</i> <i>Ephesians 4:1-6</i> <i>1 Corinthians 1:10-17</i> <i>1 Corinthians 11:17-22</i> Dissensions, divisions and factions all refer to actions that are meant to divide people into opposing camps.		

#4 | THE CROSS

Read Isaiah 53:1-12 (can also check out The Message version)

We will return to Isaiah 53 to talk more about *why* Jesus suffered, but first we'll look to the Gospel of Matthew to understand *how* Jesus suffered.

Read Matthew 26:31-74 and Matthew 27:11-50

What types of pain and suffering did Jesus experience throughout this?

Fear, Sadness, Anxiety, Anguish, Betrayal, False accusations, Denial, Mocking, Taunting, Abuse from the Romans and the Jews, Beating, Bleeding, Separation from God the Father

Read "The Medical Account of the Crucifixion"

Now we'll shift to talking less about how Jesus died and more about *why* He died.

PERSONALIZED READING OF ISAIAH 53

To personalize, read the text substituting the student's name in place of "we," "man," "our," and "us." You may need to revisit the definitions of sin, transgression, and iniquity from the previous lesson.

¹Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

²Jesus grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract _____ to him, nothing in his appearance that _____ should desire him.

³He was despised and rejected by _____, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom _____ hide their faces he was despised, and _____ held him in low esteem.

⁴Surely he took up _____ pain and bore _____ suffering, yet _____ considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. ⁵But he was pierced for _____ transgressions, he was crushed for _____ iniquities; the punishment that brought _____ peace was on him, and by his wounds _____ [is/can be] healed.

⁶_____, like a lost sheep, went astray, _____ turned to his/her own way; and the Lord has laid on Jesus the iniquity of _____. ⁷He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

⁸By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of _____ he was punished. ⁹He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

¹⁰Yet it was the Lord's will to crush Jesus and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.

¹¹After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify _____, and he will bear his/her iniquities. ¹²Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of _____, and made intercession for the him/her.

WHY DID JESUS DIE?

Isaiah says in verse 10 that it was God's will for Jesus to suffer. Why would he want that?

Verse 11 says Jesus will be satisfied - why?

Read Romans 6:23 | The Payment And The Gift

What payment do we deserve for our sin?

What does Jesus' sacrifice give us?

Read Romans 5:6-8

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21

Based on everything we've read and discussed, why do you think Jesus died?

Jesus died because God loves you and wants a relationship with you! Jesus will be satisfied if you commit your life to following Him (He will see the "light of life" from you).

COMMITMENT

Will you, in gratitude for what Jesus has done, commit to taking a radical approach to dealing with sin in your life?

CHALLENGE

Considering your life of sin, write a letter expressing your gratitude for what Jesus did and why He died for you.

THE MEDICAL ACCOUNT OF THE CRUCIFIXION
Abridged from an article by C. Truman David, M.D., M.S.
Originally published in *Arizona Medicine*, March 1965.

This account focuses on the physical suffering of Jesus Christ from Gethsemane to His death on the cross.

Crucifixion was a Roman execution designed to maximize pain, shame, and endurance. The vertical post was fixed in the ground, while the condemned carried the crossbeam - often around 100 pounds - to the site of execution. Nails were driven through the wrists and feet, as the palms could not support the body's weight.

Jesus' suffering began before any soldier touched Him.

In the garden, under extreme emotional distress, He experienced **hematidrosis** - a rare condition in which intense stress causes capillaries to rupture, mixing blood with sweat. This would have left His skin fragile, His body weakened, and may have already pushed Him toward early shock.

After His arrest, Jesus was taken before the high priest.

There, He was struck across the face, blindfolded, mocked, spit on, and repeatedly beaten. They challenged Him to identify His attackers. By morning, He was already bruised, swollen, dehydrated, and exhausted from a sleepless night.

Jesus was then scourged by Roman soldiers. A whip made of leather thongs embedded with metal or bone was used. With each strike, the skin was torn open, the blows cut deeper into muscle, and blood flowed heavily from both surface and deeper vessels.

As the beating continued, the flesh of His back was shredded, leaving strips hanging and exposing deeper tissue. The body would have gone into traumatic shock from blood loss alone. Many men died from this before ever reaching a cross.

After the scourging, the soldiers mocked Him as a king. They placed a robe on His torn back, a staff in His hand, and twisted a crown of long thorns into His scalp. They struck Him repeatedly, driving the thorns deeper and causing significant bleeding. When they tore the robe off, it ripped open the wounds again - like pulling away a bandage from a severe injury - causing renewed bleeding and intense pain.

Jesus was then forced to carry the crossbeam through the streets. Weakened from blood loss and shock, He stumbled and fell. The rough wood would have pressed into His torn back and shoulders. Unable to continue, Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry the crossbeam for Him. Jesus followed behind, bleeding, struggling, and in visible shock.

At Golgotha, the crucifixion began. Jesus was thrown onto the crossbeam, and nails were driven through His wrists into the wood. These nails likely struck major nerves, sending intense, burning pain through His arms.

Once lifted onto the vertical post, the full horror began. His feet were nailed, forcing His body weight onto a single point. As His body sagged, His arms stretched, placing pressure on His chest; breathing became extremely difficult; and to exhale, He had to push up on His nailed feet.

Each breath required Him to lift His torn body against the wood - scraping His wounds, enduring searing pain in His wrists and feet - just to inhale and exhale. Then He would collapse again.

This cycle repeated: push up → breathe → collapse → suffocate → repeat

Severe muscle cramps set in. Oxygen levels dropped. Carbon dioxide built up. Exhaustion intensified. Every movement became agony.

In the midst of this suffering - while pushing up for breath - Jesus spoke:

1. **“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”**
Even in agony, He extends forgiveness
2. **“Today you will be with me in paradise.”**
Spoken to the repentant thief beside Him
3. **“Woman, behold your son... behold your mother.”**
He entrusts His mother to John, a uniquely faithful follower
4. **“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”**
A cry of deep spiritual anguish
5. **“I thirst.”**
—Reflecting extreme dehydration and shock
6. **“It is finished.”**
—A declaration: His mission is complete

Finally, summoning one last effort to breathe:

7. **“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”**

To hasten death, the legs of crucified victims were often broken, but Jesus was already dead.

Instead, a soldier pierced His side with a spear. The flow of “blood and water” suggests the release of fluid from around the heart and lungs, along with blood - strong evidence of death by heart failure and shock.

This was not a quick or easy death. It was prolonged, calculated suffering - layer upon layer of pain, humiliation, and physical breakdown.

And Jesus endured all of it - fully conscious, fully aware, and fully willing.

This is the depth of human sin, and at the same time, the depth of God’s love.

#5 | FOLLOW ME

Read Luke 6:40

What is a disciple? A disciple is one who practices both the actions and attitudes of their master and promotes their master's teachings to others.

Do you consider yourself to be a student of Jesus? Why or why not?

What happens when you're a good student in school?

What happens when you're a good student of Jesus?

What are some things a good teacher does to help students grow and develop? How does this apply to Christ as our teacher? Just like a good teacher, Jesus will encourage, model, train, correct, discipline...

Read John 8:31-32 | His True Disciples

Does believing in Jesus make someone a disciple? What must you do to be His disciple?

What does it mean to hold to his teaching?

Read Luke 9:23-26 | Denying Yourself

What is Jesus calling us to?

What does it mean to deny yourself? To take up your cross? To follow Him?

Read John 14:15 | How to Love Jesus

What does Jesus say you will do if you love him?

The Greek word for love is *agape*, and it means sacrifice. *How does "keeping" Jesus' commands require sacrifice?*

Read Luke 19:10 | Seeking and Saving the Lost

What is Jesus' purpose? To be His disciple, what must your purpose be?

Read Matthew 28:18-20 | Inviting Others

These are the last words that Jesus spoke on this earth. How important does that make them?

What four things does Jesus tell us to do?

1. Go: to move or proceed with remarkable speed or energy, to come into action
2. Make disciples: to convert from one state, condition, category, etc., to another
3. Baptize them: to immerse in water, the covenant-making moment of uniting with Christ
4. Teach them to obey: to impart knowledge of or skill in; give instruction to comply with or follow

What does Jesus promise?

COMMITMENT

Will you commit to taking up your cross and following Jesus? What will that look like?

CHALLENGE

Invite someone to come with you to the church events you are attending.

#6 | SALVATION AND BAPTISM

Read Acts 2:36-41 | Repent and Be Baptized

What two things does Peter say we must do for the forgiveness of sin (salvation)?

What are you promised that you will receive at baptism?

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Read Romans 6:1-6 | Baptism As Burial (see below for a visualization)

What comes before burial? What comes after baptism because of Jesus Christ?

Read Acts 8:26-40 | Going Down Into the Water (see below for an example)

Can you summarize this whole story in your own words?

How was the eunuch baptized?

Read Mark 16:16 | Believe And Be Baptized

Who will be saved? Who won't?

COUNTING THE COST

Read Acts 2:14-36 | The Truth About Jesus

Definitions:

Lord - someone or something having power, authority, or influence; a master or ruler

Messiah - the anointed one, the savior

What does it mean that Jesus is both Messiah and Lord?

Read Luke 14:25-27 | Being Jesus' Disciple

What must you give up to follow Jesus?

Read Luke 14:28-33 | Counting the Cost (see below for an example)

What should the builder do? Why?

What should the king do? Why?

What do you need to do before committing your life to Christ?

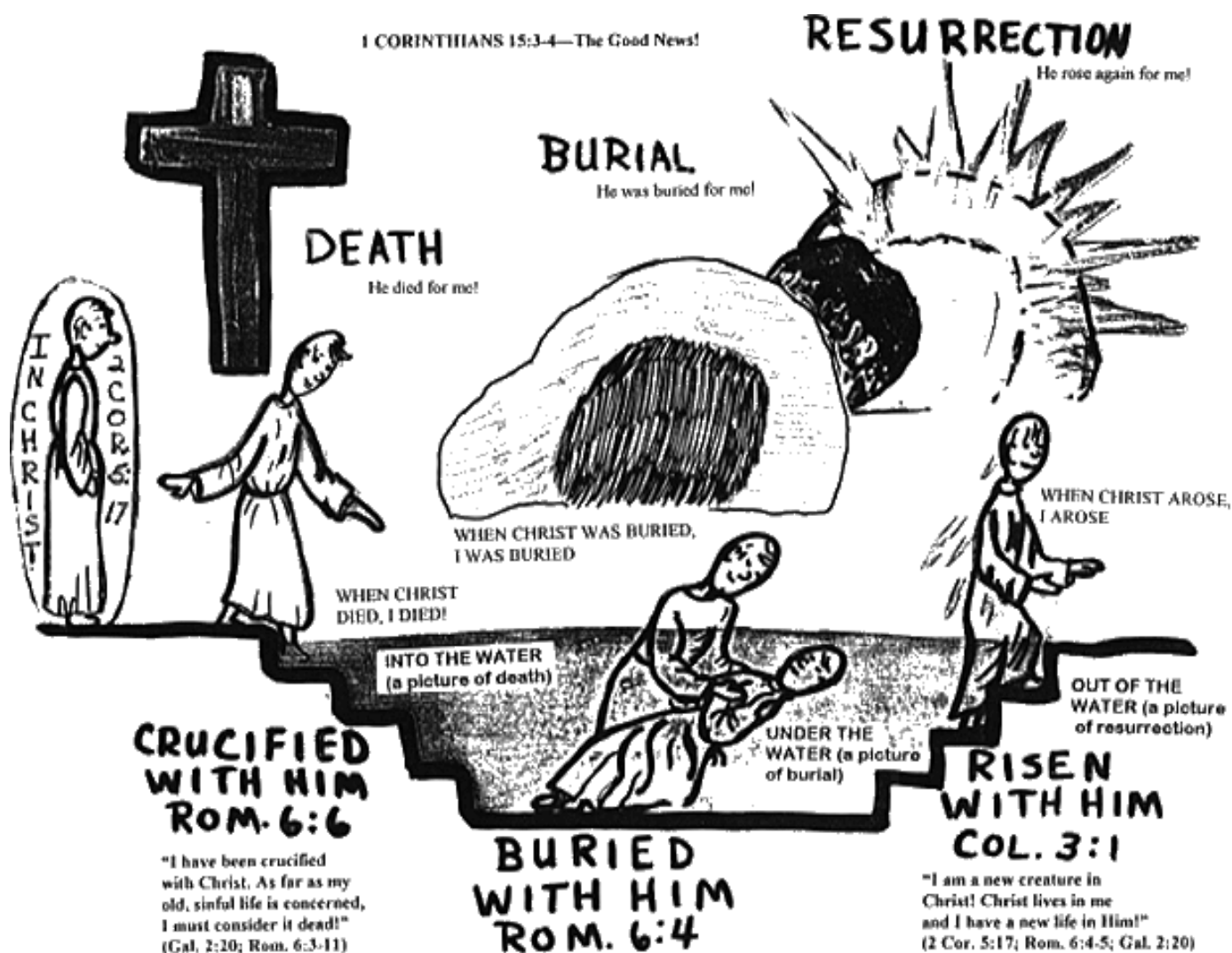
What cost must you count? Why?

COMMITMENT

Are you ready to commit your life to Christ in baptism?

CHALLENGE

If you decide to be baptized, tell four people about your decision: Two who will celebrate with you, and two who may not celebrate or even understand what you are doing.



BAPTO VS. BAPTIZO (from *Bible Study Magazine*, James Montgomery Boice, May 1989)

Baptize (*baptizo*): to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash oneself, bathe. Not to be confused with *bapto*. The clearest example that shows the meaning of *baptizo* is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be 'dipped' (*bapto*) into boiling water and then 'baptized' (*baptizo*) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of baptizing the vegetable, produces a permanent change. When used in the New Testament, this word refers to our union and identification with Christ. In Mark 16:16, Jesus says, 'He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.' Christ is saying that mere intellectual assent is not enough - there must be a union with him, a real change, like the vegetable to the pickle!

COUNTING THE COST

Asian Access, a Christian missions agency in South Asia, listed a series of questions that missionaries must ask new believers who are considering baptism. In America, we don't have to worry about things like this, but this serves as a real, tangible example of the types of things that Christians around the world may have to give up in order to follow Christ. These are the seven questions they ask to help determine a new convert's readiness to follow Christ:

- Are you willing to leave home and lose the blessing of your father?
 - Are you willing to lose your job?
 - Are you willing to go to the village and those who persecute you, forgive them, and share the love of Christ with them?
 - Are you willing to give an offering to the Lord?
 - Are you willing to be beaten rather than deny your faith?
 - Are you willing to go to prison?
 - Are you willing to die for Jesus?
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