

How Much does Being a Christian Cost?

Joe Slater

Eons ago, an elderly brother asked me, “what are my dues?” His physical condition and diminished mental capacity prevented his regular attendance, but on the one occasion his wife brought him to the assembly he wanted to make a financial contribution. I explained as best I could that the amount of any contribution wasn’t up to me or the church; it was between him and the Lord.

I used to be a member of a civic club. I knew exactly what the dues were to maintain my membership. But the Lord’s church isn’t a civic club. When I obeyed the gospel, nobody was standing there with his hand out to receive money. No one asked for my credit card. No one sent me an invoice.

Does it cost anything to be a Christian? No! and Yes! In one sense it costs you nothing; in another sense it costs you everything.

All the gold in Fort Knox couldn’t pay the interest on a down payment for salvation from sin. Jesus’ blood paid the atonement price; how do you put a dollar value on that? God certainly expects His people to finance His work, but we ought never to think of our contribution as purchasing a right relationship with God. Salvation really is by grace!

Yet Jesus Himself cautioned would-be disciples to “*count the cost*” before committing themselves. He spoke of self-denial and cross-bearing, concluding with these haunting words: “*So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple*” (Luke 14:26-33).

Upon obeying the gospel, one is made free from sin, but also becomes a slave of righteousness (Romans 6:17-18). The song is true: “I am mine no more!”

Caring for the Fatherless

James 1:27 states, “*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world*” (James 1:27, KJV).

Although most bible versions use the word “orphans” in this verse, the word “fatherless” carries much more significance when compared to the teaching of the Old Testament. As part of Jewish benevolence, the fatherless, along with widows and strangers, were to be cared for by the adherents to the Law (Deuteronomy 10:18; 14:29; 16:11; 24:19-21; 26:12). The Law commanded, “*You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child.*” Those that would do so, kindled the wrath of God, and were to be killed by the sword (Exodus 22:22-24).

God does not change, nor is there any variation with Him (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). There is no doubt that His concern for the fatherless remains the same as it did during the ancient days of the Law of Moses.

Data from the US Census Bureau shows nearly 18.5 million children are fatherless, making the US the world leader in fatherlessness. It has been shown that fatherless kids are more likely to have behavioral problems, go to prison, commit a crime, are 279% more likely to carry guns and deal drugs, two times more likely to drop out of school, and the list goes on.

God’s design for the family, with the father as the leader, is clearly described in the Scriptures. Our culture’s disregard for God’s design has given us unprecedented numbers of fatherless children. Even though our society is at fault, we must do our best to practice “pure religion,” reaching out to the fatherless with our hearts and our hands.

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)

BUILDING A SOLID LIFE

Genuine prosperity is measured not by money but by what is in the heart. Without material possessions, one can still be rich in faith toward God and that is the greatest prosperity of all (James 2:5).

Jesus tells us how to build a foundation toward spiritual prosperity, saying, “Everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall” (Matthew 7:24–27).

The key to building a successful life is found in listening to and obeying the words of Jesus. It is not enough simply to hear the words of Jesus, we must act upon them. It is as foolish to ignore the teachings of Christ as it is to build a house on the shifting sand. While the two houses may have mirrored one another in appearance, only the house built on the rock could withstand the storms of life.

When adversity comes, will your house remain? Is your life firmly grounded on the solid foundation of acting on the words of Jesus? Without obedience to the words of Christ, what assurance do you have of spiritual prosperity? Commit yourself to reading His word every day. Apply His teachings to your life and you will be building a solid life on the only eternal foundation.

--Glen Elliott (Greenbriar, AR)

*Don't put a question mark
where God has put a period!*