

COUNTING THE COST... Of Following Jesus

2017

It has now been forty years since God touched my heart in a very special way. FORTY YEARS!... I can't believe it has been that long. I remember that day as if it were yesterday. It was an incredible experience and I remember at the time asking myself '*what did just happen to me?*' I had been searching for such a long time for 'something'... I could not really pinpoint exactly what but one thing for sure, I was unhappy and I desperately wanted to change that. I turned to religion, yoga, transcendental meditation, but it was all in vain. Nothing or no one on earth could have taken away the restlessness I felt deep inside my heart. But on that day, on that special day, forty years ago, God fulfilled my yearning.

It is hard to describe what really happened since God is the author of it and the experience is, I would say, a supernatural one. But to be able to somewhat understand the phenomenon, I could compare it to a man and a woman falling madly in love with each other. When I met my husband, I would have never predicted that one day I would become his wife. But, when I fell in love with this man, there was nothing else that mattered in the world. Forget about the trips to foreign countries I had set my mind to take every year or the idea of being transferred to South America by the company I was working for at the time so I could totally immerse myself into their culture. Forget about all of that because I HAD MADLY FALLEN IN LOVE!... It was the most wonderful feeling I had ever known!.. And after about a year of courtship, we got married. It was in 1971.

In a marriage, two individuals from two different backgrounds and with two different personalities are joined together. And in God's standards, it is for life¹. So, anyway I look at it, it's a recipe for disaster! How can two people get along while being so different?.. '*Opposites attract*' as the saying goes. But there has to be more than just attraction, may it be physical, emotional or intellectual.

The union of a man and a woman in marriage has always been in God's plan² and in order for a marriage to last for life as God intended it to be there definitely has to be love, a real deep committed kind of love between the couple. Being of the same Christian faith most certainly helps as well but does not always mean the marriage will last. Sad to say, but the divorce rate amongst Christians nowadays is too high.

The Word of God says that '*love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*'³ I must admit it's quite a high standard to live by, but it is part of God's recipe for success in a marriage.

Did I know the true meaning of love when I first got married? Not really. I had a vague idea but one thing for sure was that I loved that man with all of my heart and I couldn't see myself living without him. I was committed to our marriage until death do us part. But I have to admit, I hadn't counted the cost...

Honestly, how successfully could anyone aim for such a kind of love?.. Well, since God Himself set this high standard, wouldn't it be logical to say that it's only with his help that we can really succeed?

The day I accepted Jesus in my life, I was very grateful for what he had done in me but I hadn't

fully realized what it really implied. He had met my yearning for an inner peace, a joy and happiness as I had never known before. He had fulfilled my emotional needs. But, in the days ahead, I felt another kind of yearning in my heart. I had to know Him better. And as I would begin reading about Him, his life, his teaching, his mission, his death and his resurrection, my love for Him grew exponentially.

However, as the relationship between a husband and a wife needs to mature and evolve, so it is between my Lord and me. As my life continues to unfold, he reminds me that where there is no change there is no growth, where there is no pain, there is no gain. So, he lovingly addresses some issues in my life that need to be dealt with in order to perfect me into the person he wants me to be. And going through this process can be painful. Quite painful at times... It requires on my part humility, self-denial, abandonment, brokenness, to forsake all and to serve without asking what's in it for me. When I say I love the Lord, I have to walk as he walked. Be willing to follow Him no matter what. There's no other way. There's no shortcut. Had I counted the cost on that special day, forty years ago?.. I had not.

As weeks, months and years go by, I realize more and more that I cannot function without Him in my life. Everything he endowed me with are not my own but his free gifts. He is the source of everything. He is my creator and the creator of heaven and earth. When society at large is screaming for its own rights, is consumed with self-glory, self-esteem, self-promotion and pride, what I've just said may sound like heresy to them, but I sincerely believe it.

To paraphrase John McArthur⁴ in one of his sermons, he said: *"When I look at my life, I wonder sometimes if my beliefs can remain pure... Loneliness, weariness, criticism from the world can sometimes be hard to accept... Being misrepresented, misunderstood, misjudged, wrongly evaluated and accused can be expected... To handle that without self-justification and retaliation means that I share the burden with the Lord and perhaps someone close and dear to me. But these pains are momentary light affliction for the rewards that will be mine forever."*

Oh, I feel so far away from God's standards and I pray that he will help me seek his will in everything I do, say or write. In doing so, I want *Him* to be glorified.

¹ Mark 10:9

² Genesis 2:24

³ 1 Cor. 13:4-7

⁴ Writer, Preacher and Pastor of Grace to You Church, CA

© My Walks With God

You may reproduce part of the content of this website for non-commercial purposes only. May not be reproduced or featured on any other websites without permission of My Walks With God. For additional information or to obtain permissions, contact: mywalkswithgod@gmail.com