



Sermon Notes

Topic: “Becoming”

Bible Passage: Acts 17:1-15

Preacher: Ps Sam Toms

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Study Guide Overview & Small Group Questions/Discussions

Sermon Summary: Following Jesus is a free invitation of grace, but discipleship is not casual or costless. In Acts 17 we see two dimensions of that cost. In Thessalonica, following Jesus cost the believers things **around them** — comfort, reputation, security, acceptance and control. In Berea, becoming like Jesus required a different cost — things **within them**. The Bereans were receptive, eager and willing to examine Scripture, which meant laying down pride, convenience and the need to always be right. Jesus doesn't simply call us to believe in him; he calls us to be formed by him. Sometimes we are prepared to pay the cost of being called Christian while resisting the deeper cost of actually becoming like Christ.

Life Group — What Is Following Jesus Costing Me?

Jesus says: “Whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.” Luke 14:27

Then he tells his listeners to **count the cost**. Discuss:

- When you hear the phrase “*the cost of discipleship*,” what immediately comes to mind?
- Do you tend to think more about what following Jesus might cost you externally, or what Jesus might need to change internally?

A helpful distinction from Sunday was:

Following Jesus can cost things around you.

Becoming like Jesus costs things within you.

1. The Cost Around Us - Read Acts 17:1–10. Paul and Silas arrive in Thessalonica and preach that Jesus is the Messiah. Some believe, but opposition quickly follows. Look at what it cost them:

Comfort — opposition disrupted their lives. **Safety** — a mob formed and Paul and Silas had to leave at night.

Reputation — they were accused of turning the world upside down. **Association** — Jason suffered simply because he welcomed them. **Money** — Jason and the others were forced to post security. **Acceptance** — following Jesus separated them from the surrounding culture. **Talk about it**

- Which of these costs do Christians in Australia probably feel most strongly today?
- Have you ever experienced a cost because you chose to follow Jesus?
- Where are you most tempted to compromise your faith in order to remain comfortable or accepted?

Go a little deeper

Jesus never promises that obedience will always make life easier. Sometimes obedience actually makes life more complicated.

Following Jesus may cost us the life we would have chosen for ourselves.

Ask:

Where might Jesus currently be asking me to choose obedience over comfort?



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2. The Cost Within Us Read **Acts 17:10–12**. Luke describes the Bereans as “**more noble**” because they: **Received** the message eagerly. **Examined** the Scriptures daily. They didn't blindly accept what Paul said, but neither did they immediately reject something because it challenged what they already believed. That takes maturity. It takes humility to say:

“**Maybe I don't know everything.**” “**Maybe I have misunderstood something.**” “**Maybe Jesus needs to change me.**” Discuss:

- Why is being teachable sometimes harder as we get older?
- What happens when Christians become more interested in defending themselves than being formed?
- How do you normally respond when Scripture, another Christian or the Holy Spirit challenges something in you?

The Bereans were strong enough to **listen, question, examine and change**. That is spiritual maturity.

3. RECEPTIVE — The Cost of Pride A receptive person begins with: “**God may still have something to teach me.**” Read **James 1:19–22**. James tells us not merely to hear the Word but to allow it to change how we live. Discuss:

- What is the difference between hearing Scripture and receiving Scripture?
- Why are we sometimes good at seeing what God needs to change in other people but slow to see what he wants to change in us?
- Are there areas of your life where you become defensive when challenged?

A powerful discipleship question is: “**What if the problem isn't everybody else?**”

Sometimes becoming like Jesus begins with having enough humility to let God show us ourselves.

4. EAGER — The Cost of Convenience The Bereans didn't merely tolerate Paul's teaching. They received it **eagerly**. There was hunger. Growing in Christ costs **time, attention and priority**. Read **Philippians 3:10–14**. Paul's attitude wasn't: “**How little can I do and still be considered faithful?**” His desire was: “**I want to know Christ.**” Discuss:

- What is the difference between wanting to *be a Christian* and wanting to *become like Christ*?
- What currently gets the best of your time, energy and attention?
- If somebody watched your life for a month, what would they conclude you were most eager to grow in?

There is no condemnation here. But there is a challenging question: **Do I actually want to grow?** Because formation rarely happens accidentally.

5. EXAMINED — The Cost of Discipline The Bereans examined the Scriptures: “**Every day.**” They built a repeated practice of returning to God's Word. Read **2 Timothy 3:16–17**. Scripture teaches, it corrects, it rebukes, it trains. Notice that not all of those are comfortable. Sometimes we approach Scripture looking for encouragement. But Scripture also confronts us. Discuss:



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- Which of those four functions of Scripture do you naturally welcome most?
- Which one do you resist?
- What is the difference between using Scripture to confirm what we already believe and allowing Scripture to reshape what we believe?

Becoming like Jesus doesn't happen through intention alone. It happens through repeated formation.

For parents especially, one of the greatest gifts we can give our children is not perfection.

It is a parent who keeps allowing Jesus to change them.