

## The Cost of Worship

2 Samuel 24:18-25

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August 24, 2025

Rose Hill Church

A few days ago, I was in the living room with a couple family members. I asked them: If you could be a missionary to any country in the world where would it be?

How about you: Where would you go if you could be a missionary anywhere? (Take 20 seconds and tell your neighbor.)

So, when I asked this question to my mom and my husband, one of them immediately said, “Tahiti.” **(Photos)** The other reflected for a minute and said the “Congo.” The contrast was huge! In my opinion, one was brave and courageous, risking everything and costing much; and the other seemed more about surfing, tan lines, and coconuts. What do you think? Which looks more costly in terms of sacrifice?



So, who do you think chose the Congo: Pastor Brian, or my mom? I think I’ll not disclose who chose which one.

In today’s passage, as we continue the series we’ve been in this summer on the life of David: **This subject of what it costs to walk with God is at the center.** But before we dive into our passage, I want to give a little context for the passage that we find ourselves in so we can better understand it. David is King over Israel, in about 1,000 B.C. Just before our passage, he asks for a census to be taken of the country. This was a burden for the people of Israel because of the work it would take. And God had told him, through Joab, that he shouldn’t do this. But David went forward with it anyway. He blatantly disobeyed God. David may

have been a “man after God’s own heart” as Scripture calls him, but he was far from perfect as we’ve seen a couple other times this summer. Here, we see his pride, poor leadership, and disobeying the instructions for taking census that God had given earlier.

**Pride:** First, it was downright prideful to ask for a census. David would then be able to say how big his country is and how powerful looking they are. This would build safety in people and not trusting in God. He was looking for size and not trusting in the one true God. In faith, we walk by faith and not by sight. Feeling perfect or safe is not something that we can accomplish – we must trust God!

**Poor Leadership:** Joab warned him not to do this. In 2 Samuel 24:3, he says, “Why does my lord the king want to do such a thing? May the Lord multiply the troops a hundred times over...” Yet, he was overruled by the King David; David was not heeding the warning.

**Instructions:** God had given instructions about how a census should be done in Exodus 30:12, where it says that if a census is taken, each person must make an offering, or a plague would come upon them. *“When you take a census of the Israelites... each one must pay the Lord a ransom... Then no plague will come on them.”* David did not follow the protocol for taking a census. David sat on the fence: he wanted the benefits of the census, but didn’t want to follow the process that was laid out for it.

The result is that the nation of Israel was quickly overcome by a plague. I would not have wanted to be David on that day. Everyone knew he brought this upon them with his disobedience. The angel of God stretched out and brought a plague and 70,000 people quickly died. I sure don’t want to be under that leadership! He was a spiritual wimp and was sitting on the fence in his faith.

**Now, to his credit, David confessed his sin and cried for help.** In 2 Samuel 24:14 he spoke to the prophet Gad, “I am in deep distress. Let us

fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercy is great; but do not let me fall into human hands.” David would rather have God deal with him than the people. God did not owe an explanation on this. God’s ways are higher! Yet, it shows God’s compassionate heart in verse 16 when we read, “The Lord relented concerning the disaster and said to the angel who was afflicting the people, “Enough! Withdraw your hand.” God’s love is unimaginable that He would be merciful with such disrespect from David. That brings us to our passage for today: **Samuel 24:18-25.**

The location of the altar was on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. This is on Mt. Moriah. This is the place that Abraham, David and ultimately Solomon built altars (Solomon put the Temple here). Today, it is the location of the **wailing wall** (Photo) or western wall, as it is also known, in Jerusalem where the Jews pray.



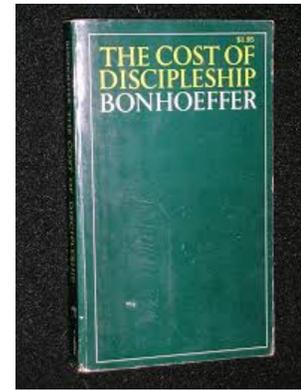
At this place, several hundred years earlier in Genesis 22:10-12, it says that Abraham reached out his hand and took a knife to slay his son, but God intervened with a ram for a sacrifice. Here in 2 Samuel 24, God intervenes again by stopping the hand of the angel as the plague was going over this site. We see through both these events in this same location, that God provides substitutionary atonement. Sacrifice cleanses us and transforms us. Substitution allows another to take the sin upon themselves: The animal sacrifice in this case; but once and for all, Christ’s substitutionary atonement came.

So, at this same place, in verses 22 and 23: The story continues with Araunah offering the land to David for FREE and offering King David whatever he wished for from Araunah’s own livestock, to offer up to God. Yet, David knows better. He said, **“No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing” (2 Samuel 24:24).**

At this place: this was an altar of the ages. He couldn’t take it lightly. Sacrifice means just that: to sacrifice. Free doesn’t work for a sacrifice.

Sacrifice costs us something. The sacrifice Jesus gave for us 1,000 years after King David, was everything.

I was given **this book (Photo)**, *The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, by my public school English teacher in my junior year of High School. I spent the summer reading it before my senior year. If I gave that book to a student today in the public schools where I teach, I would get fired! But Bonhoeffer's writing really challenged me and my priorities. It changed my life. I prioritized the gospel after reading it and realized that there was something else for me.



Christianity is not lowering the bar for our comfort; instead, it is radical and costly. It is other-worldly. Let me share an excerpt which challenges us and raises the bar with what discipleship is and costs. The language is masculine, but when he writes of “man” he means both men and women....

**“The cross is laid on every Christian. The first Christ-suffering which every man must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old man which is the result of his encounter with Christ. As we embark upon discipleship, we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death—we give over our lives to death. Thus, it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*; Chapter 4: Discipleship and the Cross page 99).**

He continues on...“It may be a death like that of the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow him, or it may be a death like Luther's, who had to leave the monastery and go out into the world. But it is the same death every time—death in Jesus Christ, the death of the old man at his call. Jesus' summons to the rich young man was calling

him to die, because only the man who is dead to his own will can follow Christ.”

Bonhoeffer encapsulates the Biblical teaching that true discipleship involves self-denial, and sacrificing everything—even to the point of death (Bonhoeffer lived this out: he died in a Nazi concentration Camp). Bonhoeffer sharply contrasted “costly grace” with “cheap grace”, emphasizing that following Christ is not all about us but rather, it is all about God. It is expensive and a radical, life-altering call.

And you see: **For David, Mount Moriah does not represent cheap grace. It represents costly grace.** Paying for the land, paying for the sacrifice, turning from sin, healing with the sacrifice, and raw, powerful obedience. This is the cost of living into God’s grace for him. It’s the kind of grace that demands repentance and obedience. The Christian life is not a clam bake or a trip to the Cape; rather, it is daily obedience and giving up of comfort. It is weighing the cost. It costs us everything! Jesus gave up everything for us and bids us to come and follow him.

I came across a video clip recently by a guy named Brice Crawford that illustrates David’s fence-sitting:

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/t0xPr5ITwwE>

**We don’t want to be fence-sitters with God.** Now, I am not saying that people shouldn’t go to Tahiti to serve Christ like my husband responded. Oops! I spilled the beans! The fact is...they need Christ there too. But we should only do so if God makes it clear. Regardless of where you’d like to go, the fact is: **We can start right here where we are on the Eastside.** Maybe we’re on the fence, trying to follow Jesus without any cost to ourselves. We need to get off of that fence. Let’s make sure we are on Jesus’ side of the fence, and seek obedience to Christ. Let’s press into God and embrace the cost of our discipleship and pursue His ultimate call upon our lives, because in Jesus, he has given us everything. **Let’s pray...**