

***Is the Cost Worth It?***  
1 Thessalonians 2:1-19

**Introduction:** Over the past three weeks, we have been talking about reaching out to those who are far from God. Our vision as a church is that there will be hundreds of us, moved by compassion, intentionally entering into genuine friendships with those who are far from God. We believe that God wants to use such relationships to help people find their way to God. It is a compelling vision isn't it? Don't you sense something deep within that really wants to go for this kind of life? But here's the question: Will we REALLY go for it? Will this sense of motivation that we feel right now truly translate into our living differently? It is important to recognize that to live this out will require changes in our lives. There will be a cost. And there are very few things in life that we will do, and continue to do, if we don't think the cost is worth it. Is the cost worth it?

**Opening Discussion:** What kinds of things do you regularly do that involve some kind of personal cost, but you keep doing them because you believe that the cost is worth it?

**Read Acts 16:22-24; 17:1-9**

1. What kind of suffering and mistreatment did Paul experience before coming to Thessalonica (Acts 16:22-24)?
2. What kind of opposition did he face in Thessalonica?

**Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12**

3. What kinds of personal costs were associated with Paul's ministry in Thessalonica?
4. Paul says in verse 8 that they were "well pleased" to impart not only the Gospel, but their lives. What kinds of costs might that level of involvement entailed for Paul?

**Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20**

5. How did the Thessalonians respond to Paul's ministry (see also 1 Thess. 1:9)?

6. How did Paul think about the Thessalonians?
7. Brian mentioned five costs of befriending those who are far from God (time & energy, giving up some things we are currently doing, discomfort, financial, laying down your life). What other costs come to your mind?
8. Which of the costs do you struggle with the most?

Brian said:

If I were to summarize all of these costs, I think it boils down to this – It is the cost of **laying down my life**. I can't go for this kind of life if I want to protect my time and my money and my energy and my safety and my comfort and my independence. If I want to have a life of truly being used by God in the lives of those who are far from God, I believe that it will only happen as I tell God, "Here's my life, my time, my comfort, my energy; use me. Use me however and whenever You please. My life is yours." No doubt, that is a steep cost. But don't forget, Jesus said that if we want to save our lives we have to lose them.

9. Do you think this is overstating the case or do you agree? Why?

Brian said:

When we think about the cost of compassion, we must have the right vantage point. Paul's vantage point was the return of Christ – an eternal perspective. That is the vantage point from which we too should weigh the cost. On that day, what will we think? Will we believe that the cost of compassion was worth it?

10. Why do you think it is important to weigh the cost of compassion from the vantage point of eternity?
11. After four weeks on this topic of active compassion, what are you sensing God is calling you to do?
12. As you think about going for this kind of life, for what do you sense you need prayer?