



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

Volume 6

September 1, 2019

No. 35

## The Mirror Versus the Window

by R. J. Evans

The common philosophy of our culture today fosters the “me, my, and mine” attitude. From early childhood onward, so much emphasis is being placed on “have your own way,” “do your own thing,” and “look out for number one.”

Some see life through a window while others view life in a mirror. Those who view life in a mirror only see themselves. They are only concerned with self, because they can't see the needs of others around them. Those who view life through a window, see others first, with a faded reflection of self. They are truly concerned about all those about them. They do everything possible to seek the good of others. This is how parents should be teaching their children—look through the window, not just focus on yourself in the mirror!

There is another mirror, however, that we need to constantly look into in order to see ourselves as God sees us—the mirror of God's Word (Jas. 1:22-26). As Christians we must always place Christ and the advancement of His Cause first in our lives. “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt. 6:33). Further we are told to “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil. 2:3-4).

Thus, living the Christian life is a life of ministry and service to others. Jesus taught this throughout the whole time he lived among men. At the close of His life here on earth, He demonstrated what He had been teaching by performing the lowly act of washing His disciples' feet (**Jn. 13**).

Give some serious thought to the teachings of Christ before you begin to think you have to have “your way” in everything. Selfishness has no place in the service of the Lord. Stop looking at life in the mirror (of self); view it through the window!

## The Most Difficult Command

Doy Moyer

Being a disciple of Jesus requires that we count the cost of such discipleship. Jesus said it plainly enough in Luke 14:25-33. Let's read it again:

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a

great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”

There is a cost in following Jesus, and Jesus directly connects this cost to bearing “his own cross” to come after Him. If we do not know this and count that cost, we may find ourselves turning from Jesus when times get difficult. Without first counting the cost, we are likely to be making only a nominal commitment. We may lack the courage to stay faithful, to persevere to the end, to enter the kingdom of God through much tribulation (Acts 14:22).

With that in mind, we ask, what is the most difficult command in all of Scripture?

We might point to various commands that have various levels of difficulty. When Jesus taught on marriage, the disciples recognized a level of difficulty with what He said (Matt 19:10). “It would be better not to marry,” they thought. On another occasion, Peter spoke of the “yoke” of the Law which “neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear” (Acts 15:10).

Some commands are difficult. For me, this one is the most difficult and it is the one Jesus connects to counting the cost. What is it?

Deny self. Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

That’s hard because self keeps rearing its ugly head. This is an emotional matter because I know intellectually what I’m supposed to do, but ... what do I want? Why can’t I do it my way? My faith, insofar as it is in my head, is confident, but in practical terms, I want what I want, and that “self” is a thorn in my side.

Is this not your problem, too? Is it not our problem?

We want to have faith, but we want that faith without having to trust that God knows what He’s doing. Either He explains everything to my satisfaction or I’m not willing to deny myself. This makes me more important than God in my own mind. This makes me an idol to myself.

We want the comfort of thinking we are saved, but we want that while not really having to give anything up, not having to sacrifice, not having to surrender. The idol of self tells us we can be safe with God while still doing whatever we want. Feelings are more important than anything. Certainly, if something is inconvenient, then that’s not part of the religion I want to accept, and I can find ways to castigate such a religion as too demanding, too legalistic, too traditional... whatever works to make myself feel better. God will still love me.

Yet taking up the cross is never convenient. The cross was ugly, humiliating, shameful, full of reproach. Taking up the cross voluntarily? Who would do that? Yet it is a supreme sign of self-denial, submission, and acknowledging a level of trust in God that we so rarely would want to do. It is total surrender to God and His will.

Is this not what Jesus did for us (Phil 2:5-8)? Here’s the twist. While my refusal to deny self is an effort to make myself more important than God, and while such arrogance will keep me from His kingdom, He emptied self and considered us as more important than Himself—God manifested in the flesh treating us who are sinful, rebellious, and arrogant, as more important than Himself! Only by my surrendering self to His will can I reap the benefits of what He did when He took up the cross for me. If I seek to save my life for self, I lose it. If I lose myself for His sake, I find it.

The wonders of His grace never cease to amaze! For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?