

# 2nd Opinion: The cost that love requires

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“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?” (Luke 14:28)

The stories that move our hearts often speak of unspeakable sacrifice. We do not gather in auditoriums to hear tales of cautious and half-hearted warriors or to remember lukewarm romances. Instead, the hero is called to face a great risk, to stare it in the eyes, and to take action full-aware that it may cost him everything. The soldier may be required to give his life. Indeed, such stories often require some good people to die along the way. The love story is no gentler, no more forgiving. The romance, too, may cost everything.

Is it a coincidence that we are drawn to these stories of great sacrifice? Can a youth rise up and become a hero without giving anything? Can a lifelong romance fit neatly into two pre-arranged and comfortable lives without casting aside much that would have been more convenient, orderly and easy? When we look to the lives that inspire us and to the stories that stir us, we find this is decidedly not the case. The opposite is true. It seems our hearts were created with the unique ability to recognize a thing of great value when we find it. And it may be that these stories move us because our Creator first wrote the pattern of the great story on our hearts.

In the Old Testament, Abraham is called to sacrifice his son Isaac, the child he has waited on, the person he loves most. What could cost him more? God requires him to raise the blade, to move his heart into a position of complete faith and obedience.

Like Abraham, God the Father raised the blade against the one he loved

most. But God spared Abraham the pain of actually killing Isaac. For Abraham, the blade was stayed. But for God himself, he spared nothing. God showed his Father's heart no mercy as he let the blade fall and kill his child.

What we cherish may be required of us, and what we love may need to be destroyed. Like Abraham, we are called to raise the blade and be ready to spare nothing. As Jesus said, "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" (Luke 14:26).

And like God the Father, we must be prepared for the blade to fall at times. There will be times when a dream we pursue, a person we love, or a thing we enjoy will, in a sense, be killed. We won't know conveniently ahead of time when the blade must painfully fall or when it must only be raised in obedience. But that is precisely the point.

The value of faith is found in its inherent risk. Abraham's act of obedience would be mere theatrics if he knew all along Isaac would be spared. Our Creator, who has written the pattern of the great story on our hearts, understands the value of great cost. He spared nothing for us, and we are to spare nothing for him.

God commanded Abraham to be ready to risk everything. This is a command to obedience. But it is much more than that. It is the very definition of faith.

As Christ said, "If anyone ... does not hate ... even his own life, he cannot be my disciple."

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