

# I Will Not Offer the Lord What Costs Me Nothing

By Wendy Wood



At the end of 2 Samuel, King David orders Joab to take a census. David is coming to the end of his life and seems to want to revel in the mighty army “he” has built. We know all throughout David’s life that God has been faithfully and providentially working out every single moment of David’s and Israel’s time according to His plan. But, as David gives his last speech, we read a long list of “David’s mighty men”. Immediately after that “Again, the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel and he incited David against them saying, ‘Go, number Israel and Judah” (2 Samuel 24:1). David’s heart had evidently grown prideful. His hope for Israel’s future is in the numbers of men able to fight, he thinks. David is placing his “trust in horses and chariots” (Psalm 20:7) instead of God and His care and protection over Israel. Even after Joab warns David that he should absolutely not take the census, David insists on it and the men are counted.

David hears the total number of men. “In Israel there were 800,000 valiant men who drew the sword, and the men of Judah were 500,000 (2 Samuel 24:9). After hearing these impressive numbers, David immediately is convicted and says, “I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O Lord, please take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have done very foolishly” (2 Samuel 24:10). While David realizes his pride has grown once again, the Lord is faithful and loving to discipline him and warn the others. God gives David three options of consequences, and David wisely leaves it up to God to decide. The Lord sends a pestilence on Israel from the morning until the

appointed time and 70,000 men die (vs 15). God stays the angel's hand so that no more perish in this incident.

Next, Gad comes to David and tells him to make an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite (vs 18). This is the exact place the angel of the Lord who killed the 70,000 was when the Lord stopped him from destroying more. David goes to Araunah the Jebusite and offers money to buy the threshing floor. Araunah says, "no" to David and wants to give him the land for free. David's response is "No, but I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God that cost me nothing" (vs 24). David makes his offering to the Lord on the altar he built after buying the threshing floor for a price.

David has once again seen the power of God. David is humbled and awed by God's holiness and trustworthiness. David knows that God is worthy of very costly worship. He wants to demonstrate his love, gratitude, and fear of God by giving a costly gift. The Lord was gracious and merciful to David, again. How could David turn around and offer something that cost him nothing?

As counselors, our worship and offering is often seen in the way that we counsel. As we sit down to minister the Word of the Lord to sinners and sufferers, we should be offering the Lord our very best. We are to work heartily unto the Lord (Colossians 3:24) and our aim is to please the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:9). Doing these two things means our work will be costly!

What is the cost of offering the Lord our best in our work?

### **1. Good Biblical counsel will cost you time.**

**Time in Prayer:** The most important time spent for a Biblical counselor is spent in prayer. We must be praying for our counselees throughout the week. We must set aside time to pray specifically for the counselee's heart and that God would be at work to humble them and work the fruit of the Spirit into each one's life. We must pray for wisdom for ourselves that our counsel would be timely, needful, and gracious. We must pray for the situations that are causing pain in our counselee's life and entrust the answer to the Lord's timing and plan.

**Time in planning:** God grants wisdom to those who ask. As you prepare for the next session and pray through what is the wisest course of action, you will need to give time to writing up an agenda and carefully thinking through the best way to present the scripture and teaching. The amount of time for each session will vary, but good counsel

is dependent on good planning. Time to study new material and locate resources is also a way counselors will give up time. As we seek to serve our counselee well, we also offer the Lord an offering of time.

**Time throughout the week:** Most likely your counselee will be emailing, calling, or texting you in between appointments. Your counselee may need guidance on a specific issue that can't wait until their appointment time. Your counselee may have questions about the homework you assigned or need something explained again before they can complete the homework. Your counselee may have news to share that they are either excited about or fearful about. Whatever the case, Biblical counseling is not usually contained to one hour a week. As we build relationships and seek to love and care for those God brings to us, we will have ample opportunity to love them. This can be a costly gift as you set aside time dedicated to something else to respond to your counselee. When we do this gladly and joyfully, we are giving the Lord a gift that cost us something.

## **2. Good Biblical counsel will cost you comfort.**

**The comfort of pleasing people:** There will be times when you have to speak words that will wound your counselee. The person in front of you may be blind to the sin in their life or need to hear that suffering is a gift from God even though they want to be free of pain immediately. Your counselee may say unkind things to you or may even quit coming to counseling. They might refuse to meet with you or cut off the relationship. You may dread the week leading up to an appointment where you know you need to address a very hard issue. A Biblical counselor will have to give up the comfort of being liked, the comfort of easy relationships, the comfort of being thanked. For some counselors, this is a costly gift to the Lord. But it is an offering of trust and love for the Lord that allows you to give this gift willingly.

**The comfort of control:** There will be plenty of times when your careful planning goes out the window! For the person, like me, who likes predictability, we must give up that comfort in order to minister well to our counselee and surrender our time to the Lord in each session. There will be many times when your planned agenda does not "fit" with the direction the session goes. The counselee may come in with a crisis that needs to be addressed or have a totally different issue that came up during the week that needs attention. Good Biblical counseling will adjust to the new plan, pray for the Holy Spirit to guide and work in you as the counselor, and trust God's grace to provide what you need. Biblical counseling will cost you the comfort of control.

## **3. Good Biblical counsel will cost you sleep.**

I know I have awakened in the middle of the night with a sufferer on my mind. As I lay awake and pray and try to sort through my next step in counseling, I am making an offering to the Lord. Psalm 56:8 tells us that God counts our tossings in the middle of the night. God knows when we are awake and unable to sleep. He knows when we are concerned about a counselee and He delights when we bring that concern to Him in prayer. Praying for a counselee is a wonderful way to spend a sleepless night and is an offering to the Lord as we trust in His care and provision for that person.

How has Biblical counseling been an offering that cost you something?