

1.5 Reflection:

Empty Hands, Both Hands: The Cost, Comfort, and Clarity of Following Jesus

Some people think following Christ means staying inside the lines—pleasing people, keeping quiet, being nice.

But Jesus didn't say "Be nice."

He said, "*Come. Follow Me.*"

And when He said that, He wasn't walking toward safety.

He was walking toward the cross.

And He was free.

To follow Him doesn't always mean abandoning our families. It means reordering our love—so that God comes first, and all other relationships are shaped by that love.

Sometimes that means walking away when a relationship leads us away from God.

Sometimes it means staying, and loving more fiercely and faithfully.

Always, it means **not being ruled by fear, comfort, or control**—but being guided by the Spirit.

Jesus healed people not just to fix bodies, but to bring people back into community. He raised the widow's son and gave him back to her. He didn't tear people out of their lives for sport. He restored them so they could love rightly again.

So yes, the call is costly.

But it is not cruel.

The cross is real—but so is the embrace.

To live with empty hands is not to live with *nothing*.

It is to live with *Christ first*.

And in that ordering, we find freedom, rest, and love that lasts.

But what does it *really* mean to put Christ first?

It's not just a feeling or vague idea. It's not a bumper sticker or a song lyric. It's a daily act of discernment, discipline, and surrender.

To put God first means this: We must know God's will. And God's will is made known through God's Word.

Jesus knew Scripture deeply. When tempted in the desert, He responded with Scripture. Mary's Magnificat is a song stitched from Scripture. The saints were not just people of good hearts.

They were people of *formed minds* and *grounded discernment*.

Yes, there is such a thing as infused knowledge—where someone comes to deep understanding purely through grace. But that's rare. Most of us are called to the slower, faithful road:

- Studying the Word
- Praying with the Word
- Wrestling with its meaning
- Discerning through it in our lives

You cannot follow God's will if you do not know how to recognize His voice. And His voice comes to us clearest in Scripture.

We often ask, "What would my spouse want?" Or, "What will keep the peace?"

Or, "What will make people like me?"

But that's not putting God first. That's putting people first. Or comfort first. Or fear first.

To put God first is to ask:

"What does Jesus want from me—right here, right now?"

And then to act on it, even if it costs us.

This doesn't mean abandoning all human relationships. Jesus never glorified isolation. He healed in order to *restore* people to community. But He also challenged people to follow Him *before* everything else.

To be a peacekeeper in Christ means living the truth *quietly but unwaveringly*.

It means refusing to compromise the Gospel for social acceptance.

It means forming our alliances not from familiarity or fear, but from **shared purpose in doing God's will**.

This is not an unattainable standard.

It's a lifelong journey.

We don't need to be perfect.

We need to be willing.

Willing to study. To pray. To listen. To discern. To obey.

We need **both hands**:

One hand open to let go of what binds us,

The other hand open to receive what God wants to give.

That's what freedom in Christ looks like.

It's not easy. But it's real.

And it's where peace begins.