



First Baptist Church of Highland Park Men's Bible Study Handout Monday, March 9, 2026

Gradually Then Suddenly – Chapter 3: 'Opportunity Cost'

Based on the book by Mark Batterson
Prepared for Men's Bible Study

Opening Scripture – Luke 9:23 (NLT)

Then he said to the crowd, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me."

Chapter Overview

The concept of 'opportunity cost' means that whenever we choose one thing, we are also choosing to give up something else. Mark Batterson explains that the same principle applies to spiritual growth. Every decision we make either moves us closer to God's purpose or further away from it.

Men often say they want a stronger faith, deeper purpose, and greater impact, but those outcomes require intentional sacrifice. Spiritual growth rarely happens instantly—it happens gradually through consistent choices that align our lives with God.

Key Principle

You cannot pursue everything, but you can pursue what matters most. Godly men must learn the discipline of focused faith.

Biblical Example – The Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10:21–22)

In this passage, Jesus invited a wealthy young man to sell his possessions and follow Him. The man walked away because the cost felt too great. He chose temporary comfort over eternal purpose. His opportunity cost was discipleship.

SEE REVERSE SIDE

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Teaching Movement 1 – Every Yes Requires a No

When you say yes to purpose, you must say no to distraction. The Apostle Paul modeled this mindset in Philippians 3:13–14 when he spoke about forgetting what lies behind and pressing toward what lies ahead.

A man who tries to chase everything will ultimately accomplish nothing. Focused faith requires intentional decisions about what truly matters.

Teaching Movement 2 – Discipline Determines Destiny

Spiritual growth is shaped by daily discipline. Hebrews 12:11 reminds us that discipline may be uncomfortable in the moment, but it produces a harvest of righteousness later.

Many people claim they do not have time to pray, study scripture, or grow spiritually. In reality, we always make time for what we truly prioritize.

Teaching Movement 3 – Small Decisions Shape Big Futures

Luke 16:10 teaches that faithfulness in small things leads to faithfulness in greater things. David did not defeat Goliath overnight—he developed his skill with a sling long before the battlefield moment arrived. Consistent obedience builds momentum.

Sports Illustration

A championship athlete understands opportunity cost. If a player wants to win a championship, he must sacrifice things others are unwilling to give up. Late nights become early workouts. Comfort becomes conditioning. Entertainment becomes preparation.

A basketball player who wants to play at the highest level cannot skip practice. A football player who wants to start cannot ignore film study. Success requires discipline.

The same principle applies to faith. You cannot celebrate like a champion if you do not sacrifice like a champion.

Africentric Illustration

Throughout African American history, many leaders understood the principle of opportunity cost. Harriet Tubman repeatedly risked her life to lead enslaved people to freedom through the Underground Railroad. Each journey required courage and sacrifice, but she believed freedom was worth the cost.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. also understood opportunity cost. His commitment to justice required him to endure criticism, threats, and imprisonment. Yet he remained focused on the vision of equality and transformation.

The lesson is clear: every meaningful calling requires sacrifice.

Discussion Questions

- What does the term 'opportunity cost' mean in your own words?
- What opportunities have you missed because of distraction or comfort?
- What is one habit that could help strengthen your spiritual discipline?
- What might God be asking you to give up in order to grow?

Life Application

This week ask yourself one question each morning: “What decision today will move me closer to God’s purpose?”

Small choices shape big destinies.

Closing Scripture – Galatians 6:9 (NLT)

So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.

Final Encouragement

Every man is paying a cost with the decisions he makes every day. The real question is: What are you paying it for?

You can spend your life on distractions, or you can invest your life in purpose. When a man aligns his choices with God's calling, what begins gradually will eventually become suddenly.