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## Editorial

We live in a world where we're always on the lookout for a bargain. The half-priced sale, the 'once in life-time' offer, or the 'too good to be true' deal (which usually is!) - our eyes and ears are tuned to such promises. We seek value and search it out. Yet at the same time we value quality. We long for that which will last and are drawn to that which will endure. Our hearts are attracted to beauty that will not fade. Of course the great goal is to find both together. That elusive situation where quality and beauty are offered at not-to-be-missed-once-in-a-life-time-you'll-never-find-better prices.

The gospel of the Lord Jesus, at one level, offers us exactly this. The very essence of grace is that God offers us all his riches - every spiritual blessing (Eph 1:3) - freedom and forgiveness, restoration and reconciliation - all for nothing. Beauty and quality, worthiness and perfection at a price every person can afford. For it is free. Bought with the precious blood of God himself and offered to us for nothing. "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost" calls the prophet Isaiah, extending the not-to-be-missed-once-in-a-life-time-you'll-never-find-better offer of a generous and gracious God to a world desperately in need.

And yet this grace, while free, is also costly. Clearly it cost God as he made his own Son sin for us (2 Cor 5:21). And grace costs us; it is a costly thing to receive such grace. It costs our pride as we admit that we need it - that 'there is no health in us' (as the Book of Common Prayer puts it), and that there is nothing we can offer or give or be which could begin to pay for such a gift. It costs us as we are taught by God's grace to say 'No' to ungodliness and instead live self-controlled, upright and godly lives (Titus 2:11-12). God's grace costs us our very lives, as we give ourselves to the one who has bought us (Acts 20:28).

And this cost is not something to be taken lightly. Our Lord warned us that it is wise to consider the cost of discipleship, and that those who are not willing to pay the cost of giving up everything cannot follow him (Luke 14:33). In the immortal words of Tana Umaga, we're not playing tiddlywinks. Discipleship is costly.

**"The wonderful truth of God's grace is that he not only calls us to costly discipleship, he also equips us for it. His grace is sufficient - to save us, sustain us, change us, and empower us."**

This edition of Focus spells out some of that costliness. The words of Jesus from Mark 8 are unfolded and applied by Chris Spark as we hear of the costliness of the cross, and the necessary and consequential costliness to us as those who have received the benefits of the cross. Malcolm Falloon shares some of his doctoral research on the cost of conversion to Maori as the gospel spread throughout these Islands. And we hear from others more recently who have endured cost to seek to love and serve their Lord.

The wonderful truth of God's grace is that he not only calls us to costly discipleship, he also equips us for it. His grace is sufficient - to save us, sustain us, change us, and empower us. Wonderfully, his grace is also powerful to forgive us as we fail him. His Spirit given to every believer graciously works in us, doing his work of making us more like our Lord. And as we give ourselves to this costly life of following Jesus, and as we constantly look to the cost he bore, we know his grace more and more.