

Jesus Teaches the Cost of Discipleship

Luke 14:25-35

With a great multitude following Him, Jesus swirled around and told them something so important He finished with, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Though salvation is a free gift, following Jesus and being His servant has a price to be paid here on earth. When we are unwilling to pay this price and live in disobedience, we become a useless disciple.

What is a Disciple? We must first settle our terms and define the word “disciple.” Simply put, a disciple is a follower who fully adheres to another's teachings, making them their rule of life and conduct. At Jesus' time, a disciple would attach himself to a teacher to learn a trade or subject, much like an “apprentice” today. They would learn by watching and doing. The New Testament uses the word disciple over 260 times, and it is central to Jesus' followers. As we have studied Jesus' life, we know He chose twelve disciples, but many others also followed Him, wanting to learn. John and Andrew were first “disciples” of John the Baptist and later followed Jesus. (John 1:35-40) Jesus will teach many times what it means to follow Him. But keep in mind, He is about three months from the cross; those who would follow Him must understand what it meant to be His disciple!

Is every Christian a Disciple? Well, before we look at this question, let's look at the definition and even the history of this word Christian. First, Jesus never used the word “Christian.” We first find it in the book of Acts. This name was given to believers in Jesus by those antagonistic toward them, and it means “belongs to Christ.” The early church called themselves disciples, saints, or brethren, but not Christians. But we do find the word “Christian” three times in the New Testament. When the name was given to them – Acts 11:26; the conversation between Agrippa and Paul – Acts 26:28 “Almost thou persuadest me to be a **Christian**.”; and Peter's words in 1 Peter 4:16, “Yet if any man suffer as a **Christian**, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.”

Keep in mind that this term was given to faithful followers of Jesus. Hostile unbelievers looked at the righteous lives of the early church and said, “Those people belong to Christ!” Sounds like they were looking at disciples!

We will come back to this question before we are done. Keep this question in mind as we go through Jesus' words. But then take it a step further: “Am I a disciple?”

I. The Setting

“And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned (Lit. - whirled; swirled; dramatic gesture), and said unto them,” Luke 14:25

“great multitudes” – Jesus had returned to Judea after much of His ministry had been spent in Galilee, the northern region of Israel. The Greek words and phrases indicate that the crowds in Judea at this time were even larger than those earlier in Galilee. First, Judea's population was much greater than Galilee's, and many had already heard of the miracle worker Jesus, whom they thought was their long-awaited Messiah. And they were coming to hear Him for themselves! Again, we are probably not talking about 20-30 people following Jesus here, but more likely hundreds, maybe even thousands!

“turned” – I love the dramatic action of this. Jesus didn't just set himself up for a teaching session – climb a hill and sit on a rock, or in a boat pushing out into the sea; He did not take a position as a teacher to give an

important lesson, but instead took a teachable moment, whirled around, and gave this great crowd the truth and reality of what their heart needed to know about following Him!

II. The Cost of Discipleship

1. The Choice of Loyalty v. 26

“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethern, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” Luke 14:26

“hate not” – The Jewish use of the word hate is different than what we think of. This is not about ill-will or malice. But in the Jewish setting, **one can only love or hate; there is no middle ground.** A lesser love is actually hate. It is the choice of the will one makes when asked to choose between two things. It is not about emotions but a conscious decision between two things, making one the **priority** over the other. God’s choice of Jacob over Esau. (Mal. 1:2-3; Rom. 9:13)

“father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethern, and sisters” – And when coming to Jesus as a disciple, who was to be “hated?” Family! **The dearest and best of one’s life!** Spouse, parents, children, siblings! The very people who we normally should feel the closest to and love unconditionally, but here Jesus is saying we should “hate” them in comparison to Him! In **priority**, our loyalty, love, devotion, and connection to Jesus should be so great that all other relationships would seem to be hate. He needs to be the disciple’s primary priority! Wow!

But then Jesus adds, “yea, and his own life also.”

“own life” – Our own lives should also be hated in comparison to our love, devotion, loyalty, care, and investment in Jesus! What is meant by our “own life?” It’s all our hopes, dreams, ambitions, and will, and, in return, accepting Jesus’ will for our lives. We do all of this willingly, without question or complaint. We must reject all other desires and place our lives solely under Christ’s authority and will! He needs to be the disciple’s **primary priority!** Wow!

When given a choice between two – family, ambitions, dreams, personal will, or Christ – a disciple always chooses Christ – because they are a disciple of His!! But don’t miss Jesus’ words! Without this kind of commitment, “he cannot be my disciple!” Wow!

“If any man come to me, and hate not....” → “he cannot be my disciple.”

2. A Cross to be Borne

“And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.” Luke 14:27

“bear his cross” – Crucifixion was a well-known Roman execution method. It was the most horrifying type of death at that time. It was not only an execution, but also a public deterrent to rebellion and a tool for instilling fear in those under Rome’s strong arm. History tells us that in about 6 AD, thousands of Jews had been crucified along the public roads of Israel in response to an open rebellion. Those bodies were left to rot on the crosses. Though no one knew Jesus would have a cross in His future, His teaching and word picture of a cross were vivid to all.

When a man was going to be crucified, he was actually made to carry his cross to the place of execution. Jesus was made to do it, but he was already so weak he could not carry it all the way. The last act of a condemned man was to submit to their Roman authority and carry their cross! To “bear” a cross, as Jesus said here, means to carry it willingly.

And where are we going with our cross...

“come after me” – We have a new direction, following Jesus! Following Jesus means that the direction we might have had planned would be abandoned! We have surrendered to a new path, Jesus’ path for our lives! It also means abandoning lusts and sin! When we follow Jesus, there is no place for lusts or sinful habits to continue to grow! We must reject these, and Jesus must be our **priority** in all things!

This would not be an easy road; to “come after me” is difficult and will take **self-denial**! But without it, Jesus stated, you “cannot be my disciple.”

“whosoever doth not bear his cross” → “come after me” → “cannot be my disciple”

Jesus told the crowd that to be a disciple, they must be totally loyal to Him, abandon all their own will, and...

3. The Surrender of All We find here two illustrations that will ultimately point to the realization that we must surrender all if we would follow Jesus, or shame and disgrace come to His name.

➤ Cost of Building

“For which of you, intending to build a tower (Lit - a fancy, ornamental upgrade to a house; it allowed one to look over their property; a luxury), sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? ²⁹Let haply (Lit. - perhaps), after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, ³⁰Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.” Luke 14:28-32

Ever build anything? A house, garage, addition, even a chicken coop? One of the first things you must do is crunch the numbers carefully! So many details cost money, a lot of money! Permit costs; excavation and leveling; cement; water lines; all the materials; the builder, electricians, plumbers, fixtures, and finally the chickens! But here in Jesus’ illustration, He is speaking of a luxurious status symbol: a tower that would rise high above the rest of a house. If someone started building such a structure and didn’t have the money to finish it, it would become a monument of shame rather than a showcase of wealth!

Jesus then uses another illustration, the....

➤ Cost of Battle

“Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? ³²Or else, which the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage (Lit. - delegation), and desireth conditions of peace.” Luke 14:31-32

Ever go into battle? Of course not, but this illustration of Jesus is not hard to understand. A king must consider if he can go to war and come out victorious against his foe. War should not an emotional response to a bad situation. If that king went to war without the resources needed to win, he would be a disgraced and shamed leader rather than a victorious king!

“So likewise , whosoever he be of you that forsaketh (Lit. - renounce; give up; surrender) not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple .” Luke 14:33

“Likewise,” or in the same way, if you “forsake **not** all,” **you will bring shame on the name of Jesus!** Starting to follow and to say you are a disciple of Jesus and then not truly forsaking your life, will, or even sin, is a mockery to Him! **The careless, foolish want-to-be disciple who refuses to forsake all brings shame on Christ!** Again, the word “**all**” is a small but huge word here! **All** must be renounced, given up, and surrendered for Jesus! (Examples of all – social status, wealth, control, time, career, family) When preaching from this passage, Charles Spurgeon put it this way, “We must be willing to give up everything – to give up even ourselves, our entire selves – to Him, for Christ will have all or nothing. He will never divide the human heart with any rival. If we profess to serve Him, we must have Him for our only Master and not attempt to serve two masters.” p. 1122

A disciple must live ready to put everything they have at the Lord’s disposal! Our priority in **all** things must be Jesus!

“whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all” → “cannot be my disciple”

V. The Consequences of the Decision

“Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned? ³⁵It is neither fit for the land, not yet for the dunghill (Lit. - rubbish heap; used as fertilizer); but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Luke 14:34-35

Salt at the time of Christ – In Palestine, salt came from the Dead Sea, but it was not pure. Other minerals and contaminants made it taste unpleasant and caused it to go stale quickly! Good salt was valuable and even used as money or payment. Hence the old saying about a lazy or poor worker: “He’s not worth his salt!”

When a disciple makes the
Decision to Give all:

“salt is good” – Jesus is saying pure salt is good! Oh, the uses of salt are almost endless! Do a quick Google search on the uses of salt, and you’ll find thousands! We are told that only about 6% of salt makes it to our food and on our tables! Salt enhances, cleans, preserves, heals, and even the correct combination of salts can fertilize plants! Salt is good!

But when a disciple makes the
Decision to Withhold:

“salt have lost his savor” – that’s salt that has gone bad or was impure to begin with! Notice how Jesus says it is good for nothing!

- “neither fit for the land” – This bad or impure salt doesn’t help man or beast...
- “not yet for the dunghill” – Even manure has great uses! But not bad salt!
- “men cast it out” – So man throws it out, where it can do no harm; in the roadway! When a follower of Jesus gives all, they “are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of man.” Matthew 5:13

Jesus finishes this lesson to the great crowd by saying....

Carefully Consider:

“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” – We find this saying of Jesus four times in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but we can only imagine He said it many more times! “If you have ears, let them hear!” But this phrase is about more than just hearing words; it's really about applying them to your life! Jesus had said:

- Your **loyalty** must be to Me alone!
- Your **will** must be surrendered to Me alone!
- Your all must be **abandoned** for Me alone!

Otherwise, you bring shame on His name and become useless! We too must not only hear these words but apply them to our hearts!

Believers' Application:

1. Is every Christian a disciple? I won't labor on this point, but as we look at this lesson, we can say yes: a Christian, someone who has put their trust in Jesus as their Savior, is a disciple. But sadly, Christians can **turn from their loyalty to Jesus back to other things; they can hold on to their own wills and refuse to let go of the things of this world**. Every believer struggles to be faithful to the name of Jesus. Just as a marriage must be carefully maintained so the couple doesn't grow apart, a believer must also actively seek to stay close to Christ. Let's read what Jesus said to the church of Ephesus, after they had left their “first love!” (Read Rev. 2:1-5) Key words here are “Remember;” and “repent.” I challenge you, as I have been challenged, to remember and repent! Let's get back to being useful disciples!

2. This isn't the first time Jesus gave “want-to-be” disciples a message about making Him the priority of their lives. Let's walk through other passages where Jesus taught this, and how some responded to this call to discipleship!

Luke 16:13 – You cannot serve, be loyal to, or invest time in the things of this world and Jesus! Jesus must be the **priority**!

John 12:25 – Again, two choices are given. Your choice of how you live, what you serve, your priorities, and what you invest in **must be set on Jesus**!

Mark 8:34 – Being a disciple means we must “deny” ourselves of our will and desires. Our will must be that of our Master. We must embrace it! Jesus must be our **priority**!

Matthew 4:18-22 contrasted with Luke 18:18-23 – Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James, and John to follow Him. Their response was to leave all and follow! Jesus became their priority; they became disciples! BUT the rich young ruler in Luke 18 went away sad when called to follow Jesus. Obviously, his riches were still his priority!

Galatians 2:20; 6:14 – Here we find Paul's attitude and motivation of discipleship! Paul said, I am carrying my cross in faith, letting Christ live through me, why!? He loved me and gave Himself for me! This should also be the prayer of our hearts!