



THE GOSPEL OF
Luke

SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 14:25-35

To understand the importance of counting the cost of discipleship.

Count the Costs

Over the last couple of years, our church buildings have undergone tremendous construction and remodeling. Apart from the fact that we have historically stewarded our resources well, we also have not one, but now two brilliantly talented staff members who are able to work projects that have saved the church a sizable amount of money. Our buildings had really weathered a lot of damage from years of ministry usage without much upkeep. If we believe that ultimately God is the One who provides every “good and perfect gift” (Ja. 1:7), then that includes the buildings He has given us, and thus we are charged to steward them. However, before we do anything, we sit down and evaluate what it’s going to cost. What supplies will we need? How much time will this take? What will go uncared for in the meantime? Counting the costs of a project is the first step in insuring we aren’t doing something we can’t finish.

In Luke 14:24-35, Jesus speaks to this very issue with regard to our faith. If you want to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, you must first evaluate what it’s going to cost you and be honest about whether you are willing to pay up. Jesus doesn’t even leave this question of costs up for debate; He tells us: “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple” (Lk. 14:27). Again, He says: “So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple” (Lk. 14:33). In order to be a disciple of Jesus, it will cost you everything, but in return you *get* more than everything. You get Him.

The Cost of Discipleship

First of all, what is a disciple? The Greek term μαθητής (mathētēs) means something like, “a learner.” In the ancient world, to be a disciple meant to follow a rabbi, serve under his wise direction, and learn everything you can from him in order to one day do the same for others. This is one of the reasons why Jesus is often referred to as a “rabbi” (although interestingly, Luke is the only Gospel account that never uses this term for Jesus). The term “disciple” just means a Christian; someone who professes faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, and follows Him. In verses 25 through 35, Jesus tells the crowds what it will take to become His disciple. Below is a breakdown of some of the key details.

FORSAKE YOUR FAMILY

It’s one thing for Jesus to ask us to *love our enemies*, but an entirely different thing for Him to ask us to *hate our families*, but that seems like what He’s doing in verse 26. This passage is often misunderstood in modern contexts. Jesus says, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.” Usually the focal point of this text becomes the front half, and questions arise concerning how Jesus could tell His followers to “hate” his family! Isn’t Jesus pro-family? Of course He is. The term “hate” is a semitic expression that simply conveys choosing one thing over another thing. For example, if I choose studying over going to sleep early, I could say in semitic fashion: “Studying I love, but sleeping I hate.” I don’t actually hate sleep (I actually quite enjoy it!); it’s just an expression that emphasizes the choice of one thing over another.

Notice also that Jesus names off six things that one must “hate,” and that they are listed in 3 groups of pairs: “Mother and father,” “wife and children,” and “brothers and sisters.” These are appropriately paired and cover all of the bases one might experience in their familial unit. To cap this whole expression off, Jesus includes the latter part of verse 26 and all of verse 27: “Yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.” The intended emphasis becomes a bit clearer in light of these verses. It isn’t that Jesus wants us to hate our families (or ourselves) but that if push comes to shove, we choose Jesus over our families and even our own lives. As a disciple of Jesus Christ, you must be willing to choose Jesus over anyone. The priority of Christ takes the top priority, or He is no priority at all.

COUNT THE COST

Jesus next moves to an illustration concerning an individual who desires “to build a tower” (Lk. 14:28). Before this person spends the money and time and resources constructing a tower, Jesus poses this question: “For which of you does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?” (Lk. 14:28). It’s a practical question, and one that would have resonated with His listeners. If one hastily rushes into a monumental task of building a tower without considering whether they have what it takes to complete it, they might end up stuck with half a tower! Jesus warns in verses 29 and 30: “When he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’” The connection seems obvious: Those who do not consider the costs of following Jesus are apt to begin following Him but will eventually depart from Him (1 Jn. 2:19).

EVALUATING THE BATTLE

The second illustration Jesus gives is that of a king who is at potential war with a neighboring kingdom: “Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.” (Lk. 14:31-32). Again, the point is

simple and clear - when making a decision that has the potential to cost you your life, you should expend a great deal of effort considering the best choice for yourself that leads to life and not death. The point is that following Jesus is not a flippant decision to make, but one that should be given careful consideration given the extraordinary demands that it will require of you.

FORSAKE IT ALL

To sum everything up, Jesus says: “So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple” (Lk. 14:33). If you are not willing to renounce everything that you possess for the sake of following Jesus, you aren’t qualified to His disciple.

Salty for Jesus

In verses 34 and 35, Jesus uses yet another illustration for the point He is making, this time with salt: “Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” How does salt lose its taste? The Greek literally says, “If salt becomes foolish,” but it’s typically rendered to mean something like a loss of taste, which ultimately just conveys the idea of a loss of purpose. Salt was very important in the ancient world, not only for seasoning but also preserving foods. If it loses its purpose, it’s worse than useless. It’s actually harmful. It would ruin the soil it is thrown on and even destroy the natural fertilizing properties of manure. Again, applied to the idea of following Jesus and counting the costs, it would be the worst-case-scenario for an individual who begins to follow the Lord (salt) and having not considered the costs, stops following Him (loses saltiness), because at that point, they are lost (the salt cannot regain its saltiness). Now, this does not mean that people who follow Jesus and backslide can’t be redeemed. But as a general principle, it means the current of our life will follow His will and His commandments.

What About Now?

The takeaway is simple: Consider the cost of following Jesus! Are you willing to give what it is going to take to pursue Him? Are you willing to sacrifice what is necessary to be obedient? His grace will sustain as you do.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Luke 14:25-26. Who was with Jesus? Who does Jesus say one must hate in order to be His disciple?

2. Read Luke 14:27. What does Jesus say is necessary to be His disciple?

Day Two

1. Read Luke 14:28-30. Summarize the first illustration Jesus uses here. What is He illustrating?

2. Read Luke 14:31-32. Summarize the second illustration Jesus uses here. What is He illustrating?

Day Three

1. Read Luke 14:33. What does Jesus say you must renounce in order to follow Him?

2. Read Luke 14:34. Summarize the third illustration Jesus uses here. What is He illustrating?

Day Four

1. Read Luke 14:35. What is tasteless salt good for, according to this verse?

2. Read 1 John 2:19-20. What does John say about those who once followed Jesus but no longer do?

Week 55 Discussion: What Will It Cost?

Luke 14:25-35 records Jesus speaking to “great crowds” concerning what it will take to follow him (Lk. 14:25). The point of His teaching is that the cost to be His disciple is great, and must be evaluated lest someone begin to follow Him but fall away. Talk as a group about what following Jesus as costed you.

1. Icebreaker: How hard is it to follow Christ?
2. What was the most difficult thing to give up in order to follow Jesus?
3. What is something you know you need to give up, but haven't yet?
4. Have you ever sat down and thought about what your faith has costed you? If so, share with the group.
5. Have you ever known someone who followed the Lord and then walked away from the faith? What do you think led them away?
6. How can the church do a better job of helping people evaluate the cost of discipleship?

Takeaways:

1. Jesus teaches us the importance of evaluating the cost of discipleship.
2. Jesus warns us to not walk away, lest our faith become useless.