
Knowing Jesus

The Followers of Christ

Luke 14:25-35

3/24/2019

Main Idea: Following Jesus requires that we love Him more than anything else.

Lesson Objective: Love Christ

Introduction

As your class time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

The movie “42” is the story of legendary baseball player Jackie Robinson, who was the first African American to play major league baseball (Brooklyn Dodgers). He played in six World Series games and drove in the winning score in the deciding game of the 1955 World Series championship game. Jackie was noted for his heady plays, his tenacity, and his amazing ability to steal bases. But, most of all, Jackie Robinson was known for his character. Even in the thick of racist ridicule and criticism, hateful acts and discrimination, Jackie demonstrated temperance.

How did he do it? Did he know how hard it would be to be the first black major league baseball player?

One of the most interesting scenes in the movie is when Jackie is in a meeting with the president of the Dodgers, Branch Rickey. Rickey is telling Jackie what he needs to do in order for the team to succeed. He says:

“People aren’t going to like this ... they’ll do anything to get you to react. Echo a curse with a curse and they’ll hear only yours. Follow a blow with a blow and they’ll say the Negro lost his temper. Your enemy will be out in force and you can’t beat him on his own low ground ... Like Our Savior, you gotta have the guts to turn the other cheek. Will you?”

After a pause Jackie replies, “Give me a uniform, give me a number on my back, and I’ll give you the guts.”

There seemed to be eternity in that pause. Jackie had to take a moment to do a heart check. He had to count the cost! Though he had no idea what it would

really be like, he had to consider that times would be hard and difficult. There would be times when it would be more painful to live out his passion for baseball than it would be fun. He was being offered the opportunity of a lifetime ... but, it had a heavy cost.

At its core, the call to discipleship is about identity. Jesus wants us to identify ourselves first and foremost as His followers. We tend to identify ourselves by the things of this world that we most value, like our relationships, our belongings and our jobs. Jesus doesn't mince words in Luke 14:25-35. Following Him comes with a cost; we have to sacrifice the things of this world to be His faithful disciples.

Taking a Stand

Luke 14:25-27

²⁵ Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them,
²⁶ “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. ²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#).

Over the past weeks, we have discussed Jesus’s focus on returning to Jerusalem, where he had prophecies that He would die. As He was traveling along, many people gathered around Him and heard the great news of the Kingdom of God. They believed in a victorious Messiah that would come and liberate Israel and return them to a super power status in the world. However, in these throngs of people, there were a lot of people that wanted the result but had little commitment. The journey to Jerusalem was seen as a celebration instead of a death march.

Jesus’ desire was not to have big crowds, but to make disciples. He wanted His followers to make a choice of personal commitment in order to remain a follower. He offered them an open invitation, “**If anyone come to me.**” This open invitation was to everyone. His disciples had already made the decision to follow Him, but Jesus wanted the **great crowds** to understand that the previously mentioned messianic banquet (Luke 14:15-24) would actually be enjoyed only by those who had paid a high price. He knew that as they approached Jerusalem, it would no longer be easy to follow Him.

He announced that no one could be His follower unless he or she *hated* **father and mother ... wife** (or husband) **and children ... brothers and**

sisters. The term “hate” reflects a hyperbolic Hebrew idiom which means “love less,” as Matthew 10:37 makes clear. To say that Jesus’ words are a hyperbole or overstatement does not lessen the demand at all. The kingdom must come before even family, a point Jesus has made before in 12:53, in which the kingdom divides families, “father against son, ... and mother against daughter.”¹ The list of family members includes the closest of family ties such as father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters.

We can find a similar teaching in Matthew’s Gospel (10:37), where it revealed that Jesus’s followers were to love Him above everyone else, including their own families. Following Christ is about giving Him primary allegiance. Christ followers understand and accept that their relationships with Jesus take precedence over all other relationships. Jesus made it very clear that if family attraction keeps us from following Him, then our not following Him is evil with a pleasant face. His voice does not waver when claiming priority even over family loyalty—Follow Me (Luke 9:59).

As the crowd was trying to absorb this teaching, Jesus added the additional requirement of hating even one’s own life. In addition to putting Christ above family, the disciple must put Christ above self. Specifically, the stipulation is to bear one’s own cross, a requirement that pictures the crucifixion. In fact, a crucifixion victim carried his own cross beam to the place of death. To “carry the cross” conveys a willingness to face martyrdom as well as the more symbolic sense of a willingness to endure great personal sacrifice. Jesus has already said that his followers take up the cross *daily*, which points to daily sacrifice. If anyone does not put Jesus above any cost, Jesus said he or she cannot be His disciple. Again, the inclusive offer of to “who-so-ever” ends with the negative

¹ Mark C. Black, [Luke](#), College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub., 1995), Lk 14:25–26b.

exclusion “cannot be My disciple.” Jesus gave them a reality check as he laid out in unforgettable terms the cost of being a disciple. Any would-be disciple who listened understood that discipleship could cost him dearly, though the benefit of following Christ would make it all worthwhile.

In this teaching, Jesus emphasized that His followers were to love Him above everyone else, including their own families. What Christ has in mind is the absolute nature of His demand to follow Him. Jesus Himself was committed to His Father to the point of sacrificial death. So our following of Christ should be giving Him our primary allegiance. This truth is easier to understand than to practice. As disciples of Christ, we must understand and accept that our relationship with Him takes precedence over all other relationships.

What’s your initial reaction to these words from Jesus? Why?

Why might discipleship cost you relationships?

Do family commitments or other priorities ever hinder your commitment to first seek God’s will or plan for your life? Why or why not?

What actions can you take to ensure that your relationship with Jesus takes precedence over all other relationships?

What did Jesus mean by bearing one’s own cross and following Him (v. 27)?

Is it easier for you to prioritize your relationship with Jesus over your family or over your own interests?

Jesus is Lord

Luke 14:28-33

²⁸ For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰ saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ ³¹ 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? ³² And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³ So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#)

Jesus’ two parables in these verses stress cost analysis. Jesus’s point in the illustrations about the builder and the king is aimed at those in the crowd who were considering becoming His disciples. They should count the cost of following Jesus before they embark on a life of following Him.

“**For which of you**” is a rhetorical question that begins the first story and draws Christ’s hearers into the plot. A builder, probably a farmer, wanted to build a tower. In the first-century world an individual would **build a tower** for protection for a vineyard or a house. It would have served as a lookout tower to detect thieves or approaching enemies. It must have been enormous because the foundation alone depleted his funds. His start did not have a finish. Such a project needed a first sit down decision. He did not plan to fail, but he failed because he failed to plan. If he did not have enough money, he should not have started. Thus everyone would **mock him**. Embarrassment could have been avoided if the man had thought through the amount needed to finish the

construction. The builder fell victim to rushing into a project before counting the cost.

Similarly, **the king** who is about to go to **war** must assess his soldiers and arms before engaging the battle. Most likely, the king with **ten thousand** should not attempt to **oppose the one ... with twenty thousand**. The wise king who knows he cannot win the battle **will send a delegation ... and will ask for terms of peace**. Just as the tower builder and the king needed a sit down decision that called for thinking first before acting.

Then Jesus began to apply the two parables to discipleship. The phrase **“So therefore”** unites the two stories. The phrase **“any one of you”** is an inclusion without exception, and the phrase **“does not renounce”** describes an attitude that refuses to let go. We should understand Jesus’ command to give up their possessions as a willingness to do so whenever necessary to follow Him faithfully (Luke 12:33). This is clearly a crucial verse.

The key word is *apotassetai* (“give up”). When used of persons, the verb means to take leave of or say good-bye to someone. When used of things, it means to give up or renounce (BAG, s.v.). Here, in contrast to the cares of the rich young ruler (18:22), Jesus does not say a disciple should sell all his possessions and give everything away. His thought probably is that of abandonment of things, yielding up the right of ownership, rather than outright disposal of them. The disciple of Jesus may be given the use of things in trust, as a stewardship, but they are no longer his own. The present tense implies that what Jesus requires in relation to possessions is a continual attitude of abandonment.²

² Walter L. Liefeld, [“Luke.”](#) in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 980.

Having possessions does not keep a person from discipleship; possessions controlling the person does because following Jesus is about valuing Him above all. We should understand Jesus's command to give up their possessions as a willingness to do so whenever necessary to follow Him faithfully (Luke 12:33).

What point was Jesus making through His illustrations about the tower builder and the king?

What did Jesus advise anyone to do before making a commitment to follow Him?

What costs keep people from following Jesus today? What things in your life would you find most difficult to give up for the sake of following Christ?

What does this text reveal about why discipleship might cost you possessions?

Beautiful Feet

Luke 14:34-35

³⁴ “Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? ³⁵ 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.” [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#)

In His concluding remarks about discipleship, Jesus compared discipleship to “salt.” Salt was important to the people of the ancient East. It retarded decay in food, and of course it flavored food. In the first century most salt came from salt marshes rather than from the evaporation of salt water with the result that the salt contained many impurities. When salt got wet, it lost its flavor and its effectiveness. It was no longer salt at all. Similarly, a disciple who values his or her earthly possessions more than Jesus is really not a disciple at all.

Love requires putting Jesus above everything and everyone else, including personal and family concerns. What Jesus expects of you is the same as what He expected of His first disciples. Evaluate your priorities and adjust any that are out of sync with putting Him first. That’s what Jesus expects of all His disciples. One enters into discipleship and continues in discipleship when he or she understands Jesus’s uniqueness and infinite worth, and thus puts Him above all. Anything less is not true discipleship; anything less is like salt that’s salt in name only.

In a world full of competing voices, the disciple as well as the would-be disciple should give full attention to what he/she has just heard. This ending

encourages ears to hear, to listen. This challenging statement moves information to application—put this to work in your life.

What does “a lifestyle of sacrifice in the name of Jesus” look like? What are some of the key characteristics of this lifestyle?

Where have you seen the cost of discipleship in your life?

Is there anything in your life right now that, if you gave it up, you would be better equipped to love people and point them to Christ?

If so, what?

How can you support someone else in the group as he or she examines his or her own priorities this week?

How might doing so help you love Jesus more deeply as well?

What does the salt analogy emphasize about discipleship?

Why might discipleship cost your usefulness?

Have you had to forfeit a pursuit of something else—somewhere your usefulness was needed— because of your commitment to Jesus?