

Message #73

Luke 14:25-35

There is a discipleship course you can buy; actually called “The Discipleship Course” that claims it can make you a good foundational disciple in seven weeks. Do you actually think that you could take a course and actually become a disciple in seven weeks?

In most churches there is typically a promotion of some type of “discipleship” program that people are invited to join. In fact, the invitation to join the discipleship program is open to all who come to church. Most churches are ready to sign up any one at any time. In these programs you learn some Bible verses, a little doctrine and you are challenged to do things for God. Some of them challenge you to give up stuff and go places and be involved.

The actual word “disciple” (μαθητης) comes from a root word that means to really learn and ascertain something by being accustomed to something or having a habit of something (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 275, 277). So the actual word disciple has nothing to do with taking some course at church. In fact, that is a critical problem with this shallow stuff today.

The problem is real true Christ-like discipleship has never been about a program at church. Real discipleship is about a personal, individual, private, sacrificial commitment to Jesus Christ.

When Christ was here on earth, He wasn’t interested in signing people up for some discipleship course. In fact, He didn’t invite everyone to become His disciple. He was not interested in the big numbers or the big crowds who were following Him. Most people at the time were physically following Jesus Christ and learning from Jesus Christ. But most were not His disciples. Most did not qualify.

So when Jesus Christ was here on earth, He said I’m not interested in focusing My teaching on who can be My disciple, I am interested in focusing My teaching on who can’t be My disciple.

In fact, what Jesus says is this:

IF YOU REALLY WANT TO BE A DISCIPLE OF JESUS CHRIST, COUNT THE COST BECAUSE THE COST IS HIGH.

Verse 25 informs us that “large crowds” were following Him. Christ is heading to Jerusalem and He was being followed by a large contingency of people. Most people were trailing along with Christ because they were curious about Him.

He had just given the people an illustration about an invitation to come follow Him, but people came up with all kinds of excuses. But the crowd was still large. Apparently some in the audience thought, we won’t make excuses, we will hang with Him. Because there is a large crowd following Him, there is a real large pool of potential disciples from which to draw.

The vast majority of these people had no clue what it really meant to follow Jesus Christ.

Jesus wanted the people to realize that if you really want to be my disciple, you better count the cost because the cost will be high. Christ is not interested in big numbers; He is interested in real commitment. Comparatively speaking, the numbers will be low.

What is the cost of discipleship? There are four prerequisites that He spells out. We want to grammatically observe the two different words that are used. In **verse 26**, the emphasis is on coming “to (προς) Me” and in **verse 27** the emphasis is on coming “after (οπισω) Me.”

The coming “to” Christ has to do with entering into a relationship with Christ, and the coming “after” Christ has to do with following from behind and pursuing that relationship with Jesus Christ.

So discipleship first and foremost will require a relationship with Jesus Christ and a following of Jesus Christ. Without that there is no chance of ever being a disciple.

PREREQUISITE #1 – You cannot be My disciple unless you hate everyone else.

14:26

Wowie. That opens with some punch. Earlier, Christ told His disciples to love their enemies (6:37), now He says hate your family. He is doing this to make a critical point, which clearly has a contextual connection. Many were using their family as an argument for not committing their lives to Him (14:20).

The call to real discipleship is a call to an intense allegiance and a supreme love to and for Jesus Christ over everyone and everything. If one were to be a disciple, no other relationship can take precedence over Him. These were His terms for Him to classify one as His disciple.

That word “hate” (μισεω) that Luke chooses here, is a very strong Greek verb. It specifically speaks of a disregard for one thing in comparison to another thing (*Ibid.*, p. 293).

Now can you imagine a discipleship course at church that says if you aren’t willing to “hate” your close family members, you cannot even be Christ’s disciple? Jesus specifically lists the family members:

- 1) Father
- 2) Mother
- 3) Wife
- 4) Children
- 5) Brothers
- 6) Sisters
- 7) Yourself

Jesus assumes great love and commitment conflict between Him and the aforementioned. A true commitment to Him would cause real conflict in family relationships and with yourself. A true disciple would put Christ first and love Him most.

Now there is a normal, natural tendency for people to put the people on that list at a very high priority. Discipleship requires that Jesus Christ be the highest priority of the person. He takes priority and precedence over every other earthly person.

When Jesus says you must “hate,” He means you must love Him more than everyone by comparison. The challenge to “hate” is rhetorical and means to love those others less than Him or love Him more than them (Gen. 29:30-31; Deut. 21:15-17; Judges 14:6).

David Garland, in his commentary, said it this way. In the Jewish Semitic world there is an expression that expresses preference. “I love A and hate B,” which means “I prefer A to B” (*Luke*, p. 600).

We do the same kind of thing when it comes to several things. For example, if I am at dinner and Mary serves two different kinds of beans, green beans and lima beans, I might say, “I love green beans and I hate lima beans” meaning I prefer green beans to lima beans. Now I don’t hate lima beans in the sense that I am lying in bed at night thinking how I can destroy every lima bean plant in the world.

Jesus is not saying you should have a hateful animosity toward yourself and your family members, what He is saying is that you must make Him the first love of your life above everyone, if you want to be His disciple. If you don’t want to be His disciple, then don’t do it. Love your family more than Him and you cannot be His disciple.

Very few people actually put Jesus Christ at this level in their relationship. Most of the time family will take precedence over things of God.

PREREQUISITE #2 – You cannot be My disciples unless you carry your own cross. 14:27a

Carrying a cross was not some light imagery. Jesus carried His own cross while He was marching to His own execution. The verb “carry” (βασταζω) is a present tense verb that means to continually take up burdens with your own hands and endure them (*Ibid.*, p. 78).

The Apostle Paul said that all who live godly will suffer persecution (II Tim. 3:12). There are times when one who is close to Jesus Christ must be willing to give up some comforts. There are burdens to bear and suffering to endure.

If you are going to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, you will bear burdens. You will suffer. You will hurt and cry. You will have to endure some pain and anguish of difficulties and hardships. It will not be an easy road. You yourself will have to endure things willingly.

PREREQUISITE #3 – You cannot be My disciple unless you come after Jesus Christ. **14:27b**

Again the adverb “come after” means to stay following right behind Jesus Christ. He is leading and you are following continually. There must be allegiance to Jesus Christ and there must be obedience to Jesus Christ.

Jesus now gives a series of illustrations about carefully counting the cost before you say this is what you want to do:

Illustration #1 - The illustration of not counting the cost of completing a building and end up a mockery. **14:28-30**

If you don't count the cost of being a disciple, you may start out and end up the laughing stock of the world. Jesus uses the illustration of a wise builder.

Which builder starts to build a tower without calculating how much it will cost? When you are going to build something, you must analyze the numbers. You assess what you have, you meet with bankers and you carefully and systematically figure it out.

No builder in his right mind would start some building program without counting the cost for two reasons:

(Reason #1) - He wants to make sure he has enough to complete the project.

(Reason #2) - He will end up being ridiculed by everyone that he was not able to finish the project.

We do not want to end up a mockery. God wants us to become a finished product for His glory, not someone people laugh at.

Illustration #2 - The illustration of not counting the cost of winning a war and end up losing the war. **14:31-32**

No king in his right mind would go out to meet another king in a battle without sitting down and calculating the numbers of the military. Otherwise, you may get out and discover you have 10,000 soldiers but are about to go to war against 20,000 soldiers.

If that were to happen, you would have to try to send some delegation to ask for peace because if you fight, you will lose.

If you don't count the cost, you can lose the war.

PREREQUISITE #4 – You cannot be My disciple unless you give up all earthly possessions.
14:33

To be a disciple of Jesus Christ meant you had to follow Him right then and there. You had to make Him the number 1 priority over every earthly person and every earthly possession.

You had to be willing to say goodbye and bid farewell to a focus on earthly things.

Illustration #3 - The illustration not being good salt but ending up useless salt. **14:34-35**

Disciples are supposed to be like the salt of the earth. They bring a good reflection of Jesus Christ to the world. But if they lose their focus, they are not even fit for the manure pile, but to be thrown out. A believer can end up a good for nothing believer. A disciple must stay salty.

There was a tremendous cost and demand to being a disciple when Christ was here. A commitment to Him will not be easy.

A call to discipleship is not a call to ease and comfort, but it is a call to commitment, sacrifice and at times suffering.

To follow Jesus Christ is not a low risk or low cost proposition.

Now what is not brought out in the text is that in the end you will lose everything anyway. You will eventually leave this world and you'll say goodbye to your old self, and to your family and to all your possessions.

So either you can commit everything to the Lord now and use it for His glory, or give it all up later anyway.

It is your call.