

The Demands of Discipleship Luke 14:25-35

Introduction: Jesus tasked the apostles with making disciples.¹ He didn't say to evangelize, nor to plant churches, but to make disciples. Of course, in the process of making disciples, evangelism will take place, and church will be planted. The end game, however, is disciple making. *I hope all of us here today are believers, are genuine Christians, but are you a disciple?* In Luke 14, Jesus painted a picture of what it looks like to be a disciple. Let's see if we measure up!

******What three examples did Jesus give of people who cannot be His disciple (15:25-33)?** Anyone who does not hate others (14:26), anyone who does not bear his own cross (14:27), and anyone who does not renounce all that he has (14:33), cannot be Jesus' disciple (write on board).

14:25 (the occasion)

******What was going on in 14:25 that might have prompted Jesus to talk about the cost of discipleship?** The large crowds following Jesus evidently thought they were disciples (in normal sense of "learners"). However, Jesus took the word "disciple" and gave it a more strenuous meaning. The multitudes misunderstood what was involved. In reality they were not disciples; they merely "accompanied" (14:25) Him. What is said about discipleship was a wake-up call.

14:26 (hate)

*****Review: What's the first example of someone who absolutely *cannot* be Jesus' disciple?**

General Eisenhower wrote to his wife, "God, I hate the Germans."² What does it mean to actually "hate" (14:26) someone? Example: "Hate" is from *miseo* (3404, basis for "misanthrope"), "to detest, abhor, reject." In classical Greek it denoted a permanent and deep-seated hostility toward others.³

How can we determine if Jesus meant "hate" (14:26-27) literally or not? We must let Scripture interpret Scripture:

a). A literal interpretation would contradict such other Scriptures as:

ESV 1 John 4:20 If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

¹ Matthew 28

² "Other Losses", en.wikipedia. com. Accessed 07/22/2023.

³ Colin Brown, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. I, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 555.

b). Jesus spoke this in Greek,⁴ but He thought in Hebrew. In Hebrew thinking, to “hate” someone could merely denote a second-place status:

ESV **Genesis 29:30-31** Jacob ... loved Rachel more than Leah When the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb ... <<<<let the first statement interpret the second.

Stated a different way:

ESV **Matthew 10:37** Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

Why would Jesus use such a harsh word as “hate” (14:26), when it is so easily misunderstood? Perhaps it was for its shock value; He desired to get their attention and drive home the difficulty of being a disciple. Even though it could simply denote a second-place status, it would be still be initially shocking to hear.

Jesus said such a person “cannot” be His disciple. What does “can” (14:26) mean? The word “can” has to do with ability. No one has the ability to be a disciple who does not meet this requirement.

Demand #1: To be a disciple, Jesus must have first place in your life (even ahead of family).

ESV **Colossians 1:18b** He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

Application: Each of us must ask ourselves if we are truly a disciple or whether we would have been just going along with the crowds that accompanied Jesus.

14:27 (cross)

******What the second example of someone who cannot be Jesus' disciple (14:27)?**

3. Why did the Romans force condemned criminals were forced to carry their own crosses to the execution site (14:27)? A common site in the Roman Empire, it was:
a). To shame and humiliate the criminal, and to add to his physical suffering.
b). To serve as a deterrent to others.

4. Figuratively, what does it mean for a disciple to carry a cross (14:27)? In the first century if you saw a man carrying a cross, you knew he was as going to die. Similarly, being a disciple:
a). Might result in actual physical death via martyrdom. (It certainly cost Jesus His life). Paul said:

⁴ The current fad is to say that Jesus taught in Aramaic, and that what we have is a Greek translation of it. However, there is good evidence that Jesus indeed spoke and taught in Greek.

ESV **Acts 20:24** I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

b). Might result in ridicule and shame. We all want to be liked, to fit in, to be accepted by our peers, but the world will hate you if you are Jesus' disciple.

ESV **John 15:18** If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

c). Means death to self, embracing God's will no matter what the cost.⁵ Leading by example, Jesus came to do the Father's will, not His own.

ESV **Luke 9:23** If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

ESV **Galatians 5:24** ... those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

ESV **John 12:24-25** ... unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Demand #2: To be a disciple a person must: **1) "hate"** (put Jesus first) and **2) "take up his cross"** (die to self).

14:28 (tower)

******Next, in 14:28, Jesus asked a question. What is the answer to Jesus' question?** No thinking person would fail to calculate the cost.

5. Why might Jesus have mentioned building a "tower" rather than something like a house (14:28)? Building a tower is unusual, outstanding, a spectacle. Similarly, being a disciple of Jesus sets you apart from the crowd.

14:29-30

*****According Jesus, why do people get cost estimates before building (14:29-30)?** He would count the cost **1)** to be sure he if he has enough money to complete it, and **2)** to avoid social embarrassment. **Example:** When AGI starting building a life-sized replica of Noah's ark, it was quite the news sensation; had they stopped construction half-way through because the money ran out, it would have been an embarrassment and bad witness.

6. What is Jesus' point here (14:29-30) as it relates to discipleship? Discipleship must not be entered into flippantly. You must first "sit down" and study what's involved. It must be a well thought-through conviction. There is not much room for emotionalism.

⁵ Dennis & Grudem, *ESV Study Bible* (Crossway), 1841.

Illustration: It is common in some churches to have an emotional “altar call” at the end of every service. The Gospel is presented, and seekers are encouraged to “walk the isle,” talk with a counselor, and accept the Lord. Accompanying the altar call is moving music repeated over and over (“Just as I Am”). Sometimes the Gospel counselors sitting the audience are trained to “walk the isle” themselves during the invitation hymn to make it easier for seekers to come forward. However, Jesus’ appeal to discipleship was completely the opposite.

Application: Being a disciple will affect how we spend our money and time, our priorities, ambitions, relationships, habits, hobbies, and our profession. We must calculate to see if we have enough commitment to be a disciple. Becoming a disciple is to be a carefully studied decision.

Demand #3: A third requirement to be a disciple is **3.) a cost estimate; careful deliberation.**

14:31-32 (battle)

****7. In Luke 14:31-32, what second example of deliberation did Jesus give? No king would go to war without first carefully deliberating if he could win the battle.

- “**deliberate**” (14:31): From *bouleuo* (1011), which denotes a very carefully thought-through decision; a determined judgement. It is volitional, not emotional.

According to 14:32, if the king determines that he can’t win, what will he do?

9. Jesus gave two examples of the importance of counting the cost (tower/battle).

What is different about these two situations? Both make the same point that you must count the cost. The tower builder was under no pressure to build. It was his choice. However, the king was under tremendous pressure; he was about to be in battle with a superior force.

The tower illustration's point is that we must calculate to see if we are committed enough to be a disciple: ***Can you afford to be a disciple?*** Perhaps the king illustration's point is that we must see if we are strong enough to resist the demands of being a disciple: ***Can you afford not to be a disciple?***

Application: The king with 10,000 men is you. The king with 20,000 men is God. *Can you win in battle against God?* It will cost you to be a disciple (tower), but it will cost you more *not* to be a disciple (king). We must grapple with the facts.

14:33

****8. **What does this battle example have to do with a disciple giving up everything he has (14:33)?** The “terms of peace” (14:32) with God are the total, unconditional surrender of yourself and everything you possess. You must renounce everything.

Does Jesus mean this literally, that we must take a vow of poverty and become monks? What does He mean? Although we must be willing to literally give up everything, it is an attitude that Jesus dealt with:

ESV **Luke 16:13** No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Example: You might lose your job to honesty; lose boyfriend to purity; make to do with less “things” in order to meet the needs of others or serve the Lord; you might lose your life to persecution.

Applications: *Is Jesus Lord of your finances and possessions? Are you faithful in managing these things for His purposes? Do you give generously and faithfully to His work?*

Demand #4: Being a disciple involves **1.)** hate (Jesus first), **2.)** a cross (death to self), **3.)** a deliberation (think long and hard) and **4)** a renouncing of personal resources. These are various ways of describing total commitment.⁶ Such careful thinking is opposed to an impulsive decision made in a moment of intense emotion, without much thought about the consequences.⁷

14:34 (salt)

******What answer did Jesus expect to His question in 14:34?** The obvious answer is that it cannot be made salty again.

Has anyone here ever had first-hand experience with tasteless salt? What is tasteless salt? The Jews mined salt from a hill on the SW corner of the Dead Sea. However, due to impurities and chemical changes the outer layer was generally without flavor and thus worthless.⁸ Perhaps this is what Jesus had in mind.

14:35

*****According to 14:35, what was done with tasteless salt?** It was thrown out.

⁶ Dennis & Grudem, eds., *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1988.

⁷ Steven Cole, “Lesson 70: The Cost of Discipleship (Luke 14:25-35)”, Bible.Org. Accessed 07/20/2023.

⁸ J. D. Douglas, ed., *The New Bible Dictionary* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1982), 1056.

According to 14:35, what two things is tasteless salt of no use for?

10. Why is tasteless salt of no use in either soil or a manure pile (Lk 14:35)? Instead of being a tasty preservative, it had become a contaminate. There was a disposal problem since it was of no use as fertilizer.

What warning does 14:34-35 contain for any potential disciple (14:34-35)?

11. What does this salt statement (Lk 14:34-35) have to do being a disciple? Tasteless salt is useless. People who start out as disciples, but who lose their saltiness, will be thrown out of service to the Lord, shelved as unfit for service. They are worse than neutral; they are spiritually radioactive.

NAS **Matthew 5:13** You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

ESV **Luke 9:62** No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.

Example: A high-profile celebrity preacher who falls away from the Faith (such as Josh Harris) does great damage to the cause of Christ. He is unfit for service. Worse, he is radioactive.

Such persons may even be taken home early:

ESV **1 John 5:16** If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that.

ESV **1 Corinthians 11:30-31** ... anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.

In 14:35b, why did Jesus mention people's ears? It was to make people listen. Not everyone has the ears to hear what Jesus is saying. Jesus said that His sheep hear his voice. This is a warning. *Are you listening?*

So What?

12. Why did Jesus place so much emphasis on counting the cost of discipleship? It requires a studied, thought-through decision to be a disciple. Jesus demands total commitment, and He wants us to go into it with both eyes open.

13. What is the cost of being a disciple? To be His disciple, a person must 1) place Jesus first over everyone else, 2) die to self-desires, 3) carefully deliberate the cost involved, and 4) renounce everything you own.

14. Comparing today's text to John 8:31 and Matthew 28:19-20, what is a disciple? A disciple is a believer who puts Jesus first in his life, who abides in His word, and who obeys everything Jesus taught.

NAS **John 8:31** If you abide in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine.

NAS **Matthew 28:19-20** Go therefore and make disciples... teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.

Deity of Christ: If a church leader demanded people follow him just as Jesus did here, we'd label him as a cult leader, someone like Jim Jones or Joseph Smith. Unless Jesus really were God in human form, these demands of discipleship would be insane. Only Jesus has the authority to demand this of His followers.

Steven Cole posits there probing questions:⁹

Is He the Lord of your plans, your thoughts, and of all that you do? Or, could you selfishly be clinging to your plans, to your way, instead of seeking to please Him in all things, beginning with every thought that you entertain?

Is He Lord of your finances and possessions?

Are you faithful in managing these things for His purposes?

Do you give generously and faithfully to His work? Or, could the love of money be choking out the Word in your life?

If you don't hate your own life and daily carry your cross, you're not His disciple.

\$64,000 Question: *Is it possible to be a Christian, but not be a disciple? How so?* Salvation is a free gift of God's grace. He who accepts people just as they are (despite the way they are). However, God loves us too much to leave us the way He found us! Those who have truly been born again will necessarily be changed. **Example:** Imagine an outdoor latrine where fresh spring water suddenly sprang up. Over time, all the black water would be displaced by the fresh spring water.

It is possible that today's lesson focused on what it truly looks like to be regenerated. Based on the results of a Gallop pole of self-professed Christians in America, it appears that only about 10% truly understand the Gospel.¹⁰ Many are false professors, not true possessors.

ESV **Matthew 7:22-23** ... many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'

⁹ Cole, "Lesson 70."

¹⁰ Steven Cole, "Lesson 70".

And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

ESV **Titus 1:16** They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

**** = Ask this question aloud before having someone read the text.

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