

The Gospel Project® for Adults

Daily Discipleship Guide ESV, Unit 23, Session 2

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Jesus Teaches About the Cost of Discipleship

Session in a Sentence: Jesus shared that discipleship involves a clear, total, and costly commitment to following Him.

Background Passages: Luke 9:57-62; 14:25-35

Despite the growing intolerance of Western society, we still live in a time when, compared to other places in the world, it is incredibly advantageous to be a Christian, at least to a point. Being a member at your local church (even if you only go on special holidays), donating to your favorite Christian charity of choice (as long as it isn't a pro-life charity), and being a generally moral person (as long as your morality doesn't infringe on anyone else's choices) are all things that modern American people claim to love.

But Jesus requires an obedience without parenthetical conditions—a true and radical commitment. He requires obedience when it isn't trendy and even when it costs. Our commitment to Him could cause a loss of livelihood, familial connections, and eventually our lives.

How would you describe the world's impression of disciples of Jesus Christ?

Group Time

Point 1: Being Jesus' disciple requires a clear commitment (Luke 9:57-62).

57 As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." 58 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." 59 To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." 60 And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." 61 Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." 62 Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Whatever their salvation experience, there was a moment when every believer made a clear, verbal commitment to Christ, saying "I have decided to follow Jesus" in one form or another. But in this passage, Jesus communicates that verbal assent to His lordship is not enough, and He doesn't sugar-coat His expectations of His disciples. He wasn't concerned about amassing lukewarm followers for show. He is concerned with the real, heart-deep commitment of His listeners that will lead to true transformation.

What were some of your expectations of Christian discipleship when you became a believer?

Three men claimed to want to follow Jesus in this passage, but all three had their hang-ups because they had to put Him above all else, including **comfort, duty, wealth, and family**. They couldn't choose following Jesus *and* earthly comfort, following Jesus *and* earthly duty or wealth, following Jesus *and* family; it was Jesus *or* everything else. This was not a casual commitment but a life-altering one, and they needed to be completely clear on the terms before signing on the dotted line.

Discipleship is a _____ that takes place both formally and informally to effect spiritual _____ as people follow Jesus. Growing in our faith and deepening our walk with Christ is something

that requires our whole _____, not just the mind.

Point 2: Being Jesus' disciple requires a total commitment (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.

It should be apparent to us that Jesus is using startling words in this passage to drive home an important point: Our allegiance to Jesus must be so complete that it should even surpass our allegiance to our earthly family. In obedience to God's commands, we should strive to love and respect our earthly relations to the best of our ability. Yet our commitment to Jesus should so far outweigh our commitment toward any other person that it would make our love for others look like *hatred* in comparison. This is radical, and that is exactly the point Jesus is making: Our love for Him should be radical.

What are some ways a total commitment to Jesus may be displayed?

We are commanded to love our families, but we are called to love Jesus even more. Scripture also has the expectation that we will love ourselves, yet still we should love Jesus so much that our love for ourselves looks like hatred in comparison. Instead of calling disciples toward self-preservation, Jesus teaches the opposite: we should take up our cross when we follow Him, prepared to follow Him all the way to Calvary. We should come to Christ as if we have already died because our lives belong completely to Him.

Voices from Church History

"The disciple is a disciple only in so far as he shares his Lord's suffering and rejection and crucifixion. Discipleship means adherence to the person of Jesus, and therefore submission to the law of Christ which is the law of the cross."¹
—Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)

Point 3: Being Jesus' disciple requires a costly commitment (Luke 14:28-35).

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.

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."

Through two illustrations—building a tower and going to war—Jesus warned His listeners that following Him is not just a passive decision but an active assessment of everything we're willing to give up for Him. The cost of following Him is incalculable because **following Him will cost us everything**. If we are not willing to part with the things most precious to us and put Jesus in the place of preeminence, then we need not apply to become His disciples. If we come to the table trying to hedge and negotiate—trying to give just a little less than our all—then we do not belong at the table at all.

What are some ways we may experience the cost of discipleship to Jesus Christ?

In verses 34-35, Jesus told His listeners that His disciples are expected to be the salt of the earth. As we discussed in the previous session, our job as Christians is to act as an agent of preservation in a dying, decaying world. With the message and ministry of the gospel, we seek to arrest the curse of death in individuals and in society. But we can only do so—we can only be effective "salt"—as committed disciples of Jesus Christ who have counted the cost and found following Jesus to be worth the

price.

How have you had opportunities to be the salt of the earth for the glory of Jesus in the past week?

My Mission

Because Jesus sacrificed His life on our behalf to provide our salvation, we seek to commit our time, resources, and energy for the work of sharing Christ with others so they too might be saved.

- **In what areas of your life do you need to make a total commitment to Jesus, and how will you do so?**
- **How might your group need to support one another when the cost of discipleship hits home?**
- **When sharing the gospel message, how will you faithfully communicate and live the cost of discipleship?**

Voices from Church History

“It does cost something to be a real Christian, according to the standard of the Bible. There are enemies to be overcome, battles to be fought, sacrifices to be made, an Egypt to be forsaken, a wilderness to be passed through, a cross to be carried, a race to be run. Conversion is not putting a man in an armchair and taking him easily to heaven. It is the beginning of a mighty conflict, in which it costs much to win the victory.”²

–J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)