**The Gospel of Luke**

**Lesson 25** Luke 9:46-62 The Cost of Discipleship!

**Questions:**

1. What important truth did you learn from the lecture and how does it apply to your life?
2. Read Wiersbe pages 127-128.
   1. What three spiritual essentials missing from the disciples grieved Jesus’ heart? What should we do if we find any of these lacking in our lives?
3. Read Luke 9:46-50. Who will be the Greatest?

The greatest person in the kingdom will, of course, be Jesus. After that, ranking the greatest   
is full of surprises. Matthew 18:1-5 records, “At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ [Jesus] called a little child   
to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: ‘Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.   
And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me’” (see also Mark 9:35-37;   
Luke 9:46-48).

This incident occurred after the Transfiguration and after Jesus’ second prediction of His death. Jesus had also just spoken about paying temple taxes, essentially claiming exemption as the Son of God yet miraculously providing for both Peter’s tax and His own so as not   
to cause offense. Too, Jesus had healed a demon-possessed boy whom His disciples were unable to heal (Matthew 17:14–21). Jesus’ power was evident, and the disciples recognized Him as Messiah and King. Evidently, they were interested in what their roles would be   
in Jesus’ kingdom. Rather than provide qualifications for the greatest or talk about a hierarchical structure, Jesus said those who became like children—humble—were the greatest (Matthew 18:4).

Interestingly, after Jesus talks about the greatest being like a child, John tells Jesus that   
he had tried to stop others who were casting out demons in Jesus’ name (Mark 9:38;   
Luke 9:49). Apparently, the lesson had not quite sunken in, or perhaps John was convicted by Jesus’ words and chose to confess his mistake. Jesus explained that what mattered was not who was doing the works but the Name in which the works were being done. It is God who deserves the glory, not an elite group of His followers. We also see in Matthew 20 and Mark 10 a request from John and James to sit with Jesus in His kingdom. Jesus replied by asking them if they were able to suffer as He was going to suffer. He then said, “To sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father” (Matthew 20:23). Being great in God’s kingdom is not about prestige or privilege. Rather, it involves responsibility and sacrifice. Jesus told His disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?

Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come   
in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done” (Matthew 16:24-27). To be great is to serve self-sacrificially. Being great   
in God’s kingdom is about giving oneself for the sake of God’s glory and for the benefit   
of others.

Luke 22 tells about another dispute among the disciples about who was the greatest, this time during the Last Supper. Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not   
to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the   
one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:25-27). This is the same night Jesus performed the service of the lowest   
of servants by washing His disciples’ feet. John 13 tells us Jesus did this because of His love for the disciples and also fully knowing His own relationship with the Father. Again, we see that the greatest is not the one with power or prestige, but the one who is secure in the Father’s love and willing to serve.

Consistent in Jesus’ teaching is that His kingdom is not like the kingdoms of this world. Humans tend to be concerned with social status, political clout, and pecking order. We tend to rank people according to how things look to us in this world, but Jesus warned that using earthly criteria will never give us an accurate picture of rank in God’s kingdom. Human judgment will give way to God’s some day: “Many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first” (Matthew 19:30).

Rather than strive to be the greatest in this world, we should simply trust in Jesus and serve others, thereby serving Him. Positions of power are meant to be positions of service. Rather than lord power over others, we are to use any influence or resources we have to serve others. The greatest in the kingdom are those who have the humility of a child and the meekness of Jesus. “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). What is valued in God’s kingdom is loving the way He loved us—selflessly.[[1]](#endnote-1)

1. What traits of a child should be evident in all true followers of Christ?
2. Read Philippians 2:5-8 along with John 13:1-17.
3. What trait did Jesus exemplify more than anyone else who has ever lived?
4. What is Jesus asking each of us to do if we truly want to be great in the   
   eyes of God?
5. Have you struggled with the whole idea of serving others? If yes, explain why   
   and in what specific areas of your life.
6. How does this truth affect the way you want to live from this day forward   
   and what changes do you plan on implementing to better serve others around   
   you daily?
7. Read Proverbs 6:16-17, 8:13 and 16:18.
8. Why do you think God hates pride so much?
9. In what areas of your life do you struggle with pride?
10. How does pride keep us from serving others?

C. S. Lewis saw pride as the gateway to all other sins. He wrote, “The essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere flea-bites in comparison: it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every   
other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind.”[[2]](#endnote-2)

1. Focus on verse 49: “Master,” said John, “we saw a man driving out demons in   
   your name and we tried to stop him, because *he is not one of us*!”
2. What perhaps was the motivation behind the disciples trying to stop the man   
   from driving out demons?
3. What sin were they struggling with?
4. Do you see how pride led to their downfall in this situation? Explain.
5. Has pride ever led to some downfall in your own life? If yes, will you share   
   what you learned from this experience?
6. Read Luke 9:51-56. Samaritan Opposition!

We come to a major turning point in Luke's Gospel at this point because beginning here   
and continuing for ten lengthy chapters-right up to the Triumphal Entry (19:28-44) Jesus   
is on the road. Luke alludes to this fact at least ten times (for example, 9:51-57; 10:1; 11:53; 13:22, 33; 17:11; 18:31, 35; 19:1). But it is easy to lose sight of this because Luke does   
not note the journey's geographical progress. So as readers, we must consciously remind ourselves that Jesus is on the road.

If we do this, we will get the proper feel for what is going on—Jerusalem now looms large in the Savior's thoughts. He will soon walk through everything involved in his being “taken up” (v. 51)—that is, his betrayal, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension. The walls of Jerusalem, the city of destiny, rise ominously over all that follows, standing taller with   
each event from here to the middle of chapter 19.

“When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.”   
The raw literalness of Luke’s words communicates Jesus’ intensity “he stiffened face to   
go to Jerusalem.” Jesus has determined that nothing will stop him. Divine grit marks   
these chapters.

Of course, the Twelve and Jesus’ other followers were short on steel. Some, like Peter, thought they had it but overestimated themselves. They did not understand Jesus’   
simplest warnings. For example, right after the trans-figuration Jesus had said:

“Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.” But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying. (9:44, 45)

Jesus then proceeded to educate his would-be followers on the demands of the road-lessons on what it takes to effectively follow Jesus. As such, they are fiercely radical-scary really, even discouraging. We must resist the temptation to tame them, to make them more reasonable, to make them say what we want. The first demand is implicit and reasonable, but the following three explicit demands are increasingly stringent.

1. Read John 7:6-8, 30; 12:23. Verse 51 says, “As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.”
2. Explain these verses.
3. From these verses, what do you learn about God’s Word and Sovereignty? How does this give you comfort when you look at the world today?
4. A certain village in Samaria refused to welcome Jesus and the disciples.
5. Explain why Jesus rebuked the disciples for desiring to destroy the Samaritan village by fire.
6. What attitude should the disciples have had toward these obvious sinners?
7. Read Micah 7:18-19. Define grace and explain why it is wonderful attribute   
   of God?
8. Read Luke 9:51-62 along with Luke 14:25-33.
9. Read the following article…

**What does it mean to “count the cost” (Luke 14:28)?**

In Luke 14, Jesus lays out the terms of discipleship. There were great crowds following Him. Everyone loved the miracles, healing, and free food. Jesus was cool, the talk of the town, and the latest fad. But He knew their hearts. He knew they desired the benefits of what He *did* rather than an understanding of who He *was*. They loved His gifts, not the life He was calling them to. So, He explained what it takes to be one of His followers:  
“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. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. 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? Otherwise, 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.’ 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. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26-33).

Jesus said a lot in those simple illustrations. He quickly put an end to the idea that He offered some kind of welfare program. Although the gift of eternal life is free to anyone who asks (John 3:16), the asking requires a transfer of ownership (Luke 9:23; Galatians 5:24). “Counting the cost” means recognizing and agreeing to some terms first. In following Christ, we cannot simply follow our own inclinations. We cannot follow Him and the world’s way at the same time (Matthew 7:13-14). Following Him may mean we lose relationships, dreams, material things, or even our lives.

Those who are following Jesus simply for what they can get won’t stick around when the going gets tough. When God’s way conflicts with our way, we will feel betrayed by the shallow, me-first faith we have bought into. If we have not counted the cost of being His child, we will turn away at the threat of sacrifice and find something else to gratify our selfish desires (cf. Mark 4:5, 16-17). In Jesus’ earthly ministry, there came a time when the free food stopped and public opinion turned ugly. The cheering crowds became jeering crowds. And Jesus knew ahead of time that would happen.

Jesus ended His description of the cost of discipleship with a breathtaking statement: "Any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33). “Renouncing” may mean we give up something physically, but more often it means we let go emotionally so that what we possess no longer possesses us. When we become one of His, we cannot continue to belong to this world (1 John 2:15-17). We must make a choice, for we cannot serve both God and Mammon (Matthew 6:24). The rich young ruler, when confronted with that choice, turned his back on Jesus (Luke 18:18-25).

Suppose you learned that you had been given an all-expense-paid condo on a beach in Tahiti, complete with airfare, a car, food, and a maid. You could brag about your new lifestyle, plan for it, and dream about it. But until you pack up and leave your current home, the new life is never really yours. You cannot live in Tahiti and your current hometown at the same time. Many people approach Christianity the same way. They love the idea of eternal life, escaping hell, and having Jesus at their beck and call. But they are not willing to leave the life they now live. Their desires, lifestyle, and sinful habits are too precious to them. Their lives may exhibit a token change—starting to attend church or giving up a major sin—but they want to retain ownership of everything else. Jesus is speaking in Luke 14 to those with that mindset.

We cannot earn salvation by lifestyle change or any other good deed (Ephesians 2:8-9). But when we choose to follow Christ, we are releasing control of our lives. When Jesus is in control, pure living results (1 John 3:4-10; 2 Corinthians 5:17). In Jesus’ parable of the so[[3]](#endnote-3)wer, it was only the soil that allowed the seed to put down roots and bear fruit that was called “good.” If we are going to be disciples of Christ, we must first count the cost of following Him.

1. “Counting the cost” means recognizing and agreeing to some terms first. In following Christ, we cannot simply follow our own inclinations. We cannot follow Him and the world’s way at the same time (Matthew 7:13-14). Following Him means we may lose relationships, dreams, material things, and possibly our lives.” Explain!
2. Explain how the following statements cause many to reject the call to follow Christ:

* The Son of Man has no place to lay his head!
* Let the dead bury their own dead!
* No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in   
  the kingdom of God!

1. Why do you think Americans struggle with the concept that discipleship comes at great cost?
2. What are many believers facing around the world who have grown up in   
   Muslim, Hindu, and/or authoritative countries? How does their example of   
   sacrifice motivate you?
3. What has it cost you to follow Christ? Have you given any of the above   
   excuses (see ii)? Explain!
4. As we finish the first year studying Luke’s gospel, what new details have you   
   discovered about Christ’s identity and mission? Having heard this good news, how   
   have your responded?

1. “*Who is the Greatest?*” Got Questions Ministries, accessed March 25, 2022 [https://www.gotquestions.org/greatest-in-the-kingdom.html] [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Ryan Sanders, *The Chief Sin of Man!*, accessed March 25, 2022 [http://www.theryansanders.com/blog/2017/2/3/the-chief-sin-of-man] [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. “*What does it mean to “count the cost*” (Luke 14:28)? Got Questions Ministries, accessed March 25, 2022  
    [https://www.gotquestions.org/count-the-cost.html] [↑](#endnote-ref-3)