**The Gospel of Luke**

**Lesson 11** Luke 14:25-35 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 25-28.

What do Jesus’ words in verses 25-35 teach us about discipleship? What does Jesus require of all true disciples? How do his words challenge you?

1. Read Luke 14:25-26 along with the article below entitled, “What did Jesus mean when He instructed us to hate our father and mother?”
2. The crowds following Jesus had grown tremendously. They followed Jesus all the way to the point where he entered Jerusalem triumphantly (Luke 19:28-40). Then, things began to change in terms of Jesus’ popularity.
3. Why do you think so many people were following him at this time?
4. Why did the masses turn away and even against him (John 6:60-69)?
5. Explain what Jesus means when he says, “If anyone comes after me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.”
6. Are there any places in the world today where the choice to follow Jesus also means abandonment by one’s family? How might you respond to the call of Christ if you lived, for example, in a Muslim or Hindu country?

First, we must take this verse in the context of the chapter. Jesus is teaching His disciples, and, like any good teacher, He gets His students thinking. In this case, He begins with a truth statement that is hard to understand. Then He clarifies it with a metaphor. The truth statement is Luke 14:26, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.” It seems that, if we don’t hate our family, we can’t be Jesus’ disciple. Or is there more to this issue?

Following the statement that we must “hate” our father and mother, Jesus relates a metaphor about a man who builds a house without first counting the cost (Luke 14:28–30). The man finds that he cannot follow through with what he set out to do. He leaves the house unfinished because he cannot pay what is required. Jesus’ illustration helps explain His difficult statement about hating our mother and father—namely, we must count the cost of being a disciple. There is a cost, and that is the point of the passage.

In order to be a disciple, we must be willing to give up everything for Jesus. Following Jesus requires commitment and faithfulness, even if our parents choose not to follow the Lord. If and when we are faced with the painful choice of loyalty to family versus loyalty to Jesus, we must choose Jesus. Even if our family members disown us—or worse—for being Christians, we must follow Christ. It is in this sense that we are “hating” our family. Jesus’ command to “hate father and mother” requires us to prioritize our relationship with Jesus over our relationship with parents, siblings, and other family members.

Of course, it is right to love our family members, and we want them to love and follow God. Elsewhere, Jesus confirmed the fifth commandment that we honor our fathers and mothers (Mark 7:9–13). And Paul sternly warned that “anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Timothy 5:8). Jesus’ statement that we “hate” father and mother must be seen in relation to the whole of Scripture. His point is not that we are to be heartless toward our families, only that we must love Him more.

We must not forget that included in Jesus’ condition that a follower must “hate” his father and mother is the condition that he likewise hate “even his own life” (Luke 14:26, NAS). Jesus is not teaching an emotional hatred of one’s parents any more than He is teaching self-hatred. The emphasis is on self-denial and absolute surrender. Immediately following is Jesus’ instruction to “carry your own cross” (verse 27, NLT).

Some other translations make Jesus’ meaning a little clearer: “If you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else *by comparison*” (Luke 14:26, NLT, emphasis added), and the Amplified Bible says that a follower of Christ must “hate” his family members “in the sense of indifference to or relative disregard for them in comparison with his attitude toward God.” It is a “hatred” by comparison, not an absolute hatred.

The word *hate* in Luke 14:26 deserves a closer look. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the contrast between “love” and “hatred” is sometimes used to communicate preference. For example, in dealing with inheritances in polygamous marriages, the Mosaic Law referred to “two wives, one beloved, and another hated” (Deuteronomy 21:15, KJV). This is a good, literal translation. There was a “loved” wife and a “hated” wife. Other translations usually soften the “hated” wife to be “unloved” (CSB) or “less loved” (NET). The law was not indicating emotional hatred on the part of the husband, only preference. One wife was preferred over the other. We have a similar use of the love/hate idiom in Malachi 1:2–3 (cf. Romans 9:13).

Many Christians will never have to make the painful choice of turning their backs on their family in order to follow Christ. But, around the world, there are many other Christians who face shunning, disowning, or persecution from their families. These believers, if they are to be true to Christ, are forced to live in a way perceived as “hateful” toward their “father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters” (Luke 14:26). All believers are called to acknowledge the lordship of Christ and show Him preference over all earthly ties. Those who must sacrifice earthly relationships have this promise: “No one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life” (Mark 10:29–30).[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. Read Luke 14:27-35 along with the article below entitled, “What does it mean to   
   “count the cost?”.
2. Verse 27 states, “And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot   
   be my disciple.”
3. Explain this verse.
4. What does it mean to carry *your* cross? What is your cross to bear?
5. Verses 28-30 state, “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit   
   down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if   
   you lay the foundation and are unable to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule   
   you, saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish.’ (Verses 31-32 imply the same truth.)
6. Explain this verse.
7. What does it mean to count the cost?
8. What are some of the costs that a man or woman needs to consider before truly following Jesus as one of his disciples in today’s world (contrast the cost of following Christ in America to that of other countries)?
9. Have you ever had to pay much of a cost for following Christ? If yes, explain.   
   If not, why not?
10. Read John 15:18-21.
11. How should we expect the world to treat us if we truly follow Christ   
    and his example?
12. Have you ever experienced the world’s hatred because of your relationship with Christ? If yes, explain. If not, why not?

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 sower, 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.[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. Read Luke 14:31-35.
2. Verse 33 states, “In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”
3. Explain this verse.
4. What does it mean to give up everything to follow Christ? Does this mean we are to sell all our possessions and give the proceeds all away?
5. What do you learn from the following verses?

* Malachi 3:8-10
* 1 Corinthians 16:1-2
* 2 Corinthians 8:1-7
* 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

1. How do these passages help clarify verse 33?
2. Read Matthew 6:19-20. How can we use our financial resources to build up   
   treasure in heaven?
3. Read Matthew 5:13-16 along with Luke 14:34-35, which states, “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out.” Also, read the article below entitled, “What does it mean that believers are to be salt and light?”
4. Explain the truths contained in these verses.
5. How can we as followers of Christ lose our saltiness, and thus, our effectiveness,   
   as Christians in the world around us?
6. Read 2 Corinthians 2:14-16. Give yourself a grade. How are you doing? Are   
   you *salty*, or have you become so like the world that no one around you can discern the distinctive flavor (aroma) of Christ in you?

Jesus used the concepts of salt and light a number of different times to refer to the role of His followers in the world. One example is found in Matthew 5:13: “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.” Salt had two purposes in the Middle East of the first century. Because of the lack of refrigeration, salt was used to preserve food, especially meat, which would quickly spoil in the desert environment. Believers in Christ are preservatives to the world, preserving it from the evil inherent in the society of ungodly men whose unredeemed natures are corrupted by sin (Psalm 14:3; Romans 8:8).

Second, salt was used then, as now, as a flavor enhancer. In the same way that salt enhances the flavor of the food it seasons, the followers of Christ stand out as those who “enhance”   
the flavor of life in this world. Christians, living under the guidance of the Holy Spirit   
and in obedience to Christ, will inevitably influence the world for good, as salt has a   
positive influence on the flavor of the food it seasons. Where there is strife, we are to be peacemakers; where there is sorrow, we are to be the ministers of Christ, binding up wounds, and where there is hatred, we are to exemplify the love of God in Christ, returning good for evil (Luke 6:35).

In the analogy of light to the world, the good works of Christ’s followers are to shine for   
all to see. The following verses in Matthew 5 highlight this truth: “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16, NASB). The idea here is similar—the presence of light in darkness is something that is unmistakable. The presence of Christians in the world must be like a light in the darkness, not only in the sense that the truth of God’s Word brings light to the darkened hearts of sinful man (John 1:1-10), but also in the sense that our good deeds must be evident for all to see. And indeed, our deeds will be evident if they are performed   
in accordance with the other principles that Jesus mentions in this passage, such as the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-11. Notice especially that the concern is not that Christians would stand out for their own sake, but that those who looked on might “glorify your Father who is in heaven” (v. 16, KJV).

In view of these verses, what sorts of things can hinder or prevent the Christian from fulfilling his or her role as salt and light in the world? The passage clearly states that the difference between the Christian and the world must be preserved; therefore, any choice on our part that blurs the distinction between us and the rest of the world is a step in the wrong direction. This can happen either through a choice to accept the ways of the world for the sake of comfort or convenience or to contravene the law of obedience to Christ.  
  
Mark 9:50 suggests that saltiness can be lost specifically through a lack of peace with one another; this follows from the command to “have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other.” And in Luke 14:34-35, we find a reference to the metaphor of salt once again, this time in the context of obedient discipleship to Jesus Christ. The loss of saltiness occurs in the failure of the Christian to daily take up the cross and follow Christ wholeheartedly.

It seems, then, that the role of the Christian as salt and light in the world may be hindered or prevented through any choice to compromise or settle for that which is more convenient or comfortable, rather than that which is truly best and pleasing to the Lord. Moreover, the status of salt and light is something that follows naturally from the Christian’s humble obedience to the commandments of Christ. It is when we depart from the Spirit-led lifestyle of genuine discipleship that the distinctions between ourselves and the rest of the world become blurred and our testimony is hindered. Only by remaining focused on Christ and being obedient to Him can we expect to remain salt and light in the world.[[3]](#footnote-3)

1. “What did Jesus mean when He instructed us to hate our father and mother?” Got Questions Ministries, accessed June 29, 2022, [https://www.gotquestions.org/hate-father-mother.html] [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “What does it mean to “count the cost” (Luke 14:28)? Got Questions Ministries, accessed June 28, 2022,

   [https://www.gotquestions.org/count-the-cost.html] [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “What does it mean that believers are to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16)?”Got Questions Ministries, accessed July 1, 2022, [https://www.gotquestions.org/salt-and-light.html] [↑](#footnote-ref-3)