

MESSAGE TITLE: How to Hate Your Family for the Glory of Jesus

SCRIPTURE: Luke 14:25-35

KEY TRUTH: The call of Jesus has radical implications for every area of our lives. Today, we will consider how our relationships should be affected by our commitment to Jesus.

GETTING STARTED

When large crowds gathered around Jesus on his way to the cross, He impressed on them their need to examine their resolve to follow Him. And in his message, He raised the bar of discipleship beyond any person's capacity to achieve in his own strength. His message highlighted their ever-present need for a Savior. To emphasize that discipleship is difficult, Jesus said that one must hate his own family and even his own life to be His disciple. This is no doubt one of the hard sayings of Jesus. Literally hating one's family would have been a violation of the Law. Since Jesus on several occasions admonished others to fulfill the Law, He must not have meant here that one should literally hate his family members. The stress here is on the priority of devotion to Jesus, which is ultimately what's best for our families. The reality of embracing Jesus above all other is this: Those who love Jesus most love their family members best.

OBSERVATION

Read Luke 14:25-27.

What's your initial reaction to these words from Jesus? Why?

Why might discipleship cost you relationships?

Do family commitments or other priorities ever hinder your commitment to first seek God's will or plan for your life? Why or why not?

In this teaching, Jesus emphasized that His followers were to love Him above everyone else, including their own families. Following Christ is giving Him primary allegiance. This truth is easier to understand than it is to practice. As disciples of Christ, we must understand and accept that our relationship with Him takes precedence over all other relationships.

What actions can you take to ensure that your relationship with Jesus takes precedence over all other relationships?

What did Jesus mean by bearing one's own cross and following Him (v. 27)?

Is it easier for you to prioritize your relationship with Jesus over your family or over your own interests?

In addition to putting Christ above family, Jesus added a second requirement for discipleship. The disciple must put Christ above self. What Christ has in mind is the

absolute nature of His demand to follow Him. Jesus Himself was committed to His Father to the point of sacrificial death.

Read Luke 14:28-33.

What point was Jesus making through His illustrations about the tower builder and the king?

What did Jesus advise anyone to do before making a commitment to follow Him?

Jesus' two parables in these verses stress cost analysis. Jesus' point in these two stories about the builder and the king is aimed at those in the crowd who were considering becoming His disciples. They should count the cost of following Jesus before they embark on a life of following Him.

What costs keep people from following Jesus today? What things in your life would you find most difficult to give up for the sake of following Christ?

What does this text reveal about why discipleship might cost you possessions?

Having possessions does not keep a person from discipleship; possessions controlling the person does because following Jesus is about valuing Him above all. We should understand Jesus' command to give up their possessions as a willingness to do so whenever necessary to follow Him faithfully (Luke 12:33).

Read Luke 14:34-35.

What does the salt analogy emphasize about discipleship?

Why might discipleship cost your usefulness?

Have you had to forfeit a pursuit of something else—somewhere your usefulness was needed— because of your commitment to Jesus?

In His concluding remarks about discipleship, Jesus compared discipleship to salt that has gotten wet and lost its flavor and its effectiveness. In reality, the salt really wasn't salt at all. Similarly, a disciple who values his or her earthly possessions more than Jesus is really not a disciple at all. One enters discipleship and continues in discipleship when he or she understands Jesus' uniqueness and infinite worth and thus puts Him above all. Anything less is not true discipleship; anything less is like salt that's salt in name only.

Read Hebrews 12:1-2, verses that give us additional insight into the cost of discipleship. What do these verses call us to cast aside to follow Christ? How does this encourage you in your effort to follow Jesus wholeheartedly?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Love requires putting Jesus above everything and everyone else, including personal and family concerns. What Jesus expects of you is the same as what He expected of His first disciples. Evaluate your priorities and ask the Holy Spirit for power and wisdom to adjust any that are out of sync with putting Him first. That's what Jesus expects of all His disciples. And only Jesus can perform in us what He expects of us!

What does "a lifestyle of sacrifice in the name of Jesus" look like? What are some of the key characteristics of this lifestyle?

Where have you seen the cost of discipleship in your own life? Is there anything in your life right now that, if you gave it up, you would be better equipped to love people and point them to Christ? If so, what?

How can you support someone else in the group as he or she examines their own priorities this week? How might doing so help you love Jesus more deeply as well?

PRAYER

Spend quiet time reflecting on the cost of discipleship and anything God is revealing to you about making Him your highest priority, even above family. Recommit yourself to God and the ministry He has called you to during this prayer time. And remember, only Jesus can give you the help you need to make the changes He's calling you to make. Depend on His Holy Spirit who dwells in you for the power to make those changes (Romans 8:26).

SHARE POINT

Read and review the application questions. Share with someone in your life how God's Word is changing you into a growing disciple. Encourage that person to do the same. That person could be a family member, a friend, a co-worker or a neighbor.

COMMENTARY NOTES

14:25. Jesus was back on the road again and heading toward Jerusalem. Great crowds were accompanying Him but were not following as learners of Him or committed believers. They simply were hanging around hoping to benefit in some way from Jesus' ministry. Jesus' desire was not for the followers to remain as they were but to draw them to a choice of personal commitment. An open invitation—anyone who comes to Me—begins the message, and its difficult stipulation is to hate one's family. The list of family members includes the closest of family ties such as father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters. As the crowd was trying to absorb this teaching, Jesus added the additional requirement of hating even one's own life. Then Jesus concluded that anyone who does not comply with His words cannot be My disciple.

Matthew's Gospel (10:37) reveals that Jesus meant His followers were to love Him above everyone else, including their own families. Following Christ is giving Him primary allegiance. Christ followers understand and accept that their relationships with Jesus take precedence over all other relationships. Jesus made it very clear that if family attraction keeps us from following Him then our not following Him is evil with a pleasant face. His voice does not waver when claiming priority even over family loyalty—Follow Me (Luke 9:59).

14:27. In addition to putting Christ above family, Jesus added a second requirement for discipleship. The disciple must put Christ above self. Specifically, the stipulation is to bear one's own cross, a requirement that pictures the crucifixion. In fact, a crucifixion victim carried his own cross beam to the place of death. It was the death Jesus was traveling to Jerusalem to face. If anyone does not put Jesus above any cost, Jesus said he or she cannot be His disciple. Again, the inclusive offer whoever ends with the negative exclusion cannot be My disciple.

14:28-30. For which one of you is a rhetorical question that begins the first story and draws Christ's hearers into the plot. A builder, probably a farmer, had an idea—he wanted to build a tower. It must have been enormous because the foundation alone depleted his funds. His start did not have a finish. Such a project needed a first sit down decision. He did not plan to fail, but he failed because he failed to plan. The embarrassment—begin to ridicule him—could have been avoided if the man had thought through (Jesus' word was calculate, meaning "count with pebbles") the amount needed to finish the construction. The builder fell victim to rushing into a project before counting the cost.

14:31-32. The second parable introduces a similar story, but the main character is a king, going to war against another king. This king, who had 10,000 troops, was being invaded by a greater king, who had 20,000. Here was another sit-down decision that called for thinking first before acting. Adding up the obvious, the king's decision was to send a delegation while the enemy was still far off and ask for terms of peace.

14:33. Then Jesus began to apply the two parables to discipleship. The phrase So then unites the two stories. The phrase every one of you is an inclusion without exception, and the phrase does not give up describes an attitude that refuses to let go. We should understand Jesus' command to give up their possessions as a willingness to do so whenever necessary to follow Him faithfully (Luke 12:33).

14:34-35. In His concluding remarks about discipleship, Jesus compared discipleship to salt. Salt was important to the people of the ancient East. It retarded decay in food, and of course it flavored food. In the first century, most salt came from salt marshes rather than from the evaporation of salt water with the result that the salt contained many impurities. When salt got wet, it lost its flavor and its effectiveness. It was no longer salt at all. Similarly, a disciple who values his or her earthly possessions more than Jesus is really not a disciple at all. In a world full of competing voices, the disciple

as well as the would-be disciple should give full attention to what he/she has just heard. This ending encourages ears to hear, to listen. This challenging statement moves information to application—put this to work in your life.

In conclusion, those who would be followers of Jesus must (1) love their family less than they love Jesus, (2) bear the cross and follow Christ and (3) relinquish everything. These are complementary ways of describing complete commitment.

SOURCES CONSULTED

ESV Study Bible

The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament

www.smallgroup.com