

The Cost of Discipleship
Luke 14:25-33

We're going to be looking at the Cost of Discipleship for this morning.

It is far too easy these days to believe in God. If I asked you what was the bare minimum you had to believe in order to be saved? I'm sure you'd rack your mind and be somewhat confident in what you'd say. The problem is that this is one of the most dangerous questions for any one of us to be asking.

There is this deceptively disastrous easy-believism that is widespread all across America.

This easy-believism is the thinking that all one has to do to be saved is to believe in God and there is no real need to continue to follow after Christ.

It may be simply saying the sinner's prayer after someone, raising a hand at an altar call, walking down an aisle after a gospel presentation, a rededication of one's life to God or something similar.

For some of us, easy-believism may look like attending church Sunday morning as if it had revolving doors that you went all the way around in and right out the other way (you paid your dues, and seemed pretty easy). It may be calling your self a Christian, along with the vast majority of Americans, and living an American-at-best life. It may be having relationships with others in the church, but never excavating into their life of sin or struggle, or inviting others into yours. Or it could be making it to church functions or fellowshiping with others only when it fits into your schedule, which really makes no provision or priority for your brothers and sisters in Christ. It essentially is making a decision to follow Christ, yet denying discipleship.

You may have heard of the Adidas T-shirt that says, "add-Jesus." Lame T-shirt idea; but think of all those who think that is enough for their life. Convenient Christianity is far too common among us; it shouldn't be "add-Jesus," but "minus-me." That won't sell though.

It is completely counter to authentic Christianity. Authentic Christianity is not easy to believe, it's hard because believing doesn't just mean a mental assent to some concept, but a life that's committed to the truth.

The church must revolt against this minimal thinking and a return to biblical thinking. That is where we are going to today—to humbly subject ourselves to the matchless authority of the words of Christ and come to Him on His terms, not ours.

Luke 14:25 seems like an ordinary verse that is easy to overlook in a normal narrative, but with the context ahead it shouldn't be overlooked at all. There were great crowds accompanying him and if Jesus were all about just getting as many to follow Him as possible, then He wouldn't have said the next three things He did.

There are three essential conditions for true discipleship according to **Luke 14:25-33**.

The first condition of discipleship, for following Christ, is to have a supreme love for Christ (**Luke 14:26**).

Supreme—superior to all others; strongest, most important or powerful; first and foremost; unrivaled; unequalled, second to none

This is one of the hard sayings of Jesus, because it is hard to accept, and because it seems contradictory to other teachings of Jesus.

However hate here doesn't carry the normal connotation of the word. In Jesus' usage of hate, it simply means to love less than what is being compared to. He was using this language to provide an exaggerated contrast, to get some of the attention in this huge crowd that followed after Christ because of His miraculous life and teaching.

The parallel passage in **Matthew 10:37** helps saying, **“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.”**

So, we must hate or love less than Christ two things: The first is family. Jesus redefined true family in **Mark 3:31-35**. **“For whoever does the will**

of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.” This was one of the more stunning realities of the Kingdom of God.

And here in **Luke 14** Jesus is putting the priority on the kingdom of God, and not on the family on earth. The Jewish culture of Jesus’ day held family as one of the highest institutions among them. So for the institution of the family to be second to the singular devotion to following Him, there would be some uneasy listeners among the crowds that day.

The second is self. **“Yes, even his own life”**—this part takes it to the next level. To hate even your own life means to say no to yourself in order to say yes to Christ.

This world is all about self. Self-righteousness, self-centeredness, self-reliance, self-sufficiency, self-absorption, self-confidence, self-esteem, self-respect, self-pity, self-reliance, self-serving...the list goes on and the sin abounds. We must deny ourselves (**Matthew 16:24**). We must put off the old self and put on the new self (**Ephesians 4:17-23**).

We must be so enamored with Christ, so satisfied with His Word to the point that nothing from our life holds us back from having a supreme love for Christ.

And once you’ve bowed to Christ as your first love and declared your complete loyalty to Him, you will in essence be able to love others more fully and effectively. Listen to **Romans 5:5**, **“And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”**

Notice that after this first condition we see **“he cannot be my disciple”** (**Luke 14:26**). If you aren’t willing to cut off certain ties with family and friends for the sake of Christ, then you will not be ready to be a learner or follower of Christ.

The second condition of discipleship, for following Christ, is to have a sacrificial lifestyle for Christ (**Luke 14:27**).

From **Mark 8:31-24** we receive the answer to, what makes up the cross of Christ? It has to do with suffering, rejection, and death. Since discipleship is

adherence to Christ (loyalty, obedience, faithfulness), there is surely a road walked by Christ that we must walk down after Him.

For **1 Peter 2:21** says, “**For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.**”

Mark 14:32-36 shows us that the cross has to do with the will. Jesus was troubled in His humanity, but in His deity He submitted Himself to the cross ahead of Him. And that is what the cross consists of—a not-my-will-but-yours-be-done kind of thinking.

Cross bearing has to do with suffering. Suffering—for Christ’s sake and none other—is the fruit or evidence of exclusive allegiance to Christ. The next time you suffer, you can rejoice because it is the strongest evidence that you are Christ’s and He is yours.

And let’s get it straight. The cross is laid on every Christian from the day he first believes. There is not one of us who is exempt from bearing our cross. Suffering is the trademark of true discipleship and should be a mark of our church. For **2 Timothy 3:12** reminds us, “**Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.**”

David Watson in *Called and Committed* says that we may suffer physically; have emotional/mental pain; or spiritual grief.

Think about all your relationships. **Galatians 6:2** says, “**Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.**” If I were not saved by God’s grace, then I wouldn’t care at all for any of you.

Cross bearing has to do with rejection.

Isaiah 53:3 says, “**He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.**”

Probably the worst form of persecution we’ve ever had to experience is rejection by others in the world. It may be as bad as being ignored by friends

or co-workers or even family members, or not being as successful in the world's eyes in your business.

Think about it. How can we avoid rejection in our life (if we are thinking sinfully or minimally)? I'll tell you. Don't offer anyone anything.

Cross bearing has to do with death.

To the Jews, the cross was a familiar sight. They would have thought of it as a Roman instrument of agonizing suffering and eventual death. As Dale described in the blurb he read a few weeks back.

Tertullian, a faithful early church father, once said, "*The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.*" To us, the term martyr is so foreign, it's like if I were going to teach my young child Japanese. It is absolutely absurd to expect him or her to pick it up right away without having learned our family's primary language first. Just so, we can't be confident that we'll die for Christ if we are not daily suffering for Him in the first place.

Bonhoeffer said, of the early Christian martyrs, "In the hour of the cruelest torture they bear for his sake, they are made *partakers in the perfect joy and bliss of fellowship with Him.*"

The reason why Christ taught such exacting terms of discipleship is because Jesus sought men and women of quality and not quantity. Men and women of quality are not going to buckle under pressure. When the fighting gets fierce, they will not turn back. They will triumph under temptation, trials, and tests.

If you do not bear your cross and share in Christ's sufferings, then how can you even expect to be His disciple?

Before the third essential condition for true discipleship, Jesus uses two examples.

The Building (Luke 14:28-30)

The Battling (Luke 14:31-32)

The purpose of these two examples is to show that impulsive and ill-considered discipleship is disapproved.

Easy-believism has no grounds and no hope. Everyone who thinks it an easy endeavor to just call themselves a believer and keep living the same way they always have, will be sitting on the unfinished foundation, waiving their white flag, and asking for terms of peace. We can't have that in our church. We must count the cost.

The third condition of discipleship, for following Christ, is to have a surrendered life for Christ (**Luke 14:33**).

Renounce means, "to give up" or "part with one's possessions." In a similar usage it means "to say goodbye to and to leave," because the same Greek term is used in **Acts 18:18** of Paul, "**Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria.**"

Sometimes we find ourselves daydreaming about what we'd love to just be out on an island all alone with. And those things, those possessions we may even have right now. The sad thing is they may be isolating us from where God wants us. And where God wants us is clearly following after Christ in His footsteps.

What do you need to take leave of? What do you need to set sail from?

Materialism slays our souls slowly when we become more and more enticed by the world and its stuff. It can coax us to put down our cross just for a moment to enjoy those possessions, and in the meanwhile we've rejected the only object we'll be grateful for in heaven that we had on earth—the cross.

And remember, to renounce all that you have doesn't mean to have a yard sale with all of your belongings and give them away for free. But what it does mean is that if there are material possessions that stand in the way of following Christ full-tilt and whole heartedly, then they must be given up and surrendered unto God.

If you are unwilling to renounce all that you have for Christ's sake, you cannot be His disciple.

Each essential condition of discipleship is costly—without them there would be no discipleship.

To hate your family and your own life, to bear your own cross, and renounce all that you have is a complete forsaking and purging of all that is in your life from head to toe. Once you have submitted to these conditions, you stand naked and detached from everything except Christ. From there He builds you up and completes you with what His disciple needs to be and to have (and that can't be found anywhere else other than following Christ).

“Costly grace” is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it grants him the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and it is grace because it justifies the sinner. It is costly because it compels us to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow, and it is grace because Jesus says, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of His Son, and above all it is grace because God chose not to reckon His Son as too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered Him up for us.

When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die (**Acts 7:54-60**).