

## Lesson 2    5 November 2017

### Counting the Cost of Discipleship

**Lesson Scope:** [Luke 14](#)

*References in brackets refer to Luke 14 unless otherwise noted*

#### **Lesson Focus**

Early in Jesus' ministry, He called the twelve disciples to come and follow Him. In accepting the call to discipleship, they "forsook all, and followed him." The kingdom of God needed disciples to take up the teachings and the work of Jesus. Now a multitude also followed Jesus who had not forsaken all to follow Him. In this lesson, Jesus clearly taught them the demands of true discipleship.

Discipleship is the essence of Christianity. When an individual accepts Christ's provision of salvation, he also accepts the call to discipleship. To be a disciple, one must follow Christ in his walk and in his motives. No part of the disciple's life is not dedicated to following Christ. Today, God needs dedicated disciples to continue the work of His kingdom on earth. Jesus is still calling disciples who weigh each choice in light of eternal consequences.

Many today would like to be disciples of Christ and call themselves Christians. When Jesus looked at many in His day, He saw in them pride, self-service, and a lack of commitment. Likely He sees the same things in many who call themselves Christians today. Cross bearing and self-denial are paramount to the true Christian. Throughout the lesson, emphasize both the heart condition and the practical applications of cross bearing. Cross bearing, humility, and self-denial need to permeate every area of our life, and affect every choice, so there are many practical applications that could be brought out.

Being a disciple of Christ is a privilege that requires full commitment. Only those who love Christ above all else and daily bear the cross can be His disciples.

**Lesson Aim:** To understand the cost of being a disciple of Christ.

**Theme Verses:** [Matthew 10:37-38](#). He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me is not worthy of me.

## **Lesson Text**

### **Humble Yourself**

[Luke 14:7-14](#) And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, <sup>8</sup> When thou art bidden of any *man* to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; <sup>9</sup> And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. <sup>10</sup> But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. <sup>11</sup> For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. <sup>12</sup> Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor *thy* rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. <sup>13</sup> But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: <sup>14</sup> And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

### **Make No Excuse**

[Luke 14:15-24](#) And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed *is* he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. <sup>16</sup> Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: <sup>17</sup> And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. <sup>18</sup> And they all with one *consent* began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. <sup>19</sup> And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. <sup>20</sup> And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. <sup>21</sup> So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets

and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. <sup>22</sup> And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. <sup>23</sup> And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled. <sup>24</sup> For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

### **Bear the Cross**

[Luke 14:25-28](#) And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, <sup>26</sup> If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup> And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. <sup>28</sup> For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish *it*?

[Luke 14:33](#) So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

### **Questions for Study**

#### **Humble Yourself**

1. What are some marks of pride? of humility?
2. What mindset helps motivate us to spontaneously show the hospitality Jesus taught in 14:13?
3. What are some ways we can choose the "lowest room"?

#### **Make No Excuse**

4. What do the excuses in 14:18-20 indicate about the priorities of the ones making the excuses?
5. What excuses do individuals often give today for refusing Christ's invitation? How can we challenge them?
6. How can we keep earthly things from winning our affection?

#### **Bear the Cross**

7. In what sense should the disciple of Christ hate his family members and his own life?
8. What are some ways we may be tempted to try to follow Jesus without giving up all else?

### **Analyzing the Passage**

Verses 1-24 take place at a feast in a chief Pharisee's house on the Sab-

bath Day. In 14:8-11, Jesus taught a lesson on humility to the promotion-seeking guests. In 14:12-14, Jesus taught a lesson to the proud, selfish host on the blessings of unrecompensed service.

In 14:16-24, Jesus told a story to teach a lesson on God's rejection of those who reject Christ's invitation. This teaching seems to be directed at the Pharisees and unbelieving Israel in general. It illustrates how the Jewish nation as a whole rejected Christ's offer of salvation while He was on earth, which resulted in their being cut off. The call to Christ would go to the Gentiles, and Christianity would become primarily a religion of the despised Gentiles. Those who reject Christ in this life will miss the greatest supper invitation—to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

In Bible culture, guests often received one invitation days or weeks in advance, and secondly a personal invitation when the meal was ready. These guests made three excuses that keep men from the kingdom of God today. They allowed earthly possessions, earthly business, and earthly affection to stand in the way.

When many followed Jesus, He challenged them with the demands of discipleship (14:25-35). To be a disciple of Jesus is to enter into the challenges peculiar to the person who identifies with Jesus. Jesus outlined in startling terms what it would mean to take up His cross. To bear the cross is to endure stigma, persecution, mental anguish, and the pain of dying to self.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **Humble Yourself**

1. Humility is an essential character trait of Christ's disciples (14:7-10). In Christ's kingdom, those who humble themselves as little children, and those who are servants of all, are the greatest. The Biblical principle of "in honour preferring one another" stands in sharp contrast to the attitude of the guest. The humble person does not elevate himself, insist on having the last word, or refuse to cooperate when his ideas are not used. He is not dissatisfied when others are assigned responsibilities in church life or receive more credit for some idea or accomplishment.

2. God blesses those who choose to live humbly (14:11). Living humbly is counter to our inner impulses and counter to popular thinking. Our interests must be in pleasing the Lord with all that we have now, and in

sharing in Christ's exaltation in heaven. With luxurious and showy possessions readily available to us, we must consciously choose the simple and serviceable. Our houses and properties should not be adorned with many extras, but kept consistent with a pilgrim-and-stranger lifestyle.

3. Christ's disciples are willing to sacrifice for others even though they do not receive compensation in this life (14:12-14). We must not give, expecting to receive again, but rather give with a heart of compassion and love to those who are truly needy. Compensation for giving is often in the glory received from being seen by others. It could be a public plaque, or a newspaper story on how much a person gave. We must give, not to be seen by men, but because we have freely received (Matthew 10:8).

### **Make No Excuse**

4. Christ's disciples do not let earthly interests hinder communion with their Lord (14:18-20). The call of the Gospel must remain our highest priority. All earthly interests must be subservient to serving the Lord. We must guard against making commitments that hinder us spiritually or that distance us from the Lord and His church. We must guard against the "emptiness of business." We must guard against getting so involved in the things we enjoy that we begin to neglect our spiritual life.

5. Discipleship is a choice (14:18-20, 24). Each person needs to first of all commit his life to God to be a disciple. Then we need to choose to follow that commitment at every opportunity that God presents to us. We need to daily choose to keep God's work first in our lives. If we allow earthly possessions, earthly business, or earthly affection to come between us and God, that is a choice we have made, not a circumstance that we cannot help.

### **Bear the Cross**

6. Discipleship includes loving the Lord above all else (14:26). Christ calls us to place Him first in our affections. Certainly we must terminate all affection for unholy and wicked things, but even the noble love of family must be subservient to our love for the Lord. Also, we need to have self-denial that places even our own life secondary to Christ.

7. Cross bearing is an essential element of discipleship (14:27). True Christianity has never been easy on the flesh. An easy lifestyle not only tends to make us forget but also fosters abhorrence for cross bearing.

God has not promised the best of both worlds. We must suffer for Christ now if we hope to be glorified with Him in the future.

8. Only those who have counted the cost and totally committed themselves to the Lord can be His disciples (14:33). Jesus' teaching clearly points out that discipleship is not some optional, more advanced level of Christianity; it is foundational.

We must keep holding before ourselves and before our children the fact that becoming a Christian requires complete surrender of the will to the Lord. In order to lay hold on Jesus Christ, we must break completely with the past and with the self-life.

### **Important Teachings**

1. Humility is an essential character trait of Christ's disciples (14:7-10).
2. God blesses those who choose to live humbly (14:11).
3. Christ's disciples are willing to sacrifice for others even though they do not receive compensation in this life (14:12-14).
4. Christ's disciples do not let earthly interests hinder communion with their Lord (14:18-20).
5. Discipleship is a choice (14:18-20, 24).
6. Discipleship includes loving the Lord above all else (14:26).
7. Cross bearing is an essential element of discipleship (14:27).
8. Only those who have counted the cost and totally committed themselves to the Lord can be His disciples (14:33).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. What are some marks of pride? of humility?

Marks of pride: seeking out places or positions of honor or looking for the praise and honor of men; needing to always have the last word and elevating our opinion as the only answer; seeking to make a show of our possessions with much adornment, luxurious accessories, expensive possessions, and plush living; limiting our circle of friends to those who are well-to-do and who are exalting themselves also.

Marks of humility: willing to do the lowliest of responsibilities without any recognition; happy to see others praised and assigned greater responsibilities; satisfied when one's own ideas are not used; willing to be friends with the poor and the outcast; satisfied with basic and serviceable possessions.

2. What mindset helps motivate us to spontaneously show the hospitality Jesus taught in 14:13?

A humble mindset is of highest priority. We need to have a Christlike love for all people, even those with special needs or those with very few possessions. We need to have a service-and-servant mindset rather than a self-serving mindset. We need to remember that if we "have done it unto one of the least of these," we have done it for Christ. We need a mindset that all that we have is God's, so we should use it in His service.

3. What are some ways we can choose the "lowest room"?

We can choose to present ourselves in ways that do not attract attention to ourselves. We should not place ourselves in the center of attention. We should not always need to be the first to speak, or insist on having the last word. We should identify with the humble and "poor in spirit." We can offer to do the lowly tasks that do not get attention. We can choose to present our business in a modest way, rather than promoting it in an overly professional, lavish manner.

4. What do the excuses in 14:18-20 indicate about the priorities of the ones making the excuses?

Excuses indicate indifference to the invitation. Excuses indicate that the priorities are towards something else. Excuses indicate that a person does not value the invitation enough to respond to it.

5. What excuses do individuals often give today for refusing Christ's invitation? How can we challenge them?

Many say that a full obedience to the Scriptures is not necessary. They believe they can follow Jesus without being so radical. Many push off the day of repentance, thinking they will seek Christ later in life. Many choose to serve self and live in sin and excuse themselves with the excuse of liberty in Christ. Many excuse themselves because they are too busy to serve Christ now.

We can challenge them with the warnings of the final destiny of those who reject Christ. We can point people to the true requirements of following Christ. We can warn people of the uncertainty of life and of the imminent return of Christ.

6. How can we keep earthly things from winning our affection?

Our affection often goes to what we put effort and time into; if we put effort and time into serving the Lord, our affection will be there. Our af-

fection is also often with what we associate and identify with. We need to identify with other Christians and with God's kingdom, and our affection will be there.

7. In what sense should the disciple of Christ hate his family members and his own life?

Hate means "to detest; by extension, to love less." One's love for family ties and for one's own life must be secondary to one's love for Christ. We need to have an absolute loyalty to Christ and the kingdom of God. Nothing may be allowed to come between us and God, not even our dearest and cherished family. We need to "hate our own life" in that we are willing to expend it in the service of Christ or even give it up in death as a martyr.

8. What are some ways we may be tempted to try to follow Jesus without giving up all else?

We could be tempted to try to follow Christ but not cleanse our minds, to follow Christ without giving up the desires of the flesh, or to follow Christ without giving up a desire for wealth or fame. We could be tempted to follow Christ without living a separated life. We could be tempted to not dedicate all our possessions for God's use.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

Are we one of the multitude who would follow Jesus, but who refrain from the commitment required to truly be one of His disciples? Or are we one of the few who have made the radical commitment to take up the cross and follow Jesus? We must enter fully into the costs of discipleship in order to enter into the final rewards of discipleship.

### **Research Guide**

1. Read the chapter on "Self-Denial" in *Doctrines of the Bible*.
2. Read Matthew 10:34-39 and Mark 8:34-38.