

Jesus' Parables in Chronological Order

Parable #28 — Luke 14:25-35 — The Cost of Being a Disciple

²⁵ Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said:

²⁶ “If anyone comes to 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. ²⁷ And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

²⁸ “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? ²⁹ For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’

³¹ “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.

³³ In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

³⁴ “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?

³⁵ It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out.

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Parable #28 — Luke 14:25-35 — The Cost of Discipleship

1. What does it mean when Jesus says to “hate” your parents, wife, children, siblings, and even your own life? Is Jesus saying to treat family members badly or with disrespect? (Luke 14:26 and Matthew 10:37)
2. What does it mean to carry your own cross? (Luke 14:27) Considering his audience (the crowd following him), why did Jesus use this illustration? How do Jesus’ conditions of following him seem to you today?
3. Think about planning a major project such as renovating a basement or redoing a kitchen. How can you be sure to take into account all of the costs? What happens if you overlook something? What if the project is not completed? What will you wife, family, and friends say? Do you have any uncompleted projects around?
4. What consequences result from not counting the costs before building? (14:28-29).
5. How does this building illustration apply to discipleship (i.e., following Jesus)?
6. If a king didn’t have sufficient manpower to go to war, what was his best course of action? (14:31-32)
7. How do you interpret this second illustration (a king going to war) with respect to following Jesus?
8. Jesus presented the costs of discipleship in different ways at different times. How did people respond? (Luke 5:11, 5:27-28, Mark 10:21-22)
9. What costs do we need to count in responding to Jesus? What costs of following Jesus seem especially high to you? What holds you back?
10. What does Jesus’ short illustration about salt mean? (14:34-35)
11. If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

Parable #28 — Luke 14:25-35 — Cost of Discipleship — Notes to Leader

1. What does it mean when Jesus says to “hate” your parents, wife, children, siblings, and even your own life? Is Jesus saying to treat family members badly or with disrespect? (Luke 14:26 and Matthew 10:37)

In using the word “hate” (Luke 14:26) Jesus means it to be shocking, jolting, provoking real listening. Hating, detesting is not neutral. It does not mean ignoring someone. It does not imply disinterest. It means to actively despise. Jesus’ use of the word is intended to shock and to challenge.

Jesus is using hyperbole, an overstatement in order to make a point with maximum impact. Jesus states something in a striking, unforgettable way, a way that challenges us and forces us to think.

What does Jesus mean by telling us that we must hate our closest family members? He is contrasting our allegiance to him (Jesus) in the strongest possible way. No earthly tie, however close, must take precedence over our allegiance to and obedience of Jesus. He is Number One—by far! No other person even comes close!

Now this is no excuse to treat family members shabbily or with disrespect. Our responsibilities for our family still remain. But it does mean that following Jesus is to take first priority—even if it is painful, difficult, and misunderstood. Our parent’s wishes don’t come first; Jesus’ direction and commands do. Our spouse’s and children’s desires don’t come first; Jesus’ direction does.

2. What does it mean to carry your own cross? (Luke 14:27) Considering his audience (the crowd following him), why did Jesus use this illustration? How do Jesus’ conditions of following him seem to you today?

Carrying your cross means that we must accept the death of our own self-directed life, die to ourselves daily, and be willing to face whatever physical, emotional, or social persecution that ensues—and follow Jesus.

Jesus spoke of a cross to get the people in the crowd to think through their enthusiasm for him. He encouraged those that were superficial either to go deeper or to turn back. Being a disciple, Jesus is saying, demands full commitment; nothing less will do. In order to illustrate this point Jesus tells this parable in two parts. (Some commentators count these verses as two, or even three, parables, the first in 14:28-30, the second 14:31-33, and the third in 14:34-35.)

3. Think about planning a major project such as renovating a basement or redoing a kitchen. How can you be sure to take into account all of the costs? What happens if you overlook something? What if the project is not completed? What will you wife, family, and friends say? Do you have any uncompleted projects around?

4. What consequences result from not counting the costs before building? (14:28-29).

In the parable, the project does not get finished and the people who see it in its half-finished state ridicule the builder. Could that happen today? Perhaps. But what else? The town might consider it a hazard and require the hole to be filled in. Or something else. What else could happen?

What's the message here? Point is the you have to look ahead to see the consequences of your visions and plans. Will your Christian life be only half built and then abandoned because you didn't consider the cost of commitment to Jesus? What are these costs? Maybe you lose social status or wealth. Maybe you have to give up control over your time, your money, or your career. You may actually be hated, separated from your family, or, in an extreme case, put to death. Following Christ does not mean a trouble-free life of peace and joy. You must carefully consider the cost of becoming a disciple of Christ so you know what you're getting into and won't be tempted later to turn back,.

5. How does this building illustration apply to discipleship (i.e., following Jesus)?

Jesus is saying, if you don't have the wherewithal or willingness to see it through, don't even attempt the journey. Discipleship is a decision that demands the utmost seriousness and commitment. Be very, very sure you want to follow Jesus as his disciple.

7. How do you interpret this second illustration (a king going to war) with respect to following Jesus?

Jesus is saying, Consider ahead of time whether or not you are willing to become his follower. It will take everything you have and more. Discipleship will figure in every future decision of your life. The will of God will be first in your priority from now on. If you don't have the willingness to give up everything to totally follow Jesus, then don't begin. Don't move toward a battle that you will surely lose. Figure out your resources and what you are willing to commit ahead of time. If you don't have it, don't commit your forces. Without enough strength they'll be chewed up, destroyed. Halfway measures are not adequate. It must be all or nothing.

8. Jesus presented the costs of discipleship in different ways at different times. How did people respond? (Luke 5:11, 5:27-28, Mark 10:21-22)

Luke 5:11 - And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus. (NLT)

Luke 5:27-28 - ²⁷ After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. “Follow me,” Jesus said to him, ²⁸ and Levi got up, *left everything* and followed him.

Mark 10:21-22 - ²¹ Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

²² At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

10. What does Jesus’ short illustration about salt mean? (14:34-35)

In Jesus day, salt was considered an essential of life. It was used for both flavoring and preservation. In those days, salt was obtained from evaporation from the Dead Sea, but it was far from pure. It was often mixed with greater or lesser concentrations of other minerals. It is possible for all the sodium chloride to be leached out of a mixture of salts so all that is left is stale and useless, i.e, it is possible for what appears to be salt to have all its true salt washed out of it. Even though the appearance remains, the essence is lost.

11. If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

If we have so conformed our ways and words to the world around us that others can’t see Christ in us—that they are surprised to find out that we are Christians—then maybe we aren’t very salty at all.

In summary, Jesus looks at the large crowd traveling with him today, and says:

• Your allegiance to me must be complete; every other allegiance must pale before it.

• You must be constantly ready to die for me, if necessary, as you follow me.

• You must count the cost before you start to determine if you are committed enough to follow me. If you realize that you aren’t, then don’t even begin.

• You must give up everything you have to follow me.

• You must retain the distinctive flavor of uncompromised disciples.

Some material in leader’s notes above thanks to Jesus Walk Bible Study Series by Ralph F. Wilson. www.jesuswalk.com/lessons/14_25-35.htm