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The Cost of Being a Disciple

Luke 14: 25-35

The cost of being a disciple DIG: What does the Lord say to the large crowd about family? Why such tough talk from Jesus? What does He mean by “hate” in this context? Carrying a cross? How does each of the three examples in this passage relate to the necessity of giving our primary love and loyalty to Messiah? How is salt a good analogy for Yeshua’s final point about discipleship? What Kingdom values are taught?

REFLECT: When did you realize that following Jesus was costly? How so? Did you ever wonder since then if the cost was worth it? What would you die for? What is your relationship with Jesus Christ costing you today? What keeps you going?

After the parable of the great banquet (**to see link click [Hp](#) - The Parable of the Great Banquet**) there is a scene change to **a large crowd traveling with Jesus**. And a topic change from “becoming” a **believer** to “counting the costs” of being a **disciple**. The passage reflects a period in **Jesus’** ministry when the shadow of the cross began to loom large. As no prudent person would build **a tower** or go **to war** without counting the costs, so no one should assume the responsibilities of **discipleship** lightly. **Christ’s** purpose is not to discourage the prospective **disciple**, but to awaken the half-hearted **disciple** to the disastrous consequences of this kind of **discipleship**.¹⁰⁸⁹

Every **believer** is a **disciple**. **The Lord’s** Great Commission was to **go** into all the world **and make disciples . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20)**. That means the mission of the Church, and the goal of evangelism, is to make **disciples**. **Disciples** are people who believe, **those** whose faith motivates **them** to obey all that **the Living Word** commanded. The word **disciple** is used consistently as a synonym for **believer** throughout the book of **Acts (6:1-2 and 7; 11:26; 14:20 and 22; 15:10)**. Any distinction between the two words is purely artificial.¹⁰⁹⁰ But, make no mistake about it, the cost of becoming a **disciple** is not an easy road. The cost is high - more than most want to pay.

A **disciple** is not one who simply buys “fire insurance,” who signs up just to avoid an

unpleasant afterlife. A **believer** is one whose faith expresses itself in submission and obedience. **He** or **she** is **one** who follows **Messiah**, one who is unquestionably committed to **Christ** as **Lord** and **Savior**, **one** who wants to please **ADONAI**. When **disciples** fail, **they** seek forgiveness and want to move forward to glorify **Christ**. This is **their** spirit and direction.

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus in Perea, on the eastern side of the Jordan River valley, **and turning to them He said: 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.** The word **hate** here is not an emotion, but rather the act of choosing or not choosing (**Malachi 1:2-3**). A better translation would be: **Anyone who comes to Me but refuses to let go of parents, spouse, children, brothers and sisters - yes, even one's own life! - such a person cannot be My disciple (Luke 14:25-26 The Message).** The theme of this verse is not alienation from one's family, but the cost of **discipleship**; nothing, not love for **father** or **mother** or even **one's own life**, is to come before loyalty to **ADONAI** and **His Meshiach**.

Why is this language so severe? Why does **Messiah** use such offensive words here? Because **He** is eager to chase the uncommitted away and to draw true **disciples** to **Himself**. **He** does not want half-hearted people deceived into thinking they are in the kingdom of Heaven. Unless **Jesus** is the number one priority, **He** has not been given **His** rightful place.



And whoever does not carry their cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple (Luke 14:27). One who is not willing to lose his or her life by becoming a **disciple** of **the Savior of Sinners** is **not worthy of Him (Matthew 10:38-39)**. **Jesus** does not ask people to add **Him** to their "to do" list of daily chores. We have all heard devotional sermons spiritualize this passage to mean everything from a cranky boss to leaky roof. But that is not what the word **cross** meant to **Yeshua's** first century audience. It did not remind them of long-term

problems or difficult burdens. It did not even evoke thoughts of Calvary, since **the Lord** had not yet gone to the cross and they did not understand that **He** would. When **Christ** said **carry your cross** to them, they thought of a cruel instrument of torture and death. They thought of dying in the most agonizing way known to mankind. They thought of the poor, condemned criminals hanging on crosses by the roadside because they had undoubtedly seen many executed in that way. They understood **He** was calling them to die for **Him**.¹⁰⁹¹

The Bible does not teach salvation by martyrdom. **Jesus** was not advising **His disciples** to try to get themselves killed for **Him**. **The Prince of Life** was referring to a pattern of life. **He** simply says that genuine **believers** do not shrink back, even in the face of death.

Spiritual cost-benefit analysis is taught in the Mishna also. "Be thinking about the loss of a mitzvah (commandment) against its reward, and the reward of a transgression against its loss" (Avot 2:1). The sense is this: **Compare the relatively small cost of observing the commandment with the great and eternal benefit obtained by fulfilling it; likewise, compare the fleeting reward gained by disobeying a command with its great and eternal cost.**

The Bible states that if you believe in **Yeshua** you will have some finite costs, foregoing **the fleeting pleasures of sin (Hebrews 11:25)**, but you will gain eternal life with **ADONAI** (see **Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer**), a benefit of infinite value. On the other hand, if you reject **Jesus** you will have some finite benefits (enjoying whatever happiness the world and the devil can offer). But you will go to hell and be separated forever from **God** and all goodness, an infinite cost. As Jim Elliott, who was martyred in his attempt to evangelize the Huaorani people of Ecuador, wrote in his final days in 1956, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep . . . to gain what he cannot lose."

So, why are so few rabbis (or officials of other religions) believers? One reason is that most have never heard the gospel presented from a Jewish perspective. But even if the gospel is understood as the Good News it is, and not as a Gentile religion or a pagan revision of Judaism, a second reason is the rabbis (and officials of other religions) are usually unwilling to pay the cost - which in their case would be exchanging the honor and privileges given them in the Jewish (or other religions) community for dishonor and shame, for the status of an outcast or *meshummad*, (apostate, literally, *one who has been destroyed*). A third reason is that they do not accurately perceive the benefits. Even apart from the heaven-hell questions, few can imagine the rewards of helping shape a new and true Judaism faithful to **God**, the Jewish **Meshiach**, the Jewish people and the rest of humanity. It is hard for them to envision the excitement of devoting their rabbinical training to uniting two great streams of world history (**Ephesians 2:14**) that for two thousand years have grown apart.

One rabbi that did catch this vision, and accordingly reevaluated the costs and benefits, was Sha'ul of Tarsus. He wrote: **But the things that used to be advantages** [benefits] **for me, I have, because of the Messiah, come to consider a disadvantage** [a cost, or at most a finite benefit] **in comparison with the supreme value** [infinite benefit] **of knowing the Messiah Yeshua as my Lord. It was because of Him that I gave up everything and regard it all as garbage** [at most a finite benefit, worthless by comparison], **in order to gain the Messiah** [infinite benefit] **(Philippians 3:7-8 CJB)**.¹⁰⁹²

Then, using two illustrations, **Jesus** taught that **discipleship** must include planning and sacrifice. **Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and count the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, "This person began to build and wasn't able to finish" (Luke 14:28-30)**. The builder did not begin until he had considered **the cost**.

Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 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. A king who planned **war** against an enemy carefully considered all that was involved and did not foolishly rush into the conflict without considering the cost. **In the same way**, but once the costs have been counted and a decision has been made to have faith in **Christ, Yeshua** said **those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be My disciples (Luke 14:31-33)**.

With great skill **the Master Teacher** drove home the difficulty of **discipleship** by proclaiming: **Salt is good** only as long as it contains the characteristics of saltiness, **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 has no value at all and is thrown out**. The same is true of **disciples**. **They** must contain the characteristics of true **disciples** - planning and willing sacrifice - or **they** are ineffective. **"Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear" (Luke 14:34-35)**. This does not mean to lose one's salvation. The salt the **Jesus** was talking about came from the Dead Sea, which could lose its saltiness if not used. **Luke**, under the inspiration of **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**, makes the analogy that we do not bear witness to **His** name, no matter what the cost, we can lose our effectiveness.

Faith is not an experiment, but a lifelong commitment. It means taking up the cross daily, giving all for **Messiah** each day with no reservations, no uncertainty, and no hesitation. It

means nothing is knowingly held back, nothing purposely shielded from **His** lordship, and nothing stubbornly kept from **His** control. It calls for a painful severing of the tie with **the world (First John 2:15-17)**, a sealing of the escape hatches, a ridding oneself of any kind of security to fall back on in case of failure. Genuine **believers** *know* they are going ahead with **Christ** until death. That is how it is when you sign up to follow **Yeshua Ha'Meshiach**. That is the stuff of true **discipleship**.¹⁰⁹³