

X MARKS THE SPOT

"SECOND BEST"
LUKE 14:25-35

This Week's Core Competency

Giving Away My Life – I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes. Romans 12:1 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.*

Dallas Willard offers some practical advice on what we should do to become Jesus' disciples. One of the things he says we should do is to *decide*.

"But the final step in becoming a disciple is decision. We become a life student of Jesus by deciding. When we have achieved clarity on 'the cost'—on what is gained and what is lost by becoming or failing to become his apprentice—an effective decision is then possible. But still it must be made. It will not just happen. We do not drift into discipleship. This may seem a simple point, but today it is commonly overlooked or disregarded, even by those who think of themselves as having a serious interest in Jesus and his kingdom. I rarely find any individual who has actually *made a decision* to live as a student of Jesus in the manner discussed in this book. For most professing Christians, that is simply not something that has presented itself clearly to their minds. Current confusions about what it means, and the failure of leaders and teachers to provide instruction on it and to stress

Our job is to creatively and wisely engage in those activities that will give God a chance to work in our life.

- John Ortberg

the issue of discipleship, make that almost inevitable. But in the last analysis we fail to be disciples only because we do not decide to be. We do not intend to be disciples. It is the power of the decision and the intention over our life that is missing. We should apprentice ourselves to Jesus in a solemn moment, and we should let those around us know that we have done so" (*The Divine Conspiracy*, 298, 99).

Deciding to follow Jesus is indispensable; otherwise, any future following will be coincidental—little more than haphazard, hit or miss obedience. But while deciding is indispensable, deciding alone is insufficient. Deciding to be like Jesus must be followed by *training* to be like him. No one can be like Jesus by *trying* to be like him. However, what we cannot do by *trying hard* we can do by *training wisely*. Paul used this imagery when talking to Timothy about discipleship. He told his protegee, "*Train yourself to be godly*" (1Ti 4:7 italics added). He told Corinthian believers much the same thing, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into *strict training*. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever" (1Co 9:24, 25 italics added). What's more, he used himself as an example, "Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" (vv. 26, 27).

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What does it mean to enter training? According to John Ortberg, "It means to arrange your life around certain exercises and experiences that will enable you to do eventually what you are not yet able to do even by trying hard." He goes on to explain. "Training is essential for almost any significant endeavor in life—running a marathon, becoming a surgeon, learning how to play the piano. The need for preparation or training does not stop when it comes to learning the art of forgiveness, joy, or courage. It applies to a vibrant spiritual life just as it does to other activities. Learning to think, feel, and act like Jesus is at least as demanding as learning to run a marathon or play the piano. To follow Jesus means learning to arrange my life around those practices that will enable me to stay connected to him and live more and more like him. In short, this is just another way of defining a spiritual discipline. A *spiritual discipline* is any activity that can help me gain power to live life as Jesus taught and modeled it" (*Growth: Training vs. Trying*, 16).

For Discussion

What Jesus told the large crowds following him to Jerusalem, prompted a lively discussion in your home group. Jesus told them anyone who wanted to be his disciple must hate the ones closest to him, must carry his cross and follow him, and must give up everything he has. Some interpreted his words to mean that anyone who might be thinking about becoming a Christian ought to think again because applying to become a Christian entails a serious commitment to follow Christ no matter what it costs. Anyone unwilling to make that kind of commitment need not apply.

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Luke 14:25-35

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." (NIV(c)1984)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Draw a line from "them" in verse 25 to "crowds" in the same verse.
- * Circle "hate" in v. 26.
- * Underline "hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters" in v. 26.
- * Highlight "cannot be my disciple" in vv. 26, 27, 33.
- * Circle "disciple" in vv. 26, 27, 33.
- * Underline "carry his cross and follow me" in v. 27.
- * Bracket the rhetorical questions in vv. 28, 31.
- * Box "or" in v. 31 linking paragraphs with equal ideas.
- * Underline "give up everything" in v. 33.
- * Circle "but" indicating contrast in v. 34.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Do you see any connection between the size of the crowd traveling with Jesus and his decision to teach them about the cost of discipleship? Explain.
2. Put the first thing a person must do to be his disciple in your own words.
3. Does verse 27 contain a second thing or a second and a third thing a person must do to be his disciple? Explain.
4. Jesus tells two parables in verses 28-32 to make his point. What is his point?
5. Do you see what Jesus said in verse 33 as a third thing a person must do to be his disciple or a statement that sums up what he taught in verses 26-33?
6. It sounds like Jesus is trying to discourage people from following him. What do you think?
7. Relate what Jesus says about salt in verse 34 to what he said about being a disciple in verses 26-33.
8. Put the sense of "He who has ears let him hear" in your own words.
9. **Discussion:** Dallas Willard says, "Nondiscipleship is the elephant in the church." Talk about what you think he means by that, and if you agree with him.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

On his way to Jerusalem (cf. Lk 9:51; 13:22; 17:11), Jesus told the large crowd that was traveling with him anyone who "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." Then without stopping to take a breath he added, "anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." He told the crowd a couple of parables next and after that, concluded his remarks on the cost of discipleship by saying anyone "who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple." Many in the crowd no doubt thought that following Jesus would pay them richly rather than cost them dearly. After all, they expected the kingdom of God to appear when he arrived in Jerusalem (cf. 19:11). One author comments, "Physically, these people are on their way to Jerusalem in Jesus' entourage. But there is a suggestion that they are merely 'gong along' with him spiritually as well. They certainly have beliefs about him, but it is not clear that they truly believe in him. Probably some are truly saved while others are not. Like many groups of people, this is a mixed company spiritually. But whatever their spiritual status, they need to understand the full implications of being a Christ-follower" (Gary Inrig, *The Parables*, 82). Jesus set them straight.

This wasn't the first time Jesus urged his followers to think seriously about what it would take to be his disciples—to count the cost. In Luke 9:23 he told "them all," "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me," and in 9:57 to a man who said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go," he replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." Following Jesus would not be easy. And in verse 61 to another who said to him, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family," he replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

On this remark one writer explains, "The very

light Palestinian plough is guided with one hand. This one hand, generally the left, must at the same time keep the plough upright, regulate its depth by pressure, and lift it over the rocks and stones in its path. The ploughman uses the other hand to drive the unruly oxen with a goad about two yards long, fitted with an iron spike. At the same time he must continually look between the hindquarters of the oxen, keeping the furrow in sight. This primitive kind of plough needs dexterity and concentrated attention. If the ploughman looks round, the new furrow becomes crooked. Thus, whoever wishes to follow Jesus must be resolved to break every link with the past, and fix his eye only on the coming Kingdom of God. Jesus repeatedly discourages the enthusiast by reminding him of the difficulties of discipleship" (Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 195, 96).

Jesus' words leave one with the impression that he really doesn't want people to be his disciples; instead what he really wants is to discourage them from being his disciples. Otherwise, he would speak in softer tones about what it takes to be a disciple. However, nothing could be farther from the truth. When Jesus talks about discipleship, "It is like a mathematics teacher in high school who might say to a student, 'Verily, verily I say unto thee, except thou canst do decimals and fractions, thou canst in no wise do algebra.' It is not that the teacher will not allow you to do algebra because you are a bad person; you just won't be able to do basic algebra if you are not in command of decimals and fractions" (Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 293). Like the teacher who wants his students to learn algebra, so he tells them what they must do to learn algebra, Jesus wants us to be his disciples, so he tells us what we must do to be his disciples. The question is not "Does he want us to follow him?" The question is "Are we prepared to follow him?"

The Message of the Passage

To make sure you are prepared to be Jesus' disciple, first consider that you must love him supremely, obey him fully, and surrender everything to him, or you cannot be his disciple.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

“Second Best”

(Use the space below for Sunday's message notes)

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- vv. 25-35 "After the introduction (14:25), there are two parallel sayings describing the cost of discipleship (14:26-27; cf. Matt 10:37-38), two parabolic illustrations found only in Luke (14:28-30, 31-32), a third saying on the cost of discipleship (14:33), and a parabolic conclusion (14:34-35; cf. Matt 5:13). This theme, the cost of discipleship, is also found in Luke 9:23-27, 57-62; 124-30" (Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC, 395; cf., I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC, 591).
- v. 26 **hate** Jesus does not demand that his disciples literally hate family and self, which would contradict his command that we love others as we love ourselves. He is using a Semitic idiom. To love one person more than another is described in Old Testament terms as *loving the one and hating the other*. Genesis 29:30 says Jacob "loved Rachel *more* than Leah," i.e., loved Leah *less* than Rachel. Then the next verse says the Lord "saw that Leah was hated" (NASB margin; cf. Mt 10:37). A disciple's love for Jesus must outweigh all other loyalties. One author suggests the term refers not to psychological hate but to renunciation (592).
- v. 26 **disciple** A follower who is learning to be like his teacher (cf. Lk 6:40). Dallas Willard says, "A disciple of Jesus is one who is with Jesus learning to be like him" (*The Divine Conspiracy*, 291). "The word comes from a root meaning 'to learn.' A disciple, therefore, is a 'learner.' But the word connotes more than the idea of a student/teacher relationship. A disciple is one who follows the lifestyle, habits, and way of thinking of his teacher (or master). The goal of the disciple is to become as much like his teacher as possible" (Craig A. Evans, *Luke*, NIBC, 230).
- v. 27 **carry his cross** Jesus is talking about an *active* obedience that renounces self-seeking and personal interests as well as a passive willingness to endure the hardships that following him might entail.
- v. 28 **suppose** Cf., v. 31. "These parables, like all the others, are not to be taken as allegories—we should not try to assign a symbolical meaning to each detail in them. Only the main points in a parable are of importance for its explanation. In these two instances the main point is this, that before anyone undertakes something important he would first of all make sure whether he will be able to finish the undertaking" (Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, NICNT, 398). "Anybody who undertakes a task without being ready for the total cost involved will only make a fool of himself" (Marshall, 593).
- v. 28 **tower** A tall structure with a lookout at the top used for military purposes or to protect a vineyard or crop in a field—a high lookout or platform (cf. Lk 13:4). "If the tower is only half finished, that is, if only the foundation is laid, the construction would be of no use. Thus, the labor and expense would be entirely in vain" (230).
- v. 30 **this fellow** Not a simple statement of fact but a derogatory reference to an unthinking fellow who faced construction costs that exceeded his ability to pay.
- v. 32 **ask for terms** A smart king doesn't wage a war he can't win. No, he determines beforehand whether he can be victorious and if not negotiates a truce. Otherwise he risks a bloody defeat.
- v. 33 **in the same way** Lit., "So, therefore." This is either a third requirement to be Jesus' disciple or possibly a concluding statement that reiterates the point of verses 26-33.
- v. 33 **give up** Jesus doesn't say, "give away everything he has." The verb means, "to renounce," "to forsake," or "to say good-bye to" as in Luke 9:61. There a man who was reluctant to follow Jesus said, "First let me go back and say good-bye to my family." The present tense suggests that this "giving up" must be continual.
- v. 34 **loses its saltiness** Not that sodium chloride ever stops being sodium chloride. The salt used in Jesus' day was not a refined product but was obtained from evaporated pools by the shore of the Dead Sea. Lumps of material that once contained salt might look like salt but if the sodium chloride had leached away or the material had been carelessly processed, what remained was virtually useless. "The saying on salt is only loosely connected to the discourse on counting the cost of discipleship, but there is a definite connection, nevertheless. The follower of Jesus is likened to salt, which is good as long as it retains its flavor. However, if it loses its saltiness, it is of no value and must be thrown out. This is like the person who fails to count the cost. He begins, but then quits" (Evans, 230). "Disciples who cannot stay the course are as useless as 'salt' which has lost its flavour. It has no further use" (Marshall, 596). The quitter loses his saltiness and is no longer "worth his salt as a disciple."
- v. 35 **neither . . . nor** "Bad salt" was actually worse than useless because it became a kind of first-century hazardous waste that would ruin soil as well as pollute manure intended for use as fertilizer.

Family Time

Family time will help you take a break from your busy schedule and spend time connecting with your family.
Tips for your Family Time: Keep it simple! Be flexible! Do it often! HAVE FUN!!

Board Game Olympics

If your family is like mine, Family Game Night can quickly turn into Family Fight Night if we can't agree on a board game to play. In this version of Family Game Night everyone gets a chance to play his or her favorite game! Have each family member choose a favorite game. (A particular kid in my family always chooses Hide-and Go-Seek as his game, so flexibility is ok!) List the games on slips of paper and put them in a bowl. Randomly draw the order in which the games will be played. The fun part of this game (and to make sure everyone is in bed on time) is to set a time limit, ten minutes or so, for playing each game. Set a timer and when the buzzer sounds, it's time to move on to the next game. Whoever is winning at the buzzer is declared the winner for that game. Make sure you are taking the opportunity to talk to your kids as you play. Children are more open to talking when they are playing and having fun. Ask questions. Who is your best friend? What do you want to be when you grow up? Where is your dream vacation spot? Have fun connecting and playing!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Luke 14:25-35

- *Before building a tower, what needs to be done?
- *What do others do when a person doesn't plan the tower well?
- *What does a king do before going to war?
- *What is required to be a disciple of Jesus?

What Do You Think

- *Why is it important to consider what it will take to follow Christ?
- *What is something required of you to obey Jesus?
- *What is something you have sacrificed to obey Jesus?

What R U Going To Do

Make a list of 10 things you love the most. Next, put them in order with #1 being the thing that you love the very most. God wants his followers to have him at the top of their list.

MEMORY TIME

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the Memory Verse throughout the house.

Core Comp

Giving Away My Life - I give away my life to help with God's work.

Memory Verse

Psalm 25:4-5 Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
 Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.