

# Luke 14

## Verse 25-35

## Count The Cost

26.06.2006

The world loves a winner! The Winter Olympics are showing the winners and the Commonwealth Games will give us more. Each competing athlete has to put in a great effort to win a medal. The cost of trying to gain that glory is enormous. Some have lost their friends and family. Some have given up on a normal life for years, just to aim for it. Serious athletes have to count the cost, because it is not easy.

The same principle applies in most areas of life. If someone really wants to achieve, then they need to count the cost of such a commitment. What will they give up in order to gain? What can they afford to do or do without? How much time for friends and family? What is the cost?

As Jesus left the Pharisee's house and walked in front of a massive crowd of followers, it was time for him to speak seriously about the cost of discipleship. Were they ready for the cost of following Jesus? Are we ready for the cost?

For even though it is quite free to follow Jesus and reap the benefits of heaven and God's grace, there is an unseen cost we need to count ... what we have to give up in order to follow him.

In Luke 14:25-35, Jesus spoke in very dramatic terms. He highlighted the costs, by using hyperbole. That means he pushed language to its extreme, in order to make the point. He did this, for example, when commenting on the hypocrisy of removing specks from people's eyes when there is something in your own eye. The thing in your own eye was not a speck, it was not a sliver or a chunk, nor a rock... it was a log! Hyperbole pushes the example to extreme to make the point.

In Luke 14:26 he said "*Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple.*"

It is possible to follow Jesus without being a true disciple. The crowds did it. They praised Jesus into Jerusalem, but a few days later screamed for his death. So he stunned them by saying that

they cannot be a true disciple unless they hate their family and their own life.

It's a very graphic way of saying that in comparison to loving Jesus, their love for family is to be like hate. I say that because a similar passage in Matthew 10:37-38 says "*Whoever loves their family more than they love me is not worthy of me.*"

But what does that mean in practice? For the Jew, the family was the source of a person's **status, salvation and security**.

To be a child of Abraham was much better for them than being a Gentile. They belonged to God's special family. It gave them the **status** of belonging to God. To hate their family meant losing that status.

Their **salvation** came through the covenant God had made with the Israelites. Being part of the family of Israel meant that salvation was their's. By hating their family, it jeopardised their relationship with God.

Their old age **security** wasn't measured in terms of insurance policies, superannuation, social security or assets. Rather it was measured in terms of family. To hate their family meant disrupting future security.

In each of these three areas, hating their family meant they had to cut their dependence upon their family. Instead they were to depend on Jesus alone. To be His disciple is to trust Him for everything.

But Jesus also said we are to hate our own life, and then clarified it by saying that we are to carry our own cross and follow him. Instead of hating our own life and committing suicide, he called on us to hate our own life, carry our cross and follow him. To carry our own cross is to be ready to die to our own ways and desires, and follow him.

It is a major step to stop living for ourselves, and to stop living for our families. Instead of urging the crowd to grow bigger and better by easy

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steps of joining and coming along for the ride, Jesus challenged them to think through the commitment and what it takes.

Luke 14 then has the parables of the man building the tower and running out of money, and the king going to war and finding an enemy too powerful. They are vivid reminders of the need to count the cost in following him. The builder and the king were both unprepared and embarrassed. Both failed to follow through. Neither had the means to finish.

Do we think we have the means to keep going? What can we draw on to keep us going? Have we got anything to help us persevere? Do we have to dredge that courage, that perseverance, that long-lasting faith from deep inside us?

If we do, there will not be too many of us left, will there? I know I would have failed years ago. Many of us would feel like we are running on permanent empty. We would be overcome by guilt, failure, depression and self-hate, knowing that we're not good enough to last the distance.

Or else those who were left may well be more self-proud than the Pharisees.

Aha! So that is why this passage follows the Sabbath meal with the prominent Pharisee! The Pharisees were so full of their own achievements and pride, and Jesus warned the crowds not to become like them, even as they tried to follow him.

For who has what it takes to cling on? The cost is beyond us. We do not have the money to build the tower. We are outnumbered. We need to come to terms with the fact that we can't impress God. We cannot persevere in our own strength.

If we try, we become worse than useless. Like unsalty salt, what can you do with it? It is no good for taste. You cannot use it as a fertilizer, and it does not even help on a manure pile. It is absolutely useless.

However, if we trust in Jesus not only for the

initial flush of salvation, but also for the long haul, then who is on our side? With God for us, who can prevail against us? With God's resources, will we run out mid-building? With his fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self control, will we not persevere?

Count the cost, but when you realise our side is bankrupt in our own strength, remember that we always need to rely in trust and dependence on Him who saves.

And as we do, we avoid the leaven of the Pharisees, the hypocrisy of self-boasting that assumes God is impressed by our petty attempts.

Love Jesus. Carry your cross and follow him. Depend on His strength alone. For he has called you to be his.