

I. Read Luke 14:25-35

- A. In vs. 25-26, Jesus makes a hyperbolic statement (an obvious exaggeration) to make a point concerning the price of following Him. Why?

Jesus was making it clear that our relationship with Him and God the Father is the most important relationship we have. While in our culture we seldom face a choice between our family and God, it does occur. Our family relationships are more likely to be enriched because of Christ.

In what sort of circumstance would the words of Christ have very real implications?

In a society in which Christians are persecuted, such as the Arab nations of the Middle East or perhaps The Peoples' Republic of China. New Jewish converts may also have to choose between following Christ and pleasing their families. Certainly that would have been typical of the time in which Jesus walked the earth.

- B. In verse 27, Jesus refers to the necessity of *bearing one's cross* in order to follow Christ. What did He mean?

Jesus came to earth to fulfill a difficult mission. His earthly incarnation was ultimately about His death, burial and resurrection. Likewise, those who believe in Him have a mission and a calling. It is of paramount importance that each one of us discovers and fulfills that calling. In some instances, we are called to do difficult tasks. But just as Jesus pursued His calling and purpose, so are we to do the same.

- C. The great German pastor D. Bonhoffer referred to something called *cheap grace* in his book *The Cost of Discipleship*. To what was he referring?

He was describing the sub-biblical, casual approach to faith. Living in Nazi Germany, Bonhoffer was faced with very real and difficult choices. He observed that many professing Christians were unwilling to make sacrifices when faced with the choice of obeying the state or obeying God. He believed that many professing Christians were believers in name only, because they had a poor understanding of grace. In other words, he believed that those who would follow Christ truly must be willing to take up their cross! Anything less was a sort of *cheap grace*, different from the grace given through Jesus' shed blood.

- D. With Christ's words in vs. 26-27 in mind, how might you respond to someone teaching that Christ can be trusted as savior but denied as Lord?

It is difficult to reconcile the words of Christ with this unbiblical belief. As we consider our own sanctification, we often see a growth in knowledge that results in changed behavior. This is different from one who already understands the demands of Christ's Lordship, yet rejects them.

- E. In vs. 28-33, Jesus takes an approach to evangelism that is almost 180 degrees from most contemporary evangelicals' approach. He discourages anyone who is considering following Him from doing so before giving thought to the dramatic change and very real costs his/her faith may bring. How does our evangelism often differ from this approach?

We try to make Christianity as palatable and attractive as possible to folks so that they will *become* Christians. The result is sometimes a watered down gospel and a shallow commitment on the part of the professing believer. As soon as the pseudo-convert realizes that Christians are called do certain things, he often disappears.

F. Read Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23 and discuss the four soils and what kind of person each represents. **The first soil represents a hardened heart that is completely indifferent to the gospel. The second soil represents someone looking for a new thrill or experience. They make a quick profession of faith but quickly fall away. Evangelistic crusades often generate this kind of response. The third soil makes a more substantive profession, yet is not really willing to let go of the world — he/she lacks true repentance. When circumstances of prosperity or difficulty arise, they fall away. The fourth soil represents a regenerate heart that genuinely repents and trusts Christ. The result in *every case* is the fruit of a committed life, though the quantity of fruit will vary from believer to believer.**

G. In vs. 34-35, Jesus makes a logical comparison between salt and genuine faith. Salt without flavor is compared to whom?
Either a pseudo-Christian or a genuine Christian who has forgotten his/her commitment to Christ.

In contrast to the point above, how does *good salt* affect others?

Salt seasons a meal. It makes what would be bland taste good. It also preserves. It can keep meat from rot and decay; it also heals. It has the effect of promoting the healing of wounds; likewise, genuine believers season, preserve, and heal. A believer should be able to look behind him/her and recognize that life and lives have changed for the better because of their presence. If you cannot do this, you have lost your flavor!

H. In verse 35, Jesus makes the statement “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (NKJV). What did he mean by this?
He was acknowledging that not everyone could or would receive or understand what He was saying. He did not try to force people to listen, but rather focused on those the Holy Spirit inclined to listen.

Is there a lesson for us in Jesus’ intent in referring to “He who has ears to hear..”?

We must realize that many will reject Christ. Many will not be interested in truth or bible study or serving God. Our message is for those who have “ears to hear.” That is our responsibility. This has practical implication for our worship, our bible study, our evangelism and our ministry. A church’s strength is found not in numbers, but in the degree of commitment its people make to Christ.

I. Francis Schaeffer said that Christians of our day are primarily concerned with personal peace and affluence. What did he mean?
Personal peace means being left alone to do your own thing. Affluence is the ability to buy things. When a preacher begins to invade either of these two realms, his days are numbered. For then he “has quit preaching and gone to meddling!”