

SESSION 6

HATE YOUR FAMILY

▶ **The Point**

Loving Jesus should be so intense it makes everything else look like hate.

▶ **The Passage**

Luke 14:25-35

▶ **The Bible Meets Life**

France may have had its Eiffel Tower, but Britain had Sir Edward Watkin, an ambitious railroad businessman who decided London should have its own tower. His tower would be fully 200 feet taller and make people forget the ugly French Tower. Sure, the Eiffel Tower had restaurants, but Watkin's tower would have restaurants, theaters, Turkish baths, two observation decks, and a ninety-room hotel. At the very top would sit an astronomical observatory. Watkin's tower had only one drawback: It was never finished. Despite Sir Edward's grandiose plans, his tower only reached 154 feet before he ran out of funds and building stopped in 1894. Then they discovered where he was building was totally unsuitable for a tower. It sat there in its sad unfinished state until it was torn down in 1907.⁵

We've all had big plans that never came to pass. Unfortunately, many of us come to Christ with great plans in how we will follow Him, but our commitment does not always match our plans. Jesus longs for us to follow Him, but He also wants us to know exactly what it means to be His disciple. He calls us to count the cost.

▶ **The Setting**

Jesus was traveling with His followers to Jerusalem, where He would be crucified. Along the way, large crowds gathered to hear Him preach and teach. At one point He announced He had come to bring division rather than peace. (See Luke 12:51-53.) Some people accepted His message and became followers, but some rejected His message. Those who refused His message would be at odds with those who believed in Him, sometimes within the same family.

What does the Bible say?

Hate (v. 26)—Although this word sometimes means total rejection of someone or something, it can refer to, as it does in this instance, something that is less loved or less liked.

Luke 14:25-35

25 Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them,

26 “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

27 Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

28 For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?

29 Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him,

30 saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’

31 Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?

32 And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.

33 So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

34 “Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?

35 It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes



DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 113 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): **“What are some things people start but don’t finish?”** Allow time for each person to respond.

GUIDE: Direct group members to **“The Bible Meets Life”** on page 114 of the PSG. Introduce the importance of counting the cost of following Jesus by reading the text—or by encouraging group members to read it on their own.

GUIDE: Call attention to **“The Point”** on page 114 of the PSG: **“Loving Jesus should be so intense it makes everything else look like hate.”**

PRAY: Transition into the study by asking God to help us understand the cost of following Him. Thank Him for giving us the strength and perseverance to do so by the power of His Holy Spirit.

Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.



STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

What are the daily implications of following Jesus as a disciple?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Luke 14:25-27

25 Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, **26** *“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. 27* *Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”*

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud Luke 14:25-27 on page 115 of the PSG.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 115 of the PSG: **“Why do you think many people are initially attracted to Jesus?”**

RECAP: At this point in Jesus’ ministry, He was certainly popular. Many were drawn to Jesus as the miracle worker who fed them, healed them, and taught them with great authority. They were looking for more of the same, but Jesus turned to them and challenged them to move from being superficial followers to become fully committed disciples.

We tend to use “love” and “hate” in an emotional sense, but Scripture uses the words in another way. “Love” can mean to choose something or prefer something; consequently, “hate” can mean to reject something or to prefer something else. In that sense, Jesus calls us to choose Him, to prefer Him above all. It’s a statement of comparison. Our love for Jesus is to be so great that, by comparison, our love for others doesn’t come close to the love we have for Him.

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Ask group members to pair up and describe photos of family members from their cell phone, wallet, or purse. Ask them to discuss how putting Jesus in first place in their lives can help them love and relate better to members of their families.

TRANSITION: Following Jesus is a full-time commitment that requires total devotion. In the next verses, we also see that we must count the cost of following Him.

Luke 14:25-27 Commentary

[Verses 25-26] Jesus expects full-time commitment and total devotion from His followers. Jesus often attracted **great crowds**. In the face of such large crowds, Jesus proclaimed exactly what He expected of those who would follow Him as His disciples. With His words, **“If anyone comes to me,”** Jesus began to outline conditions or requirements for becoming one of His disciples. First, to be a true disciple meant a person would **hate** the various members of his or her own family. The meaning of the Greek word translated *hate* is crucial to understanding Jesus’ statement. The Greek word can mean to detest or abhor. However, the term does not always carry this strong or absolute meaning. A parallel passage in the Gospel of Matthew helps to understand the meaning of Jesus’ words in the Luke passage. “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:37). The Greek term translated *hate* in the focal passage carries the meaning of “to love less.”

Jesus also said a disciple must hate his or her **own life**. Jesus considered extreme and even complete self-denial as a prerequisite for true discipleship. (See Luke 9:23.) However, Jesus was not promoting low self-esteem or some kind of psychological disorder. It involves neither self-loathing nor abuse of one’s person. The issue is loving Jesus so much that love for ourselves pales in comparison.

To have such a love for Jesus flies in the face of the world in which we live. Contemporary culture promotes having a positive self-image. Certainly the Bible stresses that all humans are created in the image of God. (See Gen. 1:26-27.) Also, we know that God loved humanity so much that He sent Jesus to be the atoning sacrifice for sinful humanity (see John 3:16; 1 John 2:2), even though at that time we were God’s enemies. (See Rom. 5:10.) However, in general our society has an unhealthy preoccupation with self and selfish interests. People confuse a positive self-image with self-indulgence and narcissism. Our culture’s emphasis on success, achievement, and being number one is a major challenge both for the individual Christian and the church as a whole.

[Verse 27] Jesus noted the second condition for discipleship: **“Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”** To be a disciple of Jesus means we carry a **cross**. Earlier, when Jesus first predicted His own crucifixion, He connected the cross with self-denial. He told His disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23). The Jews of the first century were very familiar with the cross as a cruel means of capital punishment in the Roman Empire. Jesus did not need to give any details about the agonizing death endured during crucifixion. It was one of the most excruciating forms of death. Jesus did not use the term *cross* to refer to anything that we might find merely bothersome in life today. He referred to the sometimes painful and costly consequences of living a totally-committed Christian life.



STUDY THE BIBLE

NOTES

Dotted lines for notes

Luke 14:28-33

28 "For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? **29** Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, **30** saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' **31** Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? **32** And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. **33** So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple."

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud John 14:28-33 on page 116 of the PSG.

DISCUSS: Question #3 on page 116 of the PSG: "Why is counting the cost so important in following Christ?"

GUIDE: Use the Commentary for the verses on the next page of this Leader Guide to further explain the two analogies Jesus gave.

RECAP: What Jesus had called the crowd to do was no easy task: (1) to love Him so much that all other loves look like hate, and (2) to be willing to die for Him. Jesus knew this would be difficult for many of them, so He cautioned them to think through all that meant. In other words, He called them to count the cost of following Him.

To place Jesus before everybody else in our lives may not set well with others. Family members and friends may not share our radical commitment to Christ, so we must consider what that could cost us. We might experience rejection by those closest to us, as Jesus knew firsthand. He also knew that the rejection would increase and that the cross lay before Him. He knew His disciples would also experience it. So Jesus calls us to count the cost.

TRANSITION: In the next verses, we learn that we must maintain a pure devotion to Christ that makes others thirsty to know Him.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:
What contemporary examples can you give for the builder or king?

Dotted lines for notes

Luke 14:28-33 Commentary

[Verses 28-29] After challenging the crowds to consider the need to hate their families and themselves as conditions required for discipleship, Jesus used two analogies to encourage people to count the cost of such discipleship. Jesus compared calculating the cost of discipleship to a person considering building a tower. If a tower was never completed, Jesus predicted people would **mock** the builder for his foolishness. Careful planning and commitment should guarantee a project would be successfully completed.

[Verse 30] Jesus' point for the crowds was that they should carefully consider the cost of the commitment involved in following Him. If the crowds were attracted by fame or popularity, they would be severely disappointed when discipleship led to difficulties, persecution, and suffering.

[Verses 31-32] Jesus' second analogy about counting the cost of discipleship was a king anticipating a **war**. If the king realized he faced overwhelming odds, his best decision would be to negotiate **terms of peace**. Jesus' point was that the king needed to consider all the costs in the decision whether to fight or not.

Jesus wanted potential followers to count the cost of following Him as His disciples. What is at stake is the difference between eternal life with God and eternal damnation in hell! As Jesus' parable of the sower and the soils demonstrates, the end of those who fail to consider the true cost of following Him is tragic. (See Matt. 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15.)

[Verse 33] The third condition for following Jesus involves one's possessions. Jesus expected His followers to **renounce all that he has**. However, Jesus was not mandating a vow of poverty for all Christians. Believers in the early church did at times sell possessions to meet the needs of their fellow Christians, but this was done as individual believers felt led by the Holy Spirit. (See Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-37.) Like Jesus' command for the believer to hate his or her family, the issue is one of degrees. The disciple's commitment to Jesus must be so deep that he or she would be willing to renounce all that he or she possesses.

In verse 33 Jesus highlighted the impact of discipleship on our view of possessions. However, people can make a "god" of almost anything. Worshiping that "god" will keep us from committing to Jesus as Lord. Jesus reminded His followers that they could have only one master. (See Luke 16:13.) Jesus' point concerning those who would follow Him was that the price is high—it would cost them everything.

Jesus' discussion of the cost of discipleship should not lead us to think that our behavior is the basis for our salvation. Our salvation is based on God's grace, through faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. While Jesus expected people to make an informed decision about committing their lives to Him, "This does not imply that salvation must be earned. Rather the point being made is that God's grace can only be received by those who, in repenting, place Him above everything else."¹ Jesus' emphasis on the cost of discipleship relates to the way discipleship can and should impact all areas of our lives.



STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

Luke 14:34-35

³⁴ **“Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?**

³⁵ **It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”**

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud Luke 14:34-35 on page 117 of the PSG.

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 117 of the PSG: **“In what ways have others been salt in your life and influenced your thirst for God?”**

SUMMARIZE: Highlight the main points from page 118 of the PSG. What can we do to ensure we remain a strong influence in the world?

- ▶ **Stay in fellowship with Jesus.**
- ▶ **Be at peace with one another.**
- ▶ **Be in community with other believers.**

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 118 of the PSG: **“How can our group help one another maintain a devotion to Christ that influences others for Him?”**

DO: Direct group members to complete the activity, “Jesus and My Family” on page 119 of the PSG to help them evaluate their relationship with God.



Fill in a family tree with your immediate family members, including parents and grandparents. Evaluate whether you can honestly say you love Jesus more.

[PSG has space to draw and two follow-up questions: What does it mean to love Jesus more than your family members? What does it look like to love Jesus more than your family members?]

GUIDE: Refer back to **“The Point”** for this session: **“Loving Jesus should be so intense it makes everything else look like hate.”**

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

What’s the importance of Christian community in influencing the culture around us?

Luke 14:34-35 Commentary

[Verse 34] Our pure devotion to Christ will cause others to thirst to know Him as well. In the first century, **salt** had two primary uses: as a preservative and as a seasoning. Jesus offered a parable on salt losing its saltiness. Some suggest Jesus was referring to salt from the Dead Sea. Such salt contained carnallite or gypsum. If not properly processed to remove the contaminants, the salt would lose its taste. Others suggest that since this is a parable, the question of if salt could actually lose its saltiness is irrelevant.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had called His followers “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:13-14). Both salt and light are word pictures for the kind of positive impact Christians can have on the world. Jesus did not give us explicit details about many of the various issues we face today, but He presumed as His disciples we could and would be change agents.

[Verse 35] According to Jesus, salt can become useless. Jesus expected His disciples to make an absolute, life-long commitment to Him. One of the major characteristics of salt is making us thirsty. Eating salty popcorn, for example, necessitates a good drink. Jesus’ use of salt imagery in verses 34-35 and in Matthew 5:13 hints at one role for Christians today. Our distinctive Christian behavior can attract the attention of non-believers. They might be puzzled at how we behave when we exemplify Christian values. Watching our behavior, they might begin to consider the possibility of becoming disciples of Jesus as well.

Jesus concluded His discussion on the cost of discipleship with another word of advice: **“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”** Jesus clearly wanted His audience to be receptive to His message; however, He did not sugarcoat His message to attract more followers. To **hear** Jesus meant more than just hearing what He had to say; it meant being open to what Jesus had to say and responding. Listening to Jesus should lead to obedience and discipleship. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus complimented the person who heard His words and acted on them. He compared this listener to the wise man who built his house on a solid foundation. (See Matt. 7:24-25.) Jesus compared the person who listened but failed to act on His message to a foolish builder who built his house on shifting sand. (See vv. 26-27.) James echoed the words of Jesus in his letter. (See Jas. 1:22-25.)

Every person is faced with the choice of how to respond to Jesus’ call to discipleship. The price of being Jesus’ disciple is high; it will cost everything a person has. However, as high as that cost is, the cost of choosing not to follow Jesus is even higher. Jesus warned about the consequences of choosing the things of this world over His call to be His disciple (Matt. 16:24-26). In the end, in choosing to follow Jesus as His disciples we lose only those temporal things we cannot keep, and what we gain is of eternal value.

1. Robert H. Stein, Luke, vol. 24, The New American Commentary, gen. ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 397.



5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

GUIDE: Direct group members to page 120 of the PSG. Encourage them to choose one of the following applications to carry out this week:

- ▶ **Evaluate yourself.** Do a self-evaluation. In what areas of your life is compromise evident? If you determine you have not given everything to Christ, pray and make that commitment now.
- ▶ **Influence others.** Determine to let your conversations this week reflect your relationship with Christ. “Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” (Col. 4:6).
- ▶ **Count the cost.** Get involved in being salt in the community. Invest your time and energy in helping others in your community see the love and grace of Christ in you.



Wrap It Up

TRANSITION: Read or restate the final paragraph from page 120 of the PSG:

We’re not building towers or armies. We’re building something so much more important: lives and communities devoted to Christ. Let’s be sure to count the cost!

PRAY: Conclude by thanking the Lord for the gift of our families. Ask Him to fuel our passion for Him so that by loving Him so much more, we will love them even better.



Grow with other group leaders at the Groups Ministry blog.

LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry