

*Does It Cost Too Much?*

Every cult that claims to be based on the Bible uses the Scriptures. The problem is they all misuse the Bible for their own ends. Once again we're going to see how important it is to follow common sense guidelines when interpreting God's Word.

The Bible makes some radical claims for itself. There are a lot of religious books that are revered by worshipers which don't make any claims of divine inspiration. People treat them as if they're divine but the books don't make that claim for themselves.

The Bible clearly makes the claim that it comes from God. It says : *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*; Four hundred and thirteen times the OT prophets began their messages with the phrase *Thus saith the Lord*.

The Bible claims to be God's message to humanity and backs up that claim with hundreds of fulfilled prophecies. The proof is there and can be checked out by anyone who wants to.

If the Bible is God's word, it should be the top priority of our lives to know what it says. If it contains the words that lead to eternal life then their shouldn't be anything more crucial too us than understanding it.

If we want to understand the Bible then we're not going to approach it haphazardly. That's what the cults do. They pick and choose verses to support their teachings but they don't read them in context.

If we want to understand the Bible then we're going to read it carefully. Luke chapter 14 has to be read very carefully. It's a difficult passage. Jesus has says some of the hardest words here that are recorded in the NT.

**Turn to Luke chapter 14 (pg 1011)**

These are hard words but they're some of Jesus most important words to His people.

First of all we need to set the stage:

**Read vs 25**

All the preceding verses in chapter 14 have taken place in the home of a very religious man. Jesus was invited into the house of one of the rulers of Israel for a meal.

He used that opportunity to challenge everyone there with the truth that God isn't looking for people who are all caught up with prestige or position.

God isn't looking for people who just put on an external religious show. God calls those who recognize their own inadequacies and inabilities to come to Him.

God hates pride and self focus. He rewards humility and dependence on Him. Unfortunately, sometimes the more we think we know about God and the Bible, the more we become proud and less dependant on Him. We can even think we're OK with God and better than other people.

That's where much of the leadership of Israel was at this time. As Jesus moved into the final phase of His earthly ministry He chose to rock the boat more and more.

In verse 25 Jesus has left the religious man's home and is on the road again. By this time He's being followed by a great multitude of people.

I believe the people are following for a number of different reasons. Some, because of the miracles. Some because they're looking for a deliverer to straighten out their political system.

But some were drawn to Jesus because He offered hope to the poor, the weak and the downtrodden. Jesus was the first one to explain to them that the doors to God's kingdom were open to them.

If that's true, why does Jesus go from the theme of openness to restriction? Why does He say the hard things He does to this group who was made up of many sincere believers?

Here's what I think. Everything is coming to crescendo soon. Jesus will be taken and crucified. His closest disciples will scatter. Persecution will arise in Israel against Christians. It won't be long until it will be a crime to claim to be a follower of Christ.

What Jesus does in the rest of this chapter is lay out the requirements for real discipleship.

The Bible tells us that we're born into God's family by faith. That all who put their trust in the finished work of Christ on the cross are forgiven.

*He that believes on Him is not condemned, the Scriptures say.*

There's a difference though, between trusting Christ as Savior and being a committed, determined disciple. Every committed disciple has trusted Christ as Savior, but not every believer has matured into a totally devoted follower of Christ.

As Warren Wiersbe writes: *Salvation means coming to the cross and trusting Jesus Christ, while discipleship means carrying the cross and following Jesus.*

A lot of the commentaries I read on Luke 14 said that this great multitude that went with Jesus weren't believers. They were just tagging along with Him for selfish reasons.

Actually, we don't know that. Luke didn't say that. There could have been some sincere believers in this crowd.

What Jesus gives at this point is a radical call to arms. He calls for revolutionary actions. Not a physical revolution but a spiritual one.

This call to commitment wasn't just for those followers then. It applied to them because of all the hostility they would face in the coming months and years. But it applies to us too. The warfare hasn't grow easier. In fact in some ways the battle is even more intense today.

Think about some of the things we're up against

The National Board of Directors of Big Brothers-Big Sisters of America mandated recently that volunteers cannot be excluded because of their sexual orientation.

The University of Minnesota Press released a book entitled *Harmful to Minors: The Perils of Protecting Children from Sex*. The book argues that sex between adults and children may not be so bad after all,

This past week James Dobson referred to Scholastic Incorporated, the people who offer books to students in public, Catholic, and private Christian schools.

On the front of their catalog is the book *Conversations with God for Teens* by Neale Donald Walsch. Walsh in his *Conversations With God* books says that God dictated answers to questions and Walsh wrote them down.

In the book for teens a student asks “Why do I have an attraction for people of the same sex”, and God supposedly answers “Because that’s the way I made you. Your feelings come from Me.”

There is a culture war that’s been raging for decades and we’re on the losing end folks. We become so used to what’s going on around us that we just buy into the distortions of God’s truth. We get so tired of fighting against this stuff that we tend to give up the fight.

Jesus’ commands here were crucial for the Christians of His day to hear. Jesus’ commands are just as crucial for us!

Here they are. Just as radical and counterculture as they ever were.

*I. Really following Jesus in the truest sense of the word involves heavy demands. **Read vs 26***

In 1970 I was a druggie and had finally reached the promised land. I was in California. The streets of California in those days were filled with “Jesus People.” These were kids who had gotten off of drugs and were supposedly following Jesus Christ.

Some of them were, but some of them were swept up into cult groups. I was looking for reality in my life. I had been running from God and was getting tired, so I would talk to people on the street who seemed to be Christians.

One night, after a couple of hours of discussion, I went on a bus to the LA rescue mission with a group called The Children of God. I didn’t know it at the time but the COG was a cult group.

If you joined you gave them everything you owned and were shipped off to a ranch in Texas for indoctrination.

What drew me to them was their constant use of the Bible. They seemed to have Scripture for everything. They seemed to be so committed to Christ. But one thing really bothered me.

They said “Blank” (I won’t give you the expletive they used there) your parents. “Blank” the police. “Blank” the government. All those authorities were under the control of Satan.

When it came to family here’s the verse they used to prove their point.

## Read 26 again

Think about this: As a part of His devotion to the Father, Jesus cared for His family.

In Luke 2 He lingered at the temple at 12 years old, but came home when his parents told Him to.

In John 2 He submitted to God's timing, but still responded to His mother at the wedding in Caana.

In John 19 He died on the cross for our sins, but first He provided for the care of His mother.

In Acts 1 His mother was in the upper room with the Apostles after Jesus' ascension. Obviously she was one of Jesus followers.

Did Jesus tell His disciples to do one thing but He did another? Obviously not.

That helps us come to an understanding of His words here. Jesus wasn't telling us to reject our families. God is the creator of marriage and families.

We're told to love our enemies. We wouldn't be commanded to love those who hate us and hate those who love us.

So what is Jesus saying here? How are our relationships impacted if we become a committed disciple? What does he mean by the word "hate?"

The Bible gives us some clues. In Genesis chapter 29 we find the story of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah. Leah was Jacob's first wife, not due to his decision, but to her father's deception. Jacob really loved Rachel. In verse 30 we are told that Jacob *"loved Rachel more than Leah."* In verse 31, *"the Lord saw that Rachel was unloved."*

The word translated, "unloved" literally means "hated." That's the way it's translated in the KJV. Rachel was loved more than Leah; Leah was unloved; Leah was hated.

Therefore to be hated, here is to be loved less than another.

In Exodus the same sense of "hate" is found. In chapter 20, God is giving Israel the Law. He begins by commanding Israel to have "not other gods" before Him (Exodus 20:3). In verse 5, however, God said,

*"You shall not worship them or serve them [other gods]; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me."*

To have other gods, is to love them above God. To have other gods is to hate God.

In Romans 9:13, we read a quote from Malachi 1:2: "Jacob I Loved, but Esau I hated."

God chose Jacob above Esau, that He gave Jacob the preeminence and blessings that normally came to the eldest son. But God didn't hate Esau in the way we think of hate. God had compassion on Esau and on his descendants. God "hated" Esau in the sense that He loved Jacob more.

**Turn to Math 10** (This is a parallel to Luke 14) **Pg 944**  
**Read vs 37-39**

Jesus is saying that in order to be His disciple men and women must love Christ more than their parents, more than their spouse, more than their children, more than their sisters and brothers.

He's not telling us to reject them but He is telling us that He has to take top priority, even above them.

In fact, He has to take top priority, even above our own personal wants and desires.

If we're not willing to bear our cross we can't be a real disciple. **Back to Luke 14**

When we hear words like "whoever doesn't bear his cross", we think in stained glass terms. The concept of the cross has all kinds of religious connotations for us.

Remember, there was no religious significance yet to the cross when Jesus spoke these words. The cross was only a method of execution of criminals at this point.

The cross is about death. Putting these words into today's language we'd say: seat yourself in your own electric chair or tie your own hangman's noose.

Here is the point. When Jesus calls a disciple, He calls Him to give his entire life.

This is a radical, fulfilled call to acknowledge Jesus as Lord of all. Using Jesus'

definition of discipleship how many of us here can really call ourselves disciples?

*I. Really following Jesus in the truest sense of the word involves heavy demands.*

*II. Really following Jesus in the truest sense of the word involves making hard decisions* **Read 28-30**

If you're like me, you have a number of unfinished projects in various states of completion. Some began with great intentions, but then other things came up or you lost interest. "I'll do that some other time."

This isn't good enough for discipleship.

*Rick Mobley writes; Jesus wants us to know there is a price that we must consider before following Him. His calling is not cheap. When we take a stand for Jesus Christ, the wrath of others is going to come down upon us. If our faith never brings us into controversy with the values of our society, then we are not being true to the cross of Jesus Christ. Jesus lets us know, if you come and follow me, people may laugh at you, they may make fun of you, you may have trouble on the job, you might lose some friends, you might even get pretty angry at me for things not working out in the way you had hoped.*

Now remember, Jesus isn't saying, "Guys, I want you to count the cost and if it seems to high just bail out." He's saying, "I want you to make an informed, well thought out decision. You don't just jump on board because someone told an emotional story in a church service. You count the cost and then follow Me."

### **Read vs 31-32**

What's Jesus saying here? Is He like the Marines "Looking for a few good men?" Is He like the US Army, looking for that "army of one". Is he looking for people who look inside themselves and say, "I'm tough. I can handle any thing that comes my way. I've counted the cost and I can do it?"

That would be completely contrary to the Bible's overall teaching. Joh 15:5 *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."*

In II Cor the Apostle Paul asks God for strength: *And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me... For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

In I Corinthians 1 we read this explanation: *...God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.*

Think about it: None of the disciples of Jesus followed through to the end. When the "going got tough," they took off. Even Peter, who swore to Jesus that he was committed, that he would never forsake Him. If Peter, James, and John, the three closest followers of Christ, could not follow through, why would we think we would?

It's no accident that in both of the illustrations which Jesus used, the men failed to follow through. Neither had the means to finish what they'd started. Do we think that we have the means to be His disciples? Do we think that our level of commitment is sufficient to sustain us if family and friends forsake us...?

No one has the resources in and of himself to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, any more than we have the resources to earn God's favor and eternal life.

Discipleship isn't following Christ with sufficient means to do what He commands, but with absolute dependence on Him to empower us to do His will.

In the end the essence of discipleship isn't so much obedience. (That's more the result.) It's dependence that starts with a decision to commit ourselves to Jesus Christ trusting Him to live out His life through us.

- I. Really following Jesus in the truest sense of the word involves heavy demands.*
- II. Really following Jesus in the truest sense of the word involves making hard decisions*
- III. Really following Jesus in the truest sense of the word involves being radically distinctive*

## **Read vs 33**

Discipleship isn't a matter of how much we have to offer, but of renouncing all that we think we have to offer.

The Children of God didn't encourage their disciples to give *up* all that they had. They wanted their disciples to give *them* all that they had. In a sense the disciples sustained the leader.



Jesus wants it the other way around. To be His disciple you don't bring anything to Him, to prove your commitment and worthiness, you leave all behind, trusting Him and His faithful provision of all that we need to do what He calls us to do.

That's true discipleship. Just like salvation discipleship begins by recognizing the high price God requires, and that we're not able to meet it. The it's coming to Christ empty-handed, looking to Him to do what we can't do.

### **Read 34-35**

It seems like everything Jesus has said so far is going to produce a rather small number of disciples, doesn't it? He's not out for the big crowds at this point. Why not?

It's not the sheer number of disciples that matters, but their distinctness, their utter differentness from the world system in which they live.

The world isn't going to take note of a large group of people who think, feel, and act like everyone else. The world will take note of a very few "disciples" who are Christ-like, whose lives are distinctive.

Salt was a valued item in that day; in fact, part of a soldier's pay was given in salt. (The words salt and salary are related. We even have a saying, "He's not worth his salt.")

Salt does a couple of things: First it's a preservative, and disciples in this world help to slow down the growth of evil. Salt is also a purifying agent, an antiseptic that makes things cleaner. It may sting when it touches the wound, but it helps to kill infection. Salt gives flavor to things and, most of all, salt makes people thirsty. By our character and conduct, we ought to make others thirsty for the Lord Jesus Christ and the salvation that He alone can give.

Our modern salt is refined and doesn't lose its flavor, but the salt in Jesus' day was impure and could lose its flavor. Once the saltiness was gone, there was no way to get it back. The salt was thrown out into the street to be walked on.

Discipleship is serious business. The Bible tells us that God forgives our sin and gives us life for His glory. A believer who isn't a disciple isn't giving glory to God.

When I got out of high school I enrolled in a university in PA. The first week they had some kind of mixer where the freshmen are supposed to mix with the upperclassmen and you'd meet people.

There I was Joe Freshman at the big university trying to act cool. I got into a conversation with an upper class guy and after a while I asked him "What are you taking up?" He said, "Space."

It was my first time away from home and I was so nervous about being there with thousands of ot people I didn't know it didn't even register with me that he was being smart. I thought he was studying planetary science or something.

Actually, his answer was probably pretty accurate.

What about you? Are you a disciple of Jesus Christ, or are you just taking up space? Really there's no middle ground.

Salt that's lost it's flavor can't accomplish it's purpose. A believe that isn't a disciple can't accomplish their purpose either.

Are you troubled by these verses we looked at today? I'll be the first to admit, I am. I have no doubt that Jesus wanted to trouble people. He wanted to shake them up. To make them feel uncomfortable.

Discipleship isn't comfortable, but it's exciting. And in the end it's only true disciples who find the true satisfaction of life that God designed.