

Luke 14:25-33

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.”

I’ve heard about people doing a cost-benefit analysis. I didn’t know what that is. But it turns out it’s pretty simple. You just figure out if something is worth the cost. If I tell you I’ll told you I’m going to bring you some Chic-fil-a, you’d be excited. But if I tell you you’ll owe me \$100, you’ll be like “No.” Cuz you could get the same chicken for way less. It’s not worth it.

Have you ever thought about doing a cost-benefit analysis with Jesus? God doesn’t charge any money to get into heaven, but doing things Jesus’ way can be hard. Is it worth it? Well, Jesus thought of that. In Luke chapter 14, Jesus wants us to consider:

Is Following Jesus Worth the Cost? We’ll see that,

1. It will be hard.
2. You’ll need to trust him.
3. You’ll be happy you did.

Jesus told a story to teach that heaven is free and it’s for everyone! People love free stuff, so a huge crowd gathered. Well, Jesus wanted the crowd to know that just because heaven is free, doesn’t mean being a Christian is easy. You know that Christians have bad days too. Jesus wanted the crowd to know that too. So is following Jesus worth the cost?

1. First, you should know, *if you follow Jesus, it will be hard*. It might affect your family. Jesus said, **“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.”** Does Jesus really want us to hate our family? No. I don’t say “no” because

Jesus' words make me uncomfortable. I say "no" because Jesus said, "**As I have loved you, love one another**" (Jn. 13:34). He doesn't want us to think mean thoughts and do mean things to our families.

We don't just get to change the meaning of words in the Bible because we don't like them. But when Jesus gives us a reason to look for another meaning, we do. So can the word "*hate*" ever mean something else? Yes! There's a Bible story where a man named Jacob marries two wives named Rachel and Leah. He loves Rachel more than Leah. But one way the Bible phrases it is that he loves Rachel and *hates* Leah. People from Jesus' culture talked like that. Jacob didn't try to hurt Leah, but he loved Rachel more. Jesus doesn't want us to be mean to our families. He wants us to love him more.

That's hard. Someone might think, "I'll follow Jesus but what if it messes up my family?" Jesus would say, "You don't get to know if it will mess up your family, but what if it does? If you have to choose between your family and me, choose me. Or you can't be my disciple." Following Jesus is hard!

And then he said, "**Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.**" Those people could remember when they saw a real person carrying a real cross. Prison guards would beat up a prisoner, then make him pick up a heavy wooden beam. People would line up to make fun of him while he struggled to carry it. And at the end, the person was nailed to the cross and killed. Jesus says if you don't pick up your cross, you cannot be my disciple. Following Jesus is hard!

It would be dumb to follow Jesus without ever thinking of those things. But many people want to follow Jesus but without thinking about the hard parts. Jesus compares them to a builder. If you want to build Lego house so big you can actually live it, you'd spread out all the Legos on the floor. What is the first question someone is going to ask? Are you sure we have enough Legos for this? Before you start building, you want to know how much it will take to finish. Before you follow Jesus you what it costs because it's going hard.

But a lot of you already follow Jesus, and you know it can be hard. So why are we ever surprised when we find out that Jesus was right? When being a Christian makes our family conversations awkward, that's the cost of following Jesus. When someone makes fun of you for doing what Jesus wants, that's the cost of following Jesus. When you feel sad about your sins and you can't just do whatever you want, that's the cost of following Jesus. When we try to avoid those things, it's like we want to be with Jesus, but not if it will cost us. Jesus says that's impossible. "**Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.**"

The Apostle Paul knew the cost of following Jesus. He wrote in a letter, "**I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my**

Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ."

What might you lose? What will it cost you to follow Jesus? Each of us has our own cross to carry, and your struggle will be different from mine. And here's the most challenging part: you don't get to pick your struggle. Jesus does.

2. That means, *if you follow Jesus, you'll need to trust him*. By "trust" I mean, thinking that Jesus will take care of you when you don't know the details of how he's going to do it. Imagine you are blindfolded for a surprise party, and someone takes you by the hand and says, "I'll lead you!" You can't see what's around you. You don't know if you're about to bump your toe on the couch. You don't even know where the walls are. You don't know the details, but you follow the person because you trust them. That's what it takes to follow Jesus. You don't know the details. You don't know how it will affect your family. You don't know which parts of your life will be harder. You follow because you think he can take care of you, even if you don't know how. You trust him.

The church word for that is "faith." Earlier today you heard the true story about a man with amazing faith, Abram. **"The LORD said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.'**" Let's imagine you are Abram. The cost of following the LORD is that you have to leave your home and go to a different country. But you still have a lot of questions! Where are we going? How long will we be gone? How far away is it? Is it hot there or cold? What's my job going to be? Abram didn't get to know those details. He's like a guy blindfolded at a party. So does he trust the LORD? Verse four says, **"Abram left, as the Lord had told him."** If you're going to keep following Jesus, you'll need to trust him.

So how did Abram do that? Well, the LORD promised him that it would be worth it. He said, **"I will make you a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."** God promised it would be worth it for Abram.

3. It will be worth it for you too. I don't know what it will cost you to keep following Jesus, and neither do you. But *if you follow Jesus, you'll be happy you did*.

Here's how I know. Jesus didn't say, "Pick up your cross and head that way. I'll meet you in heaven." No. He said, **"Follow me."** If you're following Jesus, then you're right behind him and he's right with you. When being a Christian is hard, Jesus is with you. You might not know how he'll take care of you, but you know he's not far away.

You see this in, *The Lion the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. The main characters have lots of struggles but the Lion, Aslan is always there to help. He becomes their leader and their

dear friend. At the end of the story, the kids are in a huge battle and Aslan is nowhere to be found. He sacrificed himself and he's dead. So the kids are really scared. But then in the middle of the battle, Aslan rises from the dead and he walks into fight. And as soon as they see him, everything changes. Why? Because he's with them. Friends, Jesus is back from the dead and he is with you in every trouble. Now he says, "**Follow me.**" You'll be happy you did.

But that's not even the best part. Jesus said, "**Carry your cross and follow me,**" because he already carried a real cross. He was beaten and mocked and crucified even though he did nothing wrong. Jesus' cross was way harder than anything we will have to endure because when Jesus was on the cross, God was not with him. Jesus experienced hell without God, so that you and I never have to face hell, so we never have to be without God. Instead, because Jesus died and rose again, and we have a home in heaven.

Here's an illustration from another pastor because I want you to remember this when following Jesus gets hard.ⁱ Imagine this rope goes on forever. It doesn't. It ends in the other room there, but imagine it goes around the world a few times. And imagine this is a timeline of your existence. And this little black part here would represent your time on earth. And what blows me away is that sometimes all I think about is this black part. Some of you do too. You're like, "I'm going to work hard and save so I can really enjoy this part here." Or "These are the best years of my life so I've got to really live it up here, cuz this is the most important part." Are you serious? What about this? Cuz here's what Jesus teaches. This part after your earthly life is done, this part in heaven is like the greatest party you've ever been to with better food and music and better friendships, and no sadness, no crosses, no problems. And Jesus teaches that what you do with this part, who you trust, what you make your top priority during this little black part—it determines how you're going to exist for millions and millions and billions of years after that. Some people think you're crazy if you follow Jesus for this part because it will be hard. And I'm like, No! You're crazy if you don't! Because look at all this happiness for people who follow Jesus, who trust him. I want you to remember this when you count the cost of following Jesus.

So let's do a cost-benefit analysis. Is following Jesus worth the cost? It will be hard. You'll need to trust him. But both here on earth, and forever in heaven, you'll be happy you did.

Amen.

ⁱ Francis Chan, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86dsfBbZfWs>