

Not everyone who accompanied Jesus was truly His disciple. A disciple is one who lives life according to Jesus' teachings and who tries to follow in Jesus' steps (John 8:31; I Peter 2:21). Sometimes, Jesus would thin out the crowds that followed Him by preaching lessons that were very demanding. One such situation is found in Luke chapter 14, verses 25-33. We shall begin by reading verses 25-27.

Now great multitudes were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, "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. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be my disciple."

It seems quite strange to hear Jesus say that we should "Hate" someone. Especially since He so often taught about the importance of Love. Jesus taught that "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). Is He now teaching that we should hate our neighbors and hate ourselves? He taught that you should even "love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you ..." (Matthew 5:44). How can He now say to "Hate" father and mother and wife and children?

It is generally believed that Jesus is here making a comparison between the extent of our love toward Him and that of our love toward anyone else. In other words, if we were to compare our loyalty to Jesus with that of our loyalty to someone else, it would seem as though we actually hated the someone else. If it came to a choice between obeying father and mother and obeying Christ, we would have to choose Christ. If we had to choose between pleasing wife and children or pleasing Christ, we must choose Christ. In saying this, Jesus is defining what discipleship is all about; he is making it clear that He must be NUMBER ONE in our lives if we are to be His disciples. This is the cost of discipleship.

In verses 28-30, Jesus points out that the Cost must be calculated before a construction project is begun. He stresses the embarrassment one would feel if the project had to be scrapped because of lack of funds. Jesus does not want us to be embarrassed because we underestimated the cost of discipleship. He does not want us to begin then quit because we did not understand that it would be so demanding.

In verses 31 and 32 Jesus gives another example, this time of a king whose army is not possibly able to be victorious over another king's larger force. It would not be advisable to engage in battle under such circumstances, but to arrange terms of peace. Likewise, we must count the cost of discipleship before engaging therein.

Jesus summed up these thoughts in verse 33 by saying, "So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions." These are amazing demands! There can be no THING which is more important to us than Jesus. There can be no PERSON who can come before Jesus in our lives. As we hear these incredible demands and come to understand the cost of discipleship, we find ourselves wondering, "Just who is this Jesus that He can make these demands on my life?" That is a good question, and one we shall answer in Bible Talk # 103.

