

## Dsc04 – Christian and Not a Disciple? – Luke 14:25-28

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I want to continue to thank Greg Ogden and his numerous books on discipleship. Greg Ogden has been writing on discipleship and implementing discipleship ministries for thirty years and his writing and instruction have influenced these messages.

Francis Chan, in his book on discipleship (Multiply) lays out this scenario (that I'll paraphrase a bit). Imagine if Jesus walked up to the first disciples and said to them, "hey guys, I'm starting a thing and I'm looking for some people who will 'believe in me'. But don't worry, I'm not going to ask you to *do anything* or *change anything* in your life. I'm just looking for people who will identify with me in some way. Would you guys be interested in doing that?"

Do you think God would become a man, with all that it cost him, then come here to save and to change the world and then ask people to simply "believe in him" without ever actually *doing anything* or *changing anything in response* to their belief in him? Wouldn't that sound like an absurd thing for God to do?

Guys, we are living in a church culture that has a *potentially absurd* aspect to it. Many in our churches have found a way to imply that you can be a Christian *without* being a *Christ follower*; that you can be a Christian *without* being a *disciple*. There's just one huge problem with that idea – you *cannot* find that *anywhere in the Bible*.

Let's pray and we'll talk about it. *Lord Jesus, we've already given you our heart, now we pray you would draw us all in. We pray that we would see that you lovingly, sacrificially, with mountains of mercy, call us to be all in or not at all. We pray that we would see, that we would hear the call to be all in and that we would willingly, with great anticipation join you as full-time followers. Speak to us in your Word to that end today, we pray, for your glory and in your name, Jesus, amen.*

Let's turn over to Luke Chapter 14. As Luke 14 opens, Jesus is at the peak of his popularity. His healings and his miraculous free lunches along with his radical teaching on the Kingdom of God have all created a very large following for him. And so, Jesus did what he always did whenever the crowd got large.

But before we read about what *Jesus did*, let's think about what we do in our church culture whenever the crowd starts getting large. In our churches today we do everything we can to *accommodate* the large crowd – don't we? After all, they're showing up and we want them to *keep showing up*, right?

Okay, let's see if that's how Jesus handles the large crowd.

**Luke 14:25(A) (NLT)**

***25 A large crowd was following Jesus . . .***

Let's stop right there. The Greek word used here for "following Jesus" means "*to travel along with others*".

*Think about it.* We've always tried to make it clear that "traveling" into a church building with others is *not* actually "following Jesus".

So, Jesus has a large crowd just "*with him*". And again, Luke 14:25.

**Luke 14:25 (NLT)**

***25 A large crowd was [traveling along with] Jesus (following him). He turned around and said to them,***

Okay, this is where we need to think about *our church culture*. What would we say to this large crowd that was "*travelling with others, into a church building?*"

Well, *here* is what *Jesus* said.

**Luke 14:26 (NLT)**

***26 "If you want to be my disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple.***

Ha, ha, ha – oh Jesus... we all know what you really mean is If you want to be my disciple just raise your hand and repeat this prayer after me. Certainly, that is what you really mean, right Jesus? NO! That is *not* what he means!!

Don't get me wrong. Putting your faith in Jesus Christ changes your life for *eternity* and you *need* to do that. *BUT* when a large crowd started "*travelling along*" with Jesus (following him) he turned to them and he did not *offer* them *anything* in order to get them to *keep following him*.

He did NOT *promise* them *anything*.

He did NOT *guarantee* them *anything*.

*Instead*, he told them very dramatically, *if you want to be my disciple – it is going to cost you*.

Are there incredible promises and guarantees that come with truly following Jesus as Lord? *Absolutely!*

But, does our “me-centered” church culture focus *almost exclusively* on the promises and *generally* avoid the cost of truly following Jesus? *I’m afraid it often does!*

Our culture does that because we want to *keep* the crowd *coming*. But contrary (in so many ways) to what we do today, Jesus begins *with the cost* of following him.

Now the key to understanding *the cost* that Jesus is talking about here in verse 26 are the words “**by comparison**” which the NLT adds to correctly convey the context.

Again, Luke 14:26.

**Luke 14:26 (NLT)**

***26 “If you want to be my disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple.”***

What the two words “*by comparison*” help us to understand is that Jesus is referring to a *dramatic resetting* of our *priorities*. Jesus lists here – the things we normally *love the most*.

First – our *father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters . . .* then – the thing we love by far the most – **our own life!!** And Jesus is saying (very dramatically) if you want to be his disciple your love for him must be at a *radically higher priority* than your love for *anything else* in this life, including and especially – your *self* and your *own life*.

Then in verse 27, Jesus really nails down what is required of a disciple regarding “our own lives”.

**Luke 14:27 (NLT)**

***27 And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple.***

Still speaking to the large crowd, Jesus lays out two more costs.

**FIRST** – *if you do not carry your own cross . . . you cannot be a disciple*. Believe it or not, this does *not* mean that you wear a cross necklace or have a cross tattoo on your bicep. In the first century every person in this crowd understood what this meant.

To carry your own cross meant you were living on death row. You were walking on the Green Mile – *you were as good as dead*. It means your life is not your own. You are *dead to your SELF*.

Paul explains it perfectly in Galatians 2:20.

**Galatians 2:20 (NLT)**

***20 My old self has been crucified with Christ.* (that's carry your cross) (and as a result . . .) *It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me . . .***

So, first Jesus calls for a *reprioritizing* of what we love. Next, Jesus calls for death to self and the “self-life”. Finally, the last cost Jesus lays out is found in the same English word as we’ve already seen in verse 25. But it is a drastically different Greek word (in the original).

The English word is “follow”. The first time it was used in verse 25 – *a large crowd was following Jesus* (MEANING: to traveling along with).

But here (in verse 27) when Jesus says *You must carry your cross and follow me, to be my disciple* this is a DIFFERENT Greek word with a different meaning.

This Greek word (for follow) means “*To accept and follow the leadership and command of another, usually with physical action involved*”

Now, we’re starting to understand the “following” Jesus is calling us to is *not just travelling along* with him – while doing our own thing. ***Following Jesus is accepting and following his commands, usually involving physical action.*** In order to truly to that, you must first *die to yourself* (*take up your own cross*).

Now, looking back at verse 25 where the large crowd was “*Traveling along where Jesus was*” . . . (first English word ‘following’) I think they thought they were *actually following Jesus*.

But instead Jesus turns and tells them  
**You MUST FIRST Count the Cost**  
**BEFORE You receive the Promises** - and  
**BEFORE You can be a Disciple**

Which is exactly what the beginning of verse 28 says.

**Luke 14:28 (NLT)**

***28 “But don’t begin until you count the cost . . .***

Isn't it interesting that Jesus would say **DON'T Start Following Me** – **Until you have counted the cost?**

We're so anxious to get people "in the door" – to get their "seats" in our "seats". But Jesus would say, ***first – count the cost – decide if you're ready.***

That's another thing that has *not gone well* for me through the years – when I've told people lovingly, "It seems to me that you're not really ready to truly follow Jesus as your Lord." You would think that would help someone "re-consider" their commitment and their actions. But I can tell you from experience, most of the time it just makes them mad!

But, this *IS* what we want to give you the opportunity to do. We want to give you *the opportunity* to "count the cost" and make a decision. Do I want to be a genuine follower of Jesus – or not? Because *that* is what Jesus *actually did*.

And so, we're going to be encouraging you to make a commitment – actually a "covenant commitment" to two or three people you *already know* in the church or to *new friends* in the church... to go through a small eight-chapter book called **Essential Guide to Becoming a Disciple** (by Greg Ogden). The purpose of this eight-chapter study is to help you decide – do I see Jesus as my *free ticket to heaven*? Or – do I have a genuine desire to *follow Jesus as Lord*?

And it's not that we're challenging you or implying that you're not saved or anything like that. It's just that after almost forty years of *following Jesus* myself, I've learned that the Bible clearly calls us to more than a *quick fix for our "heaven problem"*.

Guys, becoming a disciple only *begins* with the *prayer*. That prayer where you put your full faith in Jesus Christ and commit to follow him as *Lord* for the rest of your life – your new, transformed, eternal life begins with that prayer. But it certainly *does not end there*.

And please hear me say again the Bible is clear, salvation comes by *faith alone*. But the Bible also never separates *believing IN Jesus from FOLLOWING Jesus*. In the Bible to put your faith *IN Jesus IS* to commit to FOLLOW him. **Believing in Jesus and truly following him are two sides of the same coin.**

We have to remember how James addressed the difference between believing Who Jesus IS and committing to TRULY follow him.

**James 2:19 (NLT)**

***19 You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror.***

You know, the word “Christian” is only used three times in the New Testament. And two of those three times it’s used in a *negative sense*. But “*following Jesus*” is referenced in the New Testament close to *two hundred times* (the best I could count).

I wonder if our church culture has exchanged following Jesus for saying that you’re a Christian and the question is – *can you be a Christian without following* the commands of Jesus?

In the past few years, I’ve been trying to say “Christ follower” more than Christian. It’s my subtle protest to this dangerous shift we see in our church culture. It’s kind of like saying “Merry Christmas” back to someone when they say “Happy Holidays”.

Here’s the deal. Each of us must answer the same question Jesus asked the first disciples in Matthew Chapter 16.

They had been with him well over two years.

**They** had seen **too many miracles** to count  
**They** had seen the **forces of nature** obey Jesus  
**They** had seen the **demonic realm** obey Jesus  
**They** had seen the **sick healed** and the **dead raised**  
and **They** had seen **sins forgiven**

And still Jesus marched them all the way to Caesarea Philippi to allow them to answer the million-dollar question...

**Matthew 16:15 (NLT)**

***15 . . . “But who do you say I am?”***

Because the answer to that question should determine whether you will be a follower of Jesus Christ – or not.

And so, we want to make sure you have a way to make that decision and to determine *who do you* (personally) *say Jesus Christ is?* So, we’ve been compiling great resources (for years) for you to know who Jesus Christ IS and for you to know what it means to truly follow him. We have the resources and *really good ones*.

But one thing we've found out about resources is this: they don't impact your life by you just buying them. The secret sauce, the secret ingredient that we introduced last week is *intentional relationships*. We can buy a box of great *discipleship resources*. But, we cannot buy a box of *intentional relationships*.

Our mission is to *inspire you* to create or join an intentional group of two or three other people for the purpose of *following Jesus Christ* and learning to become a *disciple*. We believe these micro-groups of three or four people are the best greenhouse for real-life transformation.

### **#1) They are INTENTIONAL**

Meaning, you go into them with the purpose of growing and helping other members to grow.

### **#2) They are RELATIONAL**

Meaning, as you get to know one another there is a trust built and that trust (as it is built) allows you the freedom to deal with the things holding you back from following Jesus.

### **#3) They are built for TRANSFORMATION**

The clear purpose of the micro-group is to encourage, equip and challenge one another *in love* to *grow toward transformation* in Christ.

They are *focused* on the *Word of God*. They are *fiercely confidential* and God will use them as an environment for *your transformation* if you will commit to them.!

Last week we had eight people commit to joining one of these discipleship groups. We hope you will commit to one today.

But first we hope that you will commit to *being a disciple*, a genuine follower of Jesus Christ and so during communion today I'm going to ask you to make that commitment and once you make a commitment to be a Christ follower then we'll get you headed in the right direction for the Lord to begin *transforming your life*.

Let's pray. *Lord, Jesus, Lord you've blessed us so much without worry about money, or attendance or worldly success or anything. You've just given us this little family where we can just say we want to follow Jesus. We want to follow you, Jesus. We want our lives to be transformed. We want you to be Lord. We want self to die. We want to be filled with your life, empowered by your Spirit, driven by your commission. We want to be used by you for your glory and for your Kingdom. We want our lives to matter for eternity. And*

*so, we come to you right now, Lord. And I pray that we would make a commitment to go all in to follow you at a cost knowing that there will be cost involved and that there will be death involved. Death to self.*

Would you just make that commitment right now? Or at least wrestle with it? If you can't make it right now would you commit to joining with a group of people to study it, to look at it, to consider it, to wrestle with it? But we have to decide. Are we full time followers of Christ, or not, because it's the only follower he asks for.

*Jesus, we want to be all in. Sold out. We want our life to dissipate and your life to replace our life. We want to be a City on a Hill, a Light in a Darkness. We want to be a witness for your glory. Draw us in. Give us the faith, Lord. Give us the faith to count the cost and to watch you radically and permanently, even eternally, transform our lives, Lord.*

If you surrender to that, just tell him right now. *I surrender to that Jesus. I surrender. For your glory Lord and in your name, amen.*