

Bible Study Guide: Week of 8-29-2022

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

Luke 14:25-33

²⁵Now large crowds were traveling with [Jesus]; and he turned and said to them, ²⁶“Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, ³⁰saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’ ³¹Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³²If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. ³³So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

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At key points in Jesus’ ministry he enjoys popularity with large crowds. Often the crowds speak well of him and marvel at his power, but he often uses these captive audiences to deliver difficult or controversial messages. Here, for instance, as he enjoys a large following of crowds, he speaks to them and tells them that in order to follow him, one must detest parents, spouse, children, siblings and even one’s own self. The Greek term for “life” here is *psuche*, cognate of our English word “psyche.” It can mean “life” as it is translated here, but it tends to mean soul, self, essence, or breath. It means the center of one’s affections and will. Jesus’ call to hate one’s life, then, is not a call toward suicidal ideation, but rather a call to choose God’s will over one’s own human will.

Also the Greek word for “hate” here is “*miseo*.” This can mean simply to hate or detest something, but often (as here) it is used as a comparative term; to hate one thing more than another thing or to favor one thing over another. Here, for instance, Jesus is saying, “Whoever comes to me and does not choose or prefer me over one’s family or over one’s own will and life cannot be my disciple.” Rather than actively urging people to despise their family and their own soul or life (which would violate the commandment to honor one’s parents, etc.) Jesus is instead urging people to make Jesus and his kingdom their highest priority. This might involve rejecting one’s own will, one’s own family, or one’s possessions at times.

As if to make the point more emphatic, Jesus refers to “carrying the cross” to show how seriously one must consider what is required to follow Jesus. His road will not be an easy one.

²⁸For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, ³⁰saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’ ³¹Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³²If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace.

Jesus tells two brief parables to illustrate this teaching. He compares one who professes to follow Jesus but who abandons following Jesus in order to seek their own interests to a person who began a building project he couldn't finish or to a king who starts a war he can't win. Such errors in calculation are fatal—fatal to a builder's reputation, fatal to a king's army and lands, fatal to one's life of discipleship.

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Here Jesus sums up this discussion by referring back to one's willingness to walk away from those "good things" in life that might ultimately distract from one's discipleship. Here, he tells his would-be followers that they must be willing to abandon or renounce all that one possesses for the sake of Jesus' message and kingdom. This may include physical possessions, but we saw above that it also includes one's own will and one's own family.

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

- 1. Why do you think Jesus chose to teach large crowds with such difficult and challenging teachings as this one?**
- 2. Have you ever known somebody who started a building project or a "battle" that they couldn't then finish or win? How about somebody who set out to follow Jesus but wasn't able to continue to do so?**
- 3. What do you think Jesus might be calling you to do through this passage?**