

The following are actual responses from comment cards given to the staff members at Bridger Wilderness Area.

1. Too many bugs and leeches and spiders and spider webs. Please spray the wilderness to rid the areas of these pests.
2. The coyotes made too much noise last night and kept me awake. Please eradicate these annoying animals.
3. A small deer came into my camp and stole my jar of pickles. Is there a way I can get reimbursed? Please call
4. Too many rocks in the mountains.

These comments and complaints indicate that the people do not really understand what it means to stay in a "wilderness area." They were looking for something convenient and comfortable, but not truly a wilderness experience. In a similar way, many people do not understand what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. In our Scripture today Jesus makes very clear what it means to be a disciple.

In Luke 14:25, these were people who were "traveling with Jesus." When we think about traveling with someone, someone would be close to us, and we are willing to spend time, together. Likewise, people who traveled with Jesus were interested in what Jesus had to say, and wanted to be a disciple like us who come here today to be a committed disciple.

Jesus said to them, "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."

We hear the word, “HATE.” Does discipleship really require one to “hate” parents, spouse, children, sibling, even one’s own life?

The word “hate” is not meant to be taken literally. In Jewish culture "hate" was used to express lesser love, so Jesus is saying that we must love Him much more than our family or our own lives. We must love Him more than our hobbies, more than our goals in life, more than our careers, and more than our self-interest.

It means that there is an ongoing negotiation between being a Christian and living in our daily life. We often encounter situations where we have to take seriously the balance of our life choices to be a Christian.

We can love more than one person, one congregation, one circle of friends at a time. There is enough for parent, spouse, children, siblings, even ourselves, and it all balances out well enough, but sometimes it does not balance. A father becomes ill and dependent on his son, and so duty may require some sacrifice of attention, and what ordinarily would go to spouse or child. A mother with three children finds her time and energy consumed by the needs of a severely autistic child. The rural physician finds that needy patients consume time she needs to devote to her marriage.

Those conflicts of obligation and loyalties with our love can be heartrending.

It is not only family members who compete for our affection and attention. Along with our family relationship, one loves the church and the Lord. It would be great if we hold those obligations and stresses in balance, but sometimes our interests come into conflict.

All relationships require some costs for us to maintain that relationship. We all may have had those moments.

Today's scripture is grounded on Jesus' understanding of the daily conflicts we encounter as disciples. Discipleship includes potential conflicts of obligations and loyalties to our ordinary life. Everyday we have to make a crucial choice.

So, Jesus explains the cost of discipleship in verses 28-32. We often face situations that require serious calculation of the costs of taking on those responsibilities, whether to the treasury or to the heart. In fact, the term, "Cost" appears only in the New Testament, and it is in this passage.

What does the term "Cost" mean? Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, *The cost of discipleship*. He defines that Cost is what we give up to acquire, accomplish, maintain, or produce something. It involves a measure of sacrifice and perhaps loss or penalty in gaining something. Cost requires effort and resources.

Thus, this scripture guides us, a disciple of Jesus Christ, to understand the cost of discipleship.

Jesus uses a metaphor in verse 27 to reemphasize this point.

"Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."

Everyone who was traveling with Jesus was familiar with what Jesus was referring to when he talked about "carrying his cross."

The cross was a cruel form of punishment used by the Romans. The criminal was forced to "carry his cross" to the place of execution. Everyone knew that Jesus was saying "goodbye" to everything through carrying his cross. There would be no turning or coming back.

Jesus uses this vivid illustration with the intent of showing us that following him requires that same kind of saying "goodbye" to our own will and desires because of our commitment to Jesus. /

It is not only to say "goodbye" to everything, but also to claim "God saves us and show His love toward us." It means we will have to make sacrifices to be a disciple because of our salvation with love of God. .

Some of you may think that this requirement of total commitment to be a follower of Jesus is contradictory to scriptural truth that God bless our lives. An illustration may help to clarify this issue

Suppose I had a desire to climb Mount Everest. But it costs about \$70,000 to do it and I don't have that kind of money. Suppose a wealthy businessman heard of my desire and offered to pay for the entire expedition. He would buy all the expensive clothing and gear; he would pay for my transportation, the guides, and the training. It is totally free for me. But if I accept his free offer, I have just committed myself to months of difficult training and arduous effort. It could even cost me my very life, because many good climbers die trying to climb Mount Everest. It is free and yet very costly.

The Apostle Paul said in Romans 6:22-23, "But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Eternal life is the free gift God gives us through Jesus Christ, but God wants us to be fully committed to Him.

In verse 33, Jesus once again makes clear the cost of following him. “³³ So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.”

Now we may not literally "give up everything, all our possessions" but Jesus is referring to an attitude of the heart in which these things don't have priority over following Jesus.

The Greek word translated as "give up" can also be translated as "say goodbye or renounce."

In other words, Jesus says that we must be willing to renounce or forsake anything when it interferes with following Jesus faithfully and completely.

Discipleship is to make the choice to commit God's ministry. For our congregation, as disciples, we learn to face life's challenges and joys with a spirit of love, hope, faith, and peace within God.

Yes- there is the cost of discipleship, which we are willing to take. The cost of discipleship is not just becoming accumulators of new information about life and living it fully, or changing our behavior in regard to Jesus' teachings.

The cost of discipleship means entering into an intimate relationship with God in Christ, more than any other relationship. This intimate relationship invites us to mature in our faith.

Are you willing to be a disciple? Are you ready to follow whatever God asks you? Jesus calls us to be a committed disciple in God's ministry!