

## SESSION 6

# HATE YOUR FAMILY



*What are some things people start but don't finish?*

**QUESTION #1**

*Loving Jesus should be so intense it makes everything else look like hate.*

## THE PASSAGE

Luke 14:25-35

## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

France may have had its Eiffel Tower, but Britain had Sir Edward Watkin, an ambitious railroad businessman who decided London should have its own tower. His tower would be fully 200 feet taller and make people forget the ugly French Tower. Sure, the Eiffel Tower had restaurants, but Watkin's tower would have restaurants, theaters, Turkish baths, two observation decks, and a ninety-room hotel. At the very top would sit an astronomical observatory.

Watkin's tower had only one drawback: It was never finished. Despite Sir Edward's grandiose plans, his tower only reached 154 feet before he ran out of funds, and building stopped in 1894. Then they discovered where he was building was totally unsuitable for a tower. It sat there in its sad unfinished state until it was torn down in 1907.<sup>1</sup>

We've all had big plans that never came to pass. Unfortunately, many of us come to Christ with great plans for how we will follow Him, but our commitment does not always match our plans. Jesus longs for us to follow Him, but He also wants us to know exactly what it means to be His disciple. He calls us to count the cost.

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## Luke 14:25-27

**25** Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them,  
**26** “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.  
**27** Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

**KEY WORD:** **Hate** (v. 26)—Although this word sometimes means total rejection of someone or something, it can, as it does in this instance, refer to something that is less loved or less liked.

At this point in Jesus’ ministry, He was certainly popular. In this passage, Jesus challenged those in the crowd to move from being superficial followers to become fully committed disciples. Jesus didn’t issue this invitation to a select, elite group. He said it to a large mass of people—ordinary people. Consider the twelve apostles who walked closely with Jesus. Nothing was special about them; they were fishermen, tax collectors, and rebels. They were ordinary people like you and me. These men had their doubts and insecurities, yet they still chose to follow Jesus. It should be encouraging to us that Jesus calls ordinary people.

*Disciple* includes the idea of following someone, but it goes far deeper than how we typically use the word *follower*. A disciple wants to learn, and to practice what he learns; a disciple wants to fully imitate the one he follows. Those who truly follow Jesus want to be trained by Him so that they can be just like Him.

At this point, Jesus was nearing the end of His ministry (Luke 9:51). He knew everything that was about to happen, and He challenged the disciples and followers to search deeper and be even more committed to following Him.

**What's the difference between being a part of the crowd and a devoted disciple?**

## QUESTION #2

That challenge came with a powerful, hard-to-swallow statement. You can't be Jesus' disciple if you do not hate:

- ▶ Parents,
- ▶ Wife and children,
- ▶ Brothers and sisters,
- ▶ Your own life.

That's rough. *Really? Jesus wants me to hate?* "Hate" sounds so harsh, so extreme. How do we justify this in light of the Fifth Commandment to honor our fathers and mothers (Ex. 20:12)? Also, as we read in an earlier session, Jesus has commanded us, "love your enemies" (Luke 6:27). Was Jesus now contradicting Himself?

We tend to use "love" and "hate" in an emotional sense, but Scripture uses the words in another way. *Love* can mean to choose something or prefer something; consequently, *hate* can mean to reject something or to prefer something else. In that sense, Jesus calls us to choose Him, to prefer Him above all. It's a statement of comparison. Our love for Jesus is to be so great that, by comparison, our love for others doesn't come close to the love we have for Him.

Jesus wants it all, our pure devotion and commitment—*one hundred percent!* Following Jesus is not easy, and He asks us to do some really hard things. What does one hundred percent commitment look like? That answer will differ for everyone, but it calls for a healthy self-evaluation. Do aspects of family life get in the way of your obedience to the Lord? Do you find more time to spend with friends than you find to spend with Jesus? Is there a particular area of your heart you still haven't fully committed to God? What is the last thing God asked you to do? Have you done it?

In our American culture, it's hard to be fully committed. We tend to talk a good talk, but we are easily distracted. We struggle with the thought of denying ourselves. Modern culture has even coined a term for this: FOMO: Fear of Missing Out.<sup>2</sup> So much is going on around us that we can't commit to a single thing; we are worried we might miss out on something better.

Jesus called for a commitment like no other: to love Him so much that every other love in our lives looks like hate by comparison. It's a call for every person to "bear his own cross." His disciples and followers knew exactly what that meant: to pick up a cross is to die. Jesus is quite clear about what we must do to be His disciples: we must choose Him over and above everything else in life!

**What are the daily implications of following Jesus as a devoted disciple?**

**QUESTION #3**

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**Luke 14:28-33**

**28** For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?

**29** Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him,

**30** saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

**31** Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?

**32** And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.

**33** So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

What Jesus had called the crowd to do was no easy task: (1) to love Him so much that all other loves look like hate, and (2) to be willing to die for Him. Jesus knew this would be difficult for many of them, so He cautioned them to think through what all that meant. In other words, He called them to count the cost of following Him.

To place Jesus before everybody else in our lives may not set well with others. Family members and friends may not share our radical commitment to Christ, so we must consider what that could cost us. We might experience rejection by those closest to us, as Jesus knew firsthand. Although at this point, He remained popular with the masses, the religious leaders had rejected His messiahship. He also knew that the rejection would increase and that the cross lay before Him. He understood rejection well, and he knew His disciples would also experience it. So Jesus calls us to count the cost.

Today throughout our world, persecuted Christians flee their homes because they have chosen Christ and are no longer welcomed by their families as a result. Some have merely been ostracized and ignored by families; others have been killed. It is estimated that one in twelve Christians worldwide experience persecution, including imprisonment, abduction, sexual assault, and death.<sup>3</sup> All because they chose to follow Jesus.

One such woman found her way to our church. When her family found out she was reading the Bible and praying to God, they beat her and kicked her out of the house. To her family, this was the biggest shame she could bring to their home and reputation. She had nowhere to go, but the Lord provided a home, food, and a good-paying job. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:10). In spite of all her troubles, pain, and rejection, this woman knows she is blessed in following Jesus.

We also can know blessing in following Jesus, but He does warn us to count the cost. A wise person always considers the total cost of constructing a home or other building before ever starting to lay the foundation. A wise commander always assesses his resources and

weighs his strategy against the strength of his enemy. He considers all his options before committing the lives of his men in battle.

Choosing to follow Jesus is not a lighthearted decision, and it should never be treated as such. If you are ready, then you must be willing to give up everything and everyone you know. You must be willing to lay down your own agenda and your own desires—and pick up a cross.

**Why does Jesus continually stress the importance of counting the costs?**

**QUESTION #4**

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### **Luke 14:34-35**

**34** “Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?”

**35** It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

The Christian life is no place for half-hearted commitment. Half-hearted commitment would be like salt that isn't salty! Based on the salt we use today, we might think that is impossible. But Jesus likely was referring to a salt they were familiar with: salt from the Dead Sea. This salt was impure, mixed with carnallite or gypsum. They could work the impurities out, but in the process, the remaining salt would become bland, even poor tasting.

Typically, when we think of salt, we think of enhanced flavor. We use salt to make our food taste better. In the days before refrigeration, however, salt was used as a preservative, to keep foods from spoiling. Jesus described His followers as “the salt of

the earth” (Matt. 5:13); as such, we are a preserving influence for the kingdom of God.

People have used salt symbolically to represent a covenant between friends. To share a meal with someone was to eat as friends, and salt was a staple at meals. Even today, the Arabic expression, “There is salt between us” describes hospitality that seals friendship. Because salt was necessary for the daily sacrifices, it also came to reflect the covenant between God and His people (Lev. 2:13; Num. 18:19; 2 Chron. 13:5).<sup>4</sup>

When we enter into a relationship with Christ—a covenant based on what Christ has done to bring us to God—we become His salt. We are to be fully committed, reflecting that relationship with Him, and serve as His purifying, preserving influence. This calls for total devotion to Christ. What does that look like? What can we do to ensure we remain that strong influence in the world around us?

- ▶ **Stay in fellowship with Jesus.** Keep your eyes on Him and your mind set in His Word. This allows God to heal hurts and mend brokenness. It is when we take our eyes off the Master that we lose our distinctive flavor.
- ▶ **Be at peace with one another.** If we are supposed to be the salt of the earth, to live a righteous life that glorifies God’s kingdom, how can we be at odds with one another? “Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another” (Mark 9:50). We are to be salt, which calls for us to be gracious, loving, and hospitable (1 Pet. 4:8-9). Remember, following Jesus means taking up our cross; when we die to selfishness we can be at peace with each other.
- ▶ **Be in community with other believers.** Community reminds us we are not alone as believers. Following Jesus is hard, and most all of us likely have had times, as I’ve had, where we do not want to keep following and do not want to take on another person’s pain or problem. At times I have wanted to crawl back into bed and sleep until everything and everyone was fixed. But then I gathered with my fellow

believers and prayed, and God gave me the strength, courage, wisdom, and energy to do what needed to be done.

Keep going—no matter how hard it gets. Remember the covenant of salt—that covenant of permanent loyalty. It’s not just a commitment of your loyalty to God; it’s also God’s commitment to you. He is with you. He loves, He restores, and He strengthens. You can keep going.

**How can Christ-followers guard against losing their influence for Christ?**

**QUESTION #5**

**CHOICES, COSTS, CONSEQUENCES**

*Read the following situations. Select one to respond to. Determine possible choices for the senior adult(s) you selected, potential costs of each choice, and the possible consequences of each choice.*

Tom and Joyce are feeling called to spend a year in a third-world country as missions volunteers. Their children are concerned for their safety and don’t want them to go.

Their choices:	Cost of choices	Consequences of choices
A. _____	A. _____	A. _____
B. _____	B. _____	B. _____

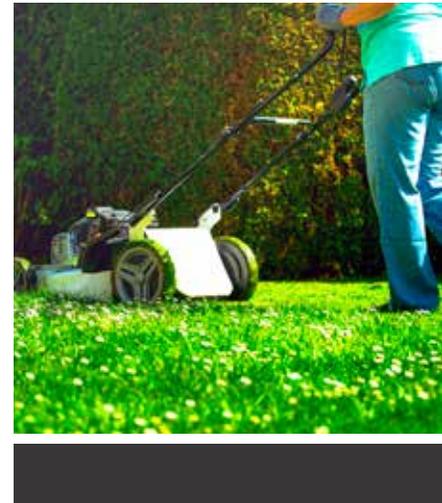
Betty’s grandchild is leading a lifestyle that is contrary to God’s Word. She senses God is calling her to speak to that child about it.

Her choices:	Cost of choices	Consequences of choices
A. _____	A. _____	A. _____
B. _____	B. _____	B. _____

# LIVE IT OUT

Being a disciple of Christ is hard. Jesus calls us to do hard things by putting ourselves aside and following Him. What will you do to reflect your commitment to Him?

- ▶ **Evaluate yourself.** Do a self-evaluation. In what areas of your life is compromise evident? If you determine you have not given everything to Christ, pray and make that commitment now.
- ▶ **Influence others.** Determine to let your conversations this week reflect your relationship with Christ. “Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” (Col. 4:6).
- ▶ **Count the cost.** Get involved in being salt in the community. Invest your time and energy in helping others in your community see the love and grace of Christ in you.



## END NOTES

1. Aarian Marshall, “When the British Tried to Build Their Own Eiffel Tower,” *CityLab*, February 25, 2015, <https://www.citylab.com/design/2015/02/when-the-british-tried-to-build-their-own-eiffel-tower/386132/>
2. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/fomo>
3. [opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution](https://opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution)
4. E.B. Pollard, “Covenant of Salt,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, gen. ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 794).