Vitality and Viability Study Committee Bible Study #3
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Jesus told several parables in Luke 14 to teach a number of important lessons. The first parable (14:7-14) is a lesson on humility. The second parable (14:15-24) is an example of the compelling invitation to come to Christ for salvation. The third parable (14:25-35) speaks about the Cost of choosing to become a Disciple of Jesus.

Many want to follow Jesus, but also want to follow personal preferences as well. Jesus used the examples of a farmer who started out with the task of building a tower (a watch-tower in a vineyard), and also of a king going to fight a war without considering the cost – these were given to awaken Jesus' disciples, helping them to see the need for considering the cost of following Him.

Some who followed Jesus wanted to hear His teachings and see His miracles – but Jesus sensed that many followers were insincere and shallow, and so He spoke to the people about the demanding nature of discipleship. Those who decide to follow Jesus need to count the cost of what it will mean to be a dedicated follower of Jesus.

William Willoughby describes the first official forming of the Brethren in Schwarzenau, Germany in August 1708 – and says that "after singing several hymns and reading the portion from Luke 14 about counting the cost, the anonymous officiant waded into the clear cold water of the Eder (River) with (Alexander) Mack (and was baptized)” (Counting the Cost: The Life of Alexander Mack, page 58).

The phrase "does not hate father and mother" (Luke 14:26) contains strong words that can refer to a harsh hostile attitude toward others, but here it is used in a comparative sense – meaning that, compared to devotion for Christ, every other devotion must become secondary! We are to love Jesus far more than our parents or anyone else. Jesus knows that those who claim loyalty to Him will find that conflict sometimes arises in the home, because those who will not follow Christ will sometimes feel threatened by those who do follow Him.

In Matthew 10:35-39, Jesus tells about a family of five people, in which three young people (a daughter, a son, the son's wife) – are arrayed against two older people (the father and the mother) – all because of differences in response to Christ. The lesson is that we must never let even close family ties prevent us from taking a clear stand for Christ. We may not disown Christ, or disobey Him – even because of opposition from family members. Children are to love their father and mother, but they are not to love parents more than they love Jesus.

To bear (carry) one's "cross" (Luke 14:27) speaks about the reproach and the contempt that will be experienced when we decide to follow Jesus and live for Him. There is a stigma that sometimes goes along with being closely identified with Jesus.
The person who starts a project and does not have the energy or finances to finish, becomes an object of ridicule (verses 28-30). The king planning a military campaign without much forethought (verses 31-32) is an example of a leader who underestimates the strength of his enemy, and must therefore submit to the enemy's terms of peace.

It is important before making significant decisions in life – to sit down first and count the cost, being certain that we are willing to abandon our lives wholeheartedly to Christ. If we start out, and then fizzle along the way – onlookers will tend to mock. To take a vow to follow Christ is an important step. We must not be flippant and insincere in our decision. We are to abandon our lives wholeheartedly to Jesus our Lord and Savior.

Attending church services on Sunday morning is a cheap and easy work, but to sincerely follow Jesus day after day requires much self-denial. True Christianity is an all-out commitment to Jesus Christ. The key concept of the passage is that it costs something to be a Christian.

There is a genuine form of discipleship which is like "salt" (verses 34-35) that preserves and makes food palatable. There is a false (insincere) form of discipleship that does nothing to flavor the message of the gospel. Our discipleship for Jesus is to be dedicated and sincere!!

(Luke 14:25-35) Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it – lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (NKJV).

The early Brethren (and other Anabaptist groups) sacrificed greatly when the first members were illegally baptized. For some, it involved giving up wealth. When coming to America and migrating westward in the new nation, they were often separated from family and friends. Counting the cost was important to them – and it should be to us.