

1                                   **Vitality and Viability Study Committee Bible Study #3**  
2                                   **The Cost of Being a Disciple of Jesus – Luke 14:25-35**  
3                                   **Harold S. Martin**

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5 Jesus told several parables in Luke 14 to teach a number of important lessons. The first parable  
6 (14:7-14) is a lesson on humility. The second parable (14:15-24) is an example of the compelling  
7 invitation to come to Christ for salvation. The third parable (14:25-35) speaks about the Cost of  
8 choosing to become a Disciple of Jesus.

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

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

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

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

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

35 To bear (carry) one's "cross" (Luke 14:27) speaks about the reproach and the contempt that will  
36 be experienced when we decide *to follow Jesus and live for Him*. There is a stigma that  
37 sometimes goes along with being closely identified with Jesus.

38 The person who starts a project, and does not have the energy or finances to finish, becomes an  
39 object of ridicule (verses 28-30). The king planning a military campaign without much

1 forethought (verses 31-32) is an example of a leader who underestimates the strength of his  
2 enemy, and must therefore submit to the enemy's terms of peace.

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

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

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

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

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

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1 **Vitality and Viability Study Committee Bible Study #4**  
2 **Renewal of Relationships – John 15**  
3 **Erin Matteson**  
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5 **Overview & Context**

6 The Gospel of John holds a unique place next to the synoptic gospels of Mark, Matthew, and  
7 Luke. It is the gospel likely written last, thought to be completed no later than 100 CE. Upon  
8 reading it we discover the recounting of three years of Jesus’ ministry as opposed to one year,  
9 three different Passover feasts celebrated (John 2:13; 6:4; 11:55) as opposed to one during  
10 Jesus’ final days in the Synoptics. Jesus’ ministry in John alternates between Galilee and  
11 Jerusalem as opposed to being primarily grounded in Galilee in the Synoptics.<sup>1</sup> The New  
12 Interpreter’s Bible Commentary, Volume IX reminds us that “the Gospel of John is characterized  
13 by a literary style that interweaves narrative, dialogue, and discourse to create lengthy drama-  
14 like scenes (e.g., 4:4-42; 6:1-69; 9:1-10:21; 11:1-44).”<sup>2</sup> John 15, specifically our focus for this  
15 bible study, is important in that it is part the “centerpiece of Jesus’ teaching” in John, a part of  
16 the “Farewell Discourse and Prayer (John 14-17), a speech of unparalleled length compared  
17 with any of the gospels.”<sup>3</sup> In John’s gospel theologically, the incarnation is central. This is  
18 expressed from the beginning with John’s discussion of “In the beginning was the Word, and  
19 the Word was with God and the Word was God” (1:1) and “the Word became flesh and lived  
20 among us”(1:14). John makes clear “Jesus provides access to God in ways never before thought  
21 possible, because Jesus’ revelation of God derives from the most intimate relation with God.”<sup>4</sup>  
22 This becomes particularly relevant as we specifically explore John 15 further, and how the  
23 imagery and conversation there intimately link God to Christ to humanity in a link of knowing  
24 and being called to love. The authorship of the gospel of John is thought to be anonymous by  
25 scholars. Although, “The Gospel According to John appears as the heading of second-century CE  
26 manuscripts, likely here referring to John, the son of Zebedee to give apostolic authorship to  
27 the gospel then, there was much debate about authorship in the second and third centuries”  
28 and no clear evidence proving who actually wrote the text.<sup>5</sup>

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30 **John 15: An Invitation to the renewal of relationships & a recommitment to our heritage**

31 To begin, this passage uses the meaningful metaphor of vines, branches, and the vinegrower to  
32 speak to the intimate way God, Christ and we as God’s people are all connected in relationship  
33 with one another. Charles Cousar, in *Texts for Preaching, A lectionary Commentary based on*  
34 *the NRSV - Year B* reminds us that “the historical character of the imagery must not be lost. The  
35 Old Testament is full of texts where Israel is referred to as God’s special vine, often texts of

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<sup>1</sup> O’Day, Gail R. *The New Interpreter’s Bible: A commentary in twelve volumes Volume IX.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991, p. 493.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p.p. 493-494.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, p. 494.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 495.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 498.