

Luke 14

The Cost of Discipleship

Learning Objectives

- To identify what excuses keep us from God's presence
- To reflect on what degree Christ should be our priority
- To discuss the costs of being a disciple of Jesus

Steps To Prepare (For Leaders)

- Read through all of Luke 14
 - Look back at previous chapters and sets of materials to review the way Jesus uses banquet metaphors and the importance placed on meals in the culture
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Has there ever been a time when you had to say no to attending an event that you really wanted to attend?

Read Out Loud: Luke 14:1-24 (NIV)

¹ One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. ² There in front of him was a man suffering from abnormal swelling of his body. ³ Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?” ⁴ But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him on his way. ⁵ Then he asked them, “If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?” ⁶ And they had nothing to say.

⁷ When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: ⁸ “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. ⁹ If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. ¹¹ For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

¹² Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at

the resurrection of the righteous.”¹⁵ When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.”

¹⁶ Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. ¹⁷ At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ ¹⁸ “But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’¹⁹ “Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’ ²⁰ “Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’

²¹ “The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’²² “‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’ ²³ “Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. ²⁴ I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.’”

Read Out Loud: Before we get into the story, let’s identify who are the characters in Jesus’ parable of the banquet. In the parable, God is the host and Jesus is the servant, extending the invitation first to the Jewish people (who reject him) and then to the Gentiles.

? What reasons do the people who were initially invited to the banquet give for rejecting the invitation?

Historical Context of Banquets
Meals signaled many social cues and distinctions in the first century. Inviting someone to a banquet signified that you saw them as someone of honor and attending a banquet signified that you saw the host as someone of honor. “Although likes should eat with likes, by eating with sinners and foreigners Jesus formally signals that God extends an inclusive invitation to non-observant and sinful outsiders for covenant membership and for status as forgiven persons.” -*The Social World of Luke-Acts* edited by Jerome H. Neyrey

Possible Answer: They gave worldly excuses such as possessions, work, and relationships.

? What excuses keep us from the invitation of God’s presence?

Possible Answer: Too busy, distracted by earthly cares and concerns, etc.

? What do their reasons say about how they viewed the host of the banquet and his invitation?

Possible Answer: They did not view God or

Jesus as more important than their worldly lives. They placed the things in their temporal lives as higher priorities than their relationship with God and their eternal lives.

? What is the condition of those who were invited second to the banquet?

Possible Answer: They are needy, poor and far off. They are humble and gladly accept the invitation out of desperation and out of gratefulness.

? In verses 7-11, Jesus talks about humbling yourself or being humiliated. How can our hearts be humble like the second group rather than the first?

Possible Answers: By thinking of others as better, and by honoring others. By gladly accepting the invitation of Jesus, knowing we need Him. And by not thinking our cares are more important than Christ.

Read Out Loud: Luke 14:25-35 (NIV)

²⁵ Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ²⁶ “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

²⁸ “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? ²⁹ For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, ³⁰ saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish.’

³¹ “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. ³³ In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

³⁴ “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? ³⁵ It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”

Read Out Loud: Jesus identifies that nothing should get in the way of accepting His invitation and that He extends the invitation to all, including the Gentiles. He then takes it a step further and addresses the crowd about the costs of following Christ.

? What does Jesus mean when he says the word “hate” in verse 26?

Possible Answers: Jesus is saying that we must always have greater love for Him before anyone else, and must choose Him first and reject everyone else, if necessary. This is not a vengeful hate (he isn’t opposing other things he has said like, “Love your neighbor as yourself”) but rather the

appearance of hate by comparison to how much one loves Christ (hate being the opposite of love).

"Loved vs. Hated"

Romans 9:13 talks about this concept in the context of God's sovereign choice in choosing the Israelites as His people. "As it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." God loving Jacob and hating Esau has nothing to do with the human emotions of love and hate. It has everything to do with God choosing one man and his descendants and rejecting another man and his descendants.

? Verses 26, 27 and 33 talk about the weighty cost of being a disciple of Christ. In what ways is discipleship costly in our culture and our day-to-day lives? Have you ever had an experience where following Christ was costly to you?

Possible Answer: Following Christ can be costly when choosing Jesus above all requires losing friendships or jobs or making tough decisions, etc. It means sacrifice and hardship.

? In verses 28-33 Jesus talks about considering consequences before committing to something. If following Christ isn't costly, can someone truly be a disciple of Him?

Possible Answers: Jesus says we cannot be His disciples if we don't give up everything. He knows it is costly. This could be a job, income, education, family ties, or friends, etc.

For Discussion and Accountability

? In your life, have you considered the cost of being a disciple? What things are you currently unwilling to give up in order to be a fully devoted disciple of Christ?