

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Lesson Guide
February 21, 2016
Consider the Cost

Memory Verse:

"For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you" (Luke 14:29)

Scripture Reading:

Galatians 6:11-18 & Luke 14:25-33

This lesson, while not directly from the sermon text for today, Galatians 6:11-18, compliments the theme of that message. Take time and read this scripture as you begin the lesson. Remind the class that you will return to it to close out the discussion today. Ask them to consider the ways in which Paul's ministry to the Galatian church were demonstrations of his being a true disciple of Jesus.

Being a disciple, a follower, of Jesus Christ should be understood in terms of taking up our own Cross and following Him. The plain understanding of this phrase to His disciples was that they must be willing to suffer and even die as Christ did. In our study through Galatians we learned of the extreme personal price that Paul paid for following Jesus. Jesus did not take discipleship lightly and the promise of death and suffering for doing anything should be enough to give anyone pause to consider what they are getting into. As we will see this week, Jesus explicitly stresses that consideration as crucial to being a disciple. He knows very well the suffering that lies ahead for Him and for any who follow Him, so he wants them to know, as well, the cost that will be required of them as His disciples.

Consider the Cost

Verse 25 starts out by mentioning that large crowds were following Jesus. This is not surprising at all. Jesus was a wise and charismatic speaker. He spoke of love and justice, truth, and people who are in need gravitate toward God's message. His works were full of compassion. Whether He was healing the sick and disabled or feeding the hungry with miraculous displays, Jesus' heart overflowed with love and a desire to meet the earthly needs of all those around Him. After having been healed, fed and taught by God Himself on earth, it's no wonder that everyone who could would follow Him everywhere they could, longing to get more of what Jesus had to offer.

However, on many occasions, it became apparent that those who followed Jesus were just in it for what they could get. Jesus had love and patience to spare, but there came a time when He had to explain to the people that being His disciple wasn't just about free food and healthcare, and it wasn't just about getting comforted by His preaching about love and forgiveness. It would have been deceitful for Jesus to let them continue thinking that way. And so Jesus turned to them with a hard, but no less truthful and no less godly message: a message of personal cost.

The Costs of Discipleship

1. Peace with Family and Friends (v.26)

Jesus explains that anyone who comes to Him to be a disciple and doesn't "hate" his family (mother, father, wife, children, brothers and sister) should just quit now, because he can't be a disciple. "Hate" here is a word that has a connotation of placing a lesser value on something. "Contempt" or "despise" might also do a good

job, but basically it means to consider of less value than something else that you consider superior. In the ancient world, these comparisons were common among wise teachers. Mencius, a Chinese philosopher, described the goodness of bravery by saying "I dislike death; however, there are some things I dislike more than death. Therefore, there are times when I will not avoid danger." This shows that bravery is good because if everyone avoided danger we'd have no soldiers or police or firefighters to protect us.

Using that same style, Jesus is telling them (and us!) that the only way to be His disciple is to say, "I love my family, but I love Jesus more than my family. Therefore, I will live for Jesus even though it may alienate me from the people I love most."

2. Life (v.27)

Jesus goes on to use the act of taking up a cross (a death sentence that promised agony and shame like no other) as a metaphor for being His disciple: an example He uses frequently as we saw in last week's lesson. Jesus' teaching leaves would-be disciples no justification for complaint or objection that they were not warned of the suffering to come for them. Jesus wasn't just trying to thin out the crowd and send the freeloaders and the riff-raff home; Jesus knew that it would be just plain wrong to let His followers think that being a disciple would be all peace and prosperity. Jesus promised His love and forgiveness. He promised joy and contentment and spiritual peace and reconciliation with God. But He also promised that we would endure suffering, trials and pain, just as He had.

In the same way, Jesus stresses that no one can be a disciple unless he "hates" his very life. Jesus says that to be disciples we must be willing to say, "I love my life, but I love Jesus more than my life. Therefore, I will live for Jesus even though it may cost me my life!"

The Costs of Failure

1. Ridicule (v.28-30)

Having outlined the costs of discipleship, Jesus also wanted His followers to consider the costs of failure: of following Christ, but failing to persevere and being forced to quit in shame. The comparison that Jesus uses is that of a man who is planning on building a tower. A tower would be a building that is designed for one thing: protection. It's built tall and strong so that it can be used for a lookout for enemy armies or thieves. Also, it's built as a deterrent to those same forces. An enemy that sees a tower says: 1) "Well, that guy probably already knows we're here, so he's going to be ready for us," and 2) "there's no way we can break into that thing or climb the walls before somebody shoots us." A tower projects strength and says to the bad guys "Move along or get hurt"

But what happens if you started building that tower only thinking about how good that strength and protection were going to be... but you forgot to see if you could afford it? You built the best foundation to support it, and you started on the walls and then you ran out of money. How foolish!!! Now what does an enemy say about a half-built tower: 1) "That guy can't even finish building a tower, what a sucker!" and 2) "It's going to be so easy to hop that unfinished wall and take everything he's got!" An unfinished tower projects weakness and says the bad guys "Easy pickins'!"

As Disciples of Christ, the last thing that we should ever want to do is bring ridicule or shame to the Kingdom of God. We're all about exalting and glorifying God. Jesus said in Matthew 5:16 that our business is to "*let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*" The thought of bringing the appearance of shame or weakness to God's Church and His Kingdom ought to make us

reconsider everything we do. Jesus let's his followers know that nothing but shame and ridicule await those who try to follow Jesus with anything less than 100% of their heart, their efforts and their lives.

2. **Compromise** (v.31-33)

Compromise is not a four-letter word when dealing with mundane things. We compromise every day to show love to those around us. We can avoid bitterness, gridlock and even violence by being more willing to sacrifice some of our self-centered positions for the sake of common good. However, this is not the compromise that is described by Jesus in the metaphor of the king who goes to war.

Presumably, the king who makes war on another king is in the right, fighting a just war. He knows he's in the right, he fields his 10,000 troops and gets them all fired up and marches them off... only to find out that the enemy has 20,000! This is a problem, to say the least. Now, to save face and avoid a military catastrophe, the king is going to have to squirm and kowtow to the other king. To avoid losing his army and his kingdom he's going to have to basically beg and plead with the opposing king to let him off the hook for declaring war. In short, he will become subject to the other king and be forced to compromise his wealth, his power and even his ideals (whatever caused him to go to war in the first place). Every day we are confronted with more and more examples of those who set out to serve Jesus but slowly, in the face of temptation or opposition, they compromised the Word of God. Then they lost their morals, their churches, their families and friends and became an object of ridicule and shame... all because of one little compromise that led to another and another until their faith and their testimonies were wrecked. These are those who did not consider the cost of their discipleship or what their failure might cost them and those around them.

Jesus puts the foolish king and the foolish tower-builder in the same boat. They are men who made attempts to do something grand without considering if they could see it through. Another ancient philosopher named Sun Tzu said "Victory is reserved for those who are willing to pay its price." Now, thankfully, the price of the victory over sin was paid by Jesus Christ. That is a price we could NEVER have paid. Knowing that, once we have truly committed to being a Disciple of Jesus, we must spend all the currency of our gifts and talents and our lives in service to Jesus out of gratitude, honor and love!

Now after having taught through this portion, take time and lead your students to look again at Galatians 6:11-18. What marks of true discipleship had Paul demonstrated in his ministry to the Galatian church?

Take Home

- Being a disciple of Jesus means that we must value Him above all things: Our families, our jobs, our comfort: even our very lives! This is a very hard teaching, but Jesus loves us enough to give us the straight truth: To be His follower is to be willing to die for Him as He died for us!
- Jesus clearly wants us to consider the cost of discipleship before we come to follow Him. We need to clearly understand the price we must pay: Death to our fleshly desires and to sin, persecution, and sometimes even physical death just like Jesus and the Apostles.
- We are called upon to suffer, to sacrifice and to obey because Christ was called to do the same. Also, like Christ, we can make the decision to do these things willingly, knowing that we can draw upon God for the strength and peace we need to endure such hard times.