

Conversations on
Luke 14:25–33

Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.

Idea! Watch the scene “World Trade Center: The Police and Fire Fighters Arrive at the Scene” from *World Trade Center* (2006, PG-13; available at bit.ly/WTCstep). Discuss how following Jesus is like volunteering to risk your life.

WHAT is important to know?

Jesus demands that a disciple would “carry the cross and follow” him (14:27). As such, this instruction is reminiscent of 9:23, where Jesus instructs would-be followers to “deny themselves and take up their cross daily,” then sets this in the context of losing their lives for his sake. What a harsh word this is for the contemporary Christian community, for we know where Jesus’ way leads. This is a word of obligation to a church obsessed with grace; worse, it is obligation with consequence, for those who refuse the cross are deemed unworthy of discipleship. The message is clear: discipleship costs. In fact, it will cost us everything (see also 12:33–34)! (*Rodney S. Sadler Jr.*)

- ✠ What does it mean to carry the cross and follow Jesus? What might it not mean to carry the cross and follow Jesus?
- ✠ How do you understand these difficult words of Jesus, “Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple” (14:26)?

WHERE is God in these words?

At the heart of discipleship is transformation. The cost of discipleship is not just becoming accumulators of new information about life and living it fully, or changing our behavior in regard to Jesus’ teachings. The cost is engaging in a profoundly radical shift toward the ethics of Jesus with every fiber of our beings. There is no driftwood in discipleship, as we are called to live lives of complete devotion to God. Jesus reminds us in today’s passage from Luke that following him means that we cannot be shallow or uncommitted believers—the adjectives simply do not fit the noun. (*Emilie M. Townes*)

- ✠ In what sense is costly discipleship a gift of grace?
- ✠ Why is discipleship more about transformation than accumulation of information? What does this tell us about God?

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

Can the Christian community offer an interpretation of the cost of discipleship for daily life that is plausible and freeing for the people of God today? How would Calvin’s advocacy of freedom from selfishness, commitment to love, honest facing of suffering, and the faithful stewardship of creation and its gifts sound to people inside and outside the churches? The housing and economic crises; the damage to the earth by the burning of fossil fuels; and the hunger, poverty, and pandemics suffered by people in all parts of the world are certainly calling us in the church to give Jesus’ call to costly discipleship a new lease on life. (*Charles E. Raynal*)

- ✠ Why is Christian community an important part of following Jesus?
- ✠ Discipleship involves a “freedom for” love, honest facing of suffering, and faithful stewardship and a “freedom from” selfishness and sin. How might “freedom for” and “freedom from” shape our lives as disciples?

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

It seems important to take Jesus’ exhortation with utter seriousness, recognizing that, for most of us, it poses a problem that needs to be thought through. Certainly it means at least that disciples should travel lightly, not unduly encumbered by acquiring, hoarding, or guarding one’s possessions against the other in her/his need. Certainly it must also mean that, when interests come into conflict, discipleship takes precedence over security. (*Ronald P. Byars*)

- ✠ How might you follow Jesus in regard to your possessions?
- ✠ What is the call to discipleship that you have heard from this text today?

God, challenge us to accept Christ’s life of costly discipleship. Amen.