

Semicontinuous

**Jer. 18:1–11**

**Ps. 139:1–6, 13–18**

Complementary

**Deut. 30:15–20**

**Ps. 1**

**Phlm 1–21**

**Luke 14:25–33**

# Disciples and Followers

**Goal for  
the Session**

*Children will consider what loving Jesus with all their hearts means for them.*

## ■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

### Focus on Luke 14:25–33

#### WHAT is important to know?

—From “Exegetical Perspective” by Rodney S. Sadler Jr.

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)!

#### WHERE is God in these words?

—From “Theological Perspective” by Emilie M. Townes

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.

#### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From “Pastoral Perspective” by Charles E. Raynal

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.

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

—From “Homiletical Perspective” by Ronald P. Byars

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.

**FOCUS SCRIPTURE**

**Luke 14:25–38**

## Focus on Your Teaching

Most children are tied closely to their parents and other family members. Expecting them to forsake their families is not realistic. Therefore, verse 26 is not emphasized in the story, but making choices is. The younger children are beginning to make choices: what to wear to school, whether to play a team sport, who to be friends with. The oldest children have made many choices and are now facing even bigger ones about their faith and what interests to pursue. In this session, they are reminded that Jesus calls for decisions too.

*God, some choices weigh heavily on my mind. Others are made in a flash.  
Prompt me to keep my love for Jesus at the forefront. Amen.*

**YOU WILL NEED**

- green cloth
- Bible
- offering basket
- candle and matches or battery-operated candle
- Singing the Feast, 2022–2023*; CD player
- Color Pack 1, 2, 3, 4, 27, 28
- tape
- Resource Sheet 1

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2; pencils; *Singing the Feast, 2022–2023*; CD player
- option 2: oven-bake clay or Model Magic, toothpicks
- option 3: Resource Sheet 2, card stock, index cards, stapler, markers
- option 4: Color Pack 28; *Singing the Feast, 2022–2023*; CD player

## LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

*Before the session*, find one of the Bible translations recommended in Exploring, in print or on a Web site. Create the Discipleship Tree using Color Pack 2, 3, and 4. Cut out the squares with leaves.

Greet the children as they arrive. Invite the early arrivals to help set up the worship table. Place a green cloth on the table. On it place a Bible, an offering basket, and a candle. Place the Discipleship Tree and leaves from Color Pack 2, 3, and 4 nearby.

When everything is ready, gather at the worship table. Point to the green cloth. Explain that it indicates that the church year season is Ordinary Time. Tell about this season, using the information on Color Pack 1.

Light the candle.

Teach the signs for *glory* and *God* shown on Color Pack 27. Sing “Glory to God” (track 8 on *Singing the Feast, 2022–2023*) and sign these words as they are sung.

Pray, inviting the children to echo each phrase after you:

*Dear God / be our guide / as we seek / to learn more about you / and how to follow / in the ways of Jesus. / Amen.*

**All: Amen!** (Clap twice.)

### Glory to God

Glory to God,  
Glory to God,  
Glory to God in the highest!

Repeat three times

Ask learners if they have ever played follow the leader. Begin with everyone standing in a circle. The children are to do whatever the leader (you) does. Begin with simple motions, such as a hand on top of your head or your legs apart, and progress to more difficult movements, such as combining two motions. After a few moments, ask:

✿ To play this game, what did you need to do?

Encourage their answers and help them see that they had to pay close attention to what the leader was doing and saying to be good followers. Ask:

✿ Who are some leaders you follow?

After they have named some leaders, explain that the Bible story today is about Jesus as our leader.

### Exploring

Ask a child to get the Bible from the worship table and open it to the Gospel of Luke. Point out that the Gospels are at the beginning of the New Testament. If necessary, have the child find Luke in the Table of Contents. Then ask a child to turn to chapter 14. Keep the Bible open to Luke 14 as you tell the story on Resource Sheet 1 (Follow Me). Ask:

✿ What did Jesus want the people to know about being his follower?

✿ What do you think the people thought after Jesus told the two parables?

Explain that people who follow Jesus are called *disciples*, a name for more than the twelve apostles who traveled with him everywhere. This means that they can be disciples. With this definition and having heard the story, provide another hearing of the focus scripture as found in Luke 14:25–33. Read from a translation in contemporary language, such as the Common English Bible, the Contemporary English Version, or Today's English Version (the Good News Bible). Following verses 26, 27, 30, and 33, prompt the children to say this refrain together: Jesus says, "Be my disciple."

Conclude Exploring by noting that being a disciple or follower of Jesus means we have to think about what we do and whether our choices follow the way that Jesus teaches.

### Responding

Offer at least two options so the children have a choice. One might be more challenging to interest children who can work on their own.

- 1. Disciples in Development** Although the children may be at various stages of faith development, they can encourage one another to move forward. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Disciples in Development) and pencils. Explain that this activity is to help them think about ways they can be more faithful disciples or followers of Jesus. Read the directions at the top of the resource sheet together. Play music softly as they work, something like "Music over Water" (track 16 on *Singing the Feast*, 2022–2023). When everyone has finished, invite volunteers to tell one thing they will do to follow Jesus in the coming week.

A *parable* is a story of comparison that teaches a religious truth. Jesus used parables to teach about God.

**EASY  
PREP**

If two or more children need help reading the resource sheet, work with them in a small group as the others complete the sheet on their own.

- Pocket Cross** Children will make small crosses as a reminder to follow Jesus. Follow the directions on the package of oven-bake clay. Have the children mold crosses between 2 and 3 inches tall. Provide toothpicks for them to inscribe words, such as “follow me” or “I am with you” on their crosses. Bake the crosses. If necessary, do this at home and return them to the children at the next session. Together, memorize Luke 14:27, using the Bible translation from Exploring.

Option: Make the crosses with Model Magic, which does not have to be baked and will harden by air-drying.

- Disciple Book** To help the children think more about what faithful disciples do, make “A Disciple . . .” books. Begin by brainstorming all the things a disciple of Jesus might do to follow the ways Jesus taught. They may include: pray to God, give money to the church, read the Bible every day. (See Resource Sheet 2 [Disciples in Development] for ideas.) To construct the book, begin with a 12" x 4" piece of card stock. Fold up about 4" from the bottom of the 12" strip. Staple along the sides to make a pocket. Above the pocket, print “A Disciple . . .” Give each child three or four index cards (3" x 5"). On each one, front and back, they complete the sentence at the top of the pocket holder with words or illustrations. For example: “prays every day.” Slip the index cards into the pocket as they are finished.

**I’m Gonna Live  
So God Can Use Me**

I’m gonna *live* so God can  
use me  
anywhere, Lord, anytime!  
I’m gonna *live* so God can  
use me  
anywhere, Lord, anytime!

I’m gonna *work* . . .

I’m gonna *share* . . .

I’m gonna *care* . . .

- Following Jesus in Song** “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me” (Color Pack 28; track 10 on *Singing the Feast, 2022–2023*), sung at the close of this session, is a musical reminder of how to follow Jesus. After singing it, talk together about how they might live so God can use them.

**Closing**

Gather at the worship table. Light or turn on the candle.

Sing “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me” (Color Pack 28; track 10 on *Singing the Feast, 2022–2023*).

Invite children to name ways to follow Jesus. Print their ideas on a few leaves and tape them to the Discipleship Tree.

Close with this benediction:

(*Name*), be a faithful disciple of Jesus this week. God be with you.

Tell the children you hope to see them next week.

Save the Discipleship  
Tree and leaves for use  
in future sessions.

**Follow Me**  
based on Luke 14:25-33

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. But along the way he had dinner in the home of a leader of the Pharisees. He taught people about God's love by telling them stories called parables. He visited his friends, Mary and Martha, in a town called Bethany. He told people not to worry because God was always with them.

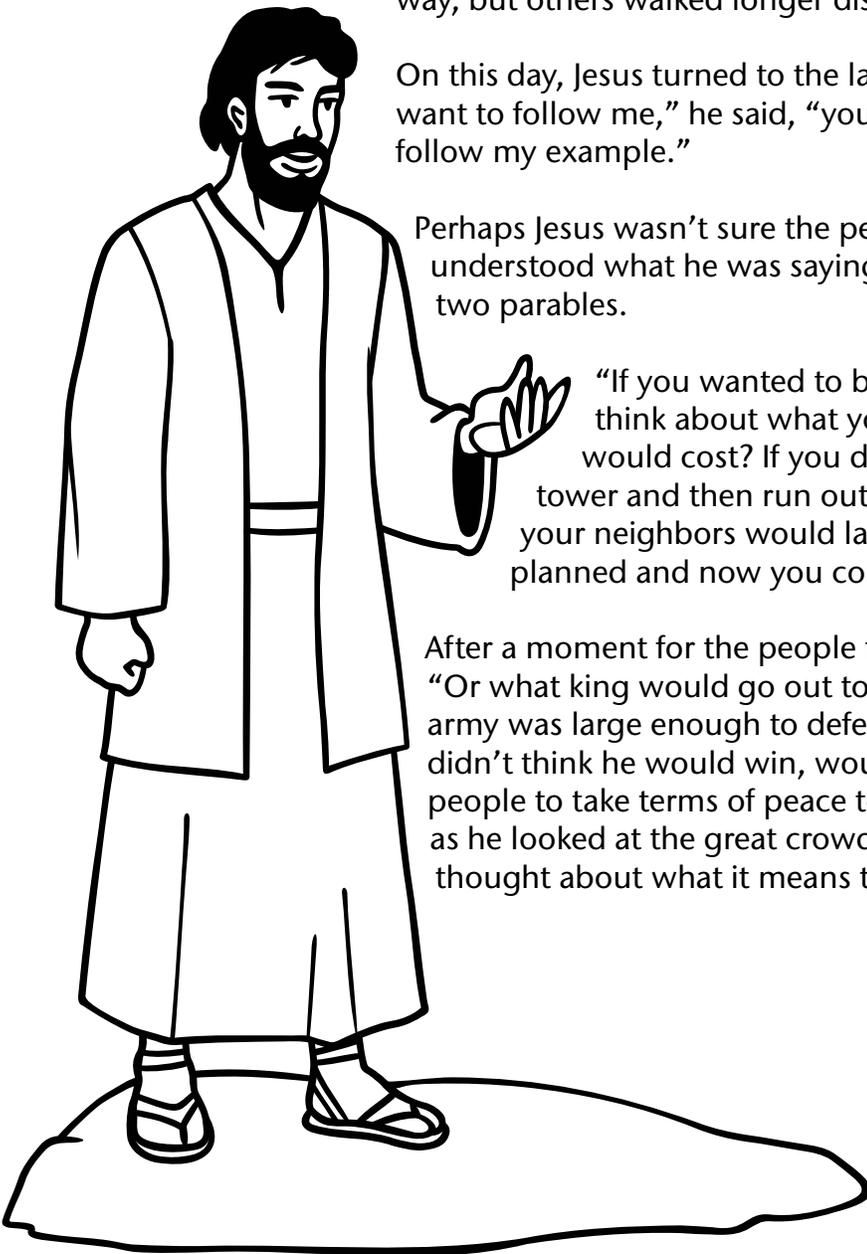
As Jesus and the 12 disciples walked from village to village, crowds of people, large crowds, walked with them. Some could go only a short way, but others walked longer distances with Jesus.

On this day, Jesus turned to the large crowd following him. "If you want to follow me," he said, "you must give up everything. You must follow my example."

Perhaps Jesus wasn't sure the people in that large crowd understood what he was saying, so he told them two stories, two parables.

"If you wanted to build a tower, wouldn't you first think about what you would need and how much it would cost? If you didn't, you might start to build the tower and then run out of materials or of money. Then, your neighbors would laugh at you because you hadn't planned and now you couldn't finish the tower."

After a moment for the people to think about that story, Jesus said, "Or what king would go out to fight without thinking whether his army was large enough to defeat the enemy's army? If the king didn't think he would win, wouldn't he send one of his trusted people to take terms of peace to the enemy? And you," Jesus said as he looked at the great crowd around him, "have you really thought about what it means to be my follower?"



## Disciples in Development



Jesus expects much from his disciples. But Jesus also helps us so we can be faithful followers. How do we receive help from Jesus? Over many centuries, Christians have found that some practices (things we do over and over) help us grow into more faithful disciples. Read the lists below. Check the boxes of the things you already do or have tried. Draw a star next to something you want to try this week.



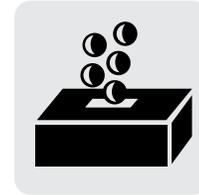
### DAILY PRAYER

- Pray at a regular time each day:
  - Morning
  - Midday
  - Evening
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Offer prayers in the “ACTS” pattern:
  - A**dore (praise) God.
  - C**onfess your sins and ask God’s forgiveness.
  - T**hank God for the good in your day and life.
  - M**ake **S**upplications (requests) to God for others and for yourself.
- Pray a breath prayer. It can help you calm yourself when you are anxious. Find a short sentence about God in the Bible, or use Psalm 121:2: “My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.” Say the first part as you breathe in, and the second part as you breathe out. Repeat this until you are calm, ready to do what is next, or to pray to God in your own words.



### DAILY SCRIPTURE READING

- Read from the Bible at a regular time each day, by yourself or with a family member:
  - Morning
  - Midday
  - Evening
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Read three or four verses from the Bible at a time. Read them two or three times, slowly. Spend time thinking about the verses, groups of words, and images they bring to mind.
- Copy Bible verses special to you in a notebook. Write your thoughts about them. Include questions or prayers that came to you. Draw pictures in your notebook or add information from newspapers or magazines that remind you of these verses.



### DISCIPLINES OF GIVING

- Set aside some time each week to help other people at home or through your church or a community organization.
- Set aside some of your allowance each week to give to the church.

**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](http://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.*

*Semicontinuous*  
**Jer. 18:1–11**  
**Ps. 139:1–6, 13–18**  
*Complementary*  
**Deut. 30:15–20**  
**Ps. 1**  
**Phlm. 1–21**  
**Luke 14:25–33**

# The Cost of Discipleship

## Goal for the Session

*Heeding Jesus' call to discipleship, adults will evaluate their commitment to following Christ whatever the cost.*

## ■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

### Focus on Luke 14:25–33

#### WHAT is important to know?

—From “Exegetical Perspective” by Rodney S. Sadler Jr.

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)!

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**FOCUS SCRIPTURE**

**Luke 14:25–33**

**YOU WILL NEED**

- Bibles
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- whiteboard or newsprint
- markers
- pens and paper
- copies of Resource Sheet 2
- hymnals or songbooks
- copies of Resource Sheet 1 for September 11, 2022

For Responding

- option 1: pens and paper
- option 2: pens and paper
- option 3: copies of Resource Sheet 2 and Internet-connected device

Jesus sometimes used hyperbole in teaching. He exaggerated to make a point (e.g., “hate” family members). Such exaggeration forces us to face the stark demands of Jesus’ teaching. Commitment to Christ must surpass our love for all others, no matter how dear.

## Focus on Your Teaching

For many adults in today’s society, following Jesus may seem to involve few hazards. Adults know that, in some parts of the world, people die for their faith, but those instances may seem remote. Yet some adults in our society are ridiculed—even by family members and friends—for taking their faith seriously. Others keep quiet rather than offend by speaking of their faith in public. Some may never have been challenged to ask, “How deep is my commitment?” Many may welcome the chance to examine ways to renew commitment to our Lord and to consider the implications of costly discipleship.

*O Christ, I thank you for your commitment to us shown in the cross. Through your Spirit, deepen my own commitment to you and to your Word. Amen.*

## LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

*Before the session*, if you plan to do option 3 in Responding, preview the Web sites on contemporary martyrs (type “Christian martyrs today” into the search field) and choose a Web site that seems most relevant for your purpose.

Welcome participants warmly and introduce visitors.

Form pairs or groups of three and invite people to tell of a time when they felt that someone did not or would not appreciate their witness for Christ. Perhaps that witness was telling about their faith. Perhaps it involved speaking out about an injustice to others. Some may be unable to recall an instance, but others may have had memorable or even painful experiences. After a few minutes, gather as a whole group and have a few volunteers briefly recount their experiences.

Tell participants that today’s session deals with the possible cost of commitment to Christ.

Pray the following or a prayer of your choosing:

*O Lord, give us your Spirit to study, to hear your Word, and to meditate on its meaning for our lives. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

### EXPLORING

Invite a volunteer to read Luke 14:25–33 aloud. Briefly discuss people’s initial reactions to the text. Some may wonder that Jesus says that we must hate family members; in that case, refer to the information in the sidebar on hyperbole.

Distribute Resource Sheet 1 (Focus on Luke 14:25–33). Have a volunteer read the “What?” excerpt. Invite volunteers to read the texts referenced in the excerpt (Luke 9:23; 12:33–34; and 14:27).

Write on a whiteboard or newsprint the heading “Discipleship Requirements.” Begin a list with the points in the readings—hate close relatives, carry the cross, count the cost, give up possessions, give alms, deny yourself.

Form groups of two or three and give each group a marker, pen, and paper. Have them brainstorm other requirements for discipleship found in the New Testament, and have someone write down the ideas. (If any group is stuck for ideas, point them to Luke 6:20–49; 1 Corinthians 5:6–6:20; or Galatians 5:13–26.) After a few minutes, return to the whole group and invite a member of each group to add to the list on the board the points their subgroup has found.

Invite a volunteer to read the “Where?” excerpt. Have the group discuss what might be meant by “a profoundly radical shift toward the ethics of Jesus with every fiber of our beings” and how this might be related to taking up our cross. Ask: Is it possible for anyone to be a “shallow or uncommitted believer”? Be sure that participants understand that our salvation is not earned by our ethical behavior or other good works, but rather that our actions are a response to Christ’s taking up his own cross on our behalf for the forgiveness of sin.

Have a volunteer read the “So What?” excerpt. Invite the group to select one of the crises mentioned in the excerpt—housing and economic crises; damage done by fossil fuels; hunger; poverty; pandemics—and discuss what cost might be involved if they were to commit themselves fully to this issue.

Lead into Responding by having a volunteer read the “Now What?” excerpt. Ask the group to name instances in which the church or individual Christians have shown willingness to risk their own security in order to do what is right.

## RESPONDING

Choose one or more of these activities, depending on the length of your session:

- 1. Commitment in Daily Life** This activity gives an opportunity for adults to renew their commitment to following Christ whatever the cost.

Provide pens and paper, and ask participants to think of one new way they can show commitment to Christ in daily work, leisure, or prayer. It should be a way that will cost them something in time, effort, or finances. Have each person write a commitment promise to Christ, describing what they intend to do, and a short prayer they might pray about their promise. Encourage them to take the sheet home and use it in daily devotions and to follow through on their promise.

**EASY  
PREP**

- 2. Commitment in the Congregation** This activity gives an opportunity for adults to renew their commitment to following Christ through increased involvement in congregational activities.

Have the group brainstorm the costly discipleship activities your congregation is involved in, and explain why they think these opportunities evidence costly commitment. (Members might vary on assessing the cost involved.)

Distribute pens and paper, and invite each participant to plan a way to show commitment through deepening their involvement in one of these activities. Invite them to write down details of the activity—how to contact the person in charge, dates and times of the activity, the role they believe they could take, and so on. Encourage participants to follow through on their commitment.

Saints are examples of faith. In remembering such individuals we can see how God strengthened and sustained them, and so our own faith can be strengthened.

- 3. Commitment to Prayer for Martyrs Today** In this activity adults will renew their commitment to learn about and pray for those who follow Christ in circumstances of persecution, suffering, and death. Have participants read Resource Sheet 2 (Following, Whatever the Cost) silently and then discuss what it would take to make a witness such as that of Perpetua.

Access your chosen Internet site. Have the group discuss the information provided and the value of prayer for those who suffer for the faith. While prayer may be the only thing you can do for them, it is also the most powerful way to sustain Christian brothers and sisters in critical times.

Make plans to pray regularly for those who suffer for their commitment to Christ. You might plan to meet ten minutes early for the next five sessions and to pray for those who are persecuted. Or each person may pledge to pray every day for the next month for those who suffer persecution. Make specific plans to carry out the commitment.

## CLOSING

Have a few participants say how the session has affected their commitment to Christ.

If you did not do option 3 in Responding, have a volunteer now read the story on Resource Sheet 2.

Together sing or say “Just as I Am, Without One Plea” or “Here I Am, Lord.” Pray the following or a prayer of your choosing:

*O Christ, you gave yourself for us without reservation. We would commit ourselves to you. Use us to pray and to serve you without reserve in our daily work, our congregation, our family, and wherever else we might be. In your name we pray. Amen.*

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 for September 11, 2022, or e-mail it to the participants.

September 4, 2022  
The Cost of Discipleship



Adult  
Resource Sheet 1

## Focus on Luke 14:25–33

Semicontinuous  
**Jer. 18:1–11**  
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Complementary  
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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.

## Following, Whatever the Cost

Saints are people to whom we look as examples of faith. Throughout the centuries many such people have shown deep commitment to Jesus that led them to follow Christ despite the terrible cost and suffering they endured.

In the early church, many Christians suffered for their faith. Roman emperors considered themselves divine and demanded that people worship them, usually by sacrificial burning of incense, as a sign of patriotism and loyalty. Various emperors instigated persecutions of Christians who claimed allegiance to the true God and refused to worship the emperor as divine.

### Perpetua

In 202 CE Roman Emperor Septimus Severus began a severe persecution of Christians in northern Africa. A catechetical group and their catechist were arrested in Carthage. The members of the group were 22-year-old noblewoman Perpetua, Felicitas and Revocatus (two slaves), Saturninus and Secundulus. Soon the group's catechist, Saturus, joined them in house arrest and baptized each of them. One of the slaves, Felicitas, was eight months pregnant. She was glad when she gave birth prematurely and the baby was adopted by a Christian family. Romans did not execute pregnant women, and Felicitas very much desired to make her public witness along with her friends.

Perpetua had an infant son, whom she nursed in prison for a time before handing him over to her family to care for. Perpetua's pagan father regularly visited her in prison and begged her to renounce her Christian faith so that she would live. But Perpetua remained firm in her commitment to Christ.

On March 7, 203 CE, at the games to honor Caesar Geta, the condemned Christians were scourged, then led to the amphitheater to face wild beasts. They carried their heads high as they marched into the arena to make a final witness for Jesus. Attempts were made to force them to dress as pagan priests and priestesses, but Perpetua resisted and was allowed to retain her tunic.

Perpetua entered the arena singing a psalm. After being tossed by a wild heifer, she rearranged her tunic and pinned up her hair so that she would look her best in this triumphant hour of witness to her Lord. Having survived the heifer attacks, Perpetua and Felicitas walked hand in hand to the spot where swordsmen waited to end their lives. The young novice gladiator assigned to Perpetua was trembling, but Perpetua guided to her throat his hand that held the sword.



# *Joining the Feast*

Year C  
Fall 2022  
Proper 18 to First Sunday of Advent



# What you will find in *Joining the Feast!*

## The Church Year Calendar

Describes the important church festivals and special days for the coming season. It provides theological reflections on their importance for the church's life and our own lives.

## The Shape of the Season

Presents an overview of the focus scriptures for the weeks in the coming season. It discusses the biblical and theological significance of each of the passages.

## Joining Worship and Learning: Making the Connections and Time with Children

This section of *Joining the Feast* includes the stories on the focus scriptures from the multi-age course. These stories can be used in the children's time during worship. A single sheet children's activity page featuring the focus scripture is included to be used as a children's worship bulletin, one for each Sunday. During these final weeks of the church year and Ordinary Time, several focus scriptures are taken from letters in the New Testament. Notice that some songs are used by several age levels but not in the same session. If you are interested in including a prayer, poetry, or artwork from an age level, speak with the leader in advance. May your congregational worship be enlivened by these suggestions to join worship and learning.

## Joining Mission and Learning

Help the participants in *Feasting on the Word Curriculum* resources connect with existing service opportunities in your congregation. Review this list and offer suggestions to the leaders. Give this chart to the chair of the mission or outreach committee so the work of the committee can be strengthened through the church school.

## Litanies and Prayers

A selection of poetic prayers and responsive readings that helps worship leaders connect the church's educational and worship experiences to find fullness and blessing in the praise and service of God.

## Joining the Feast

We invite you to “Join the Feast”!

Our exciting *Feasting on the Word Curriculum* offers great opportunities for the local church. Pastors, educators, and participants can experience the wonder of God’s nourishing word to us. For church schools, for study groups, and in preparation for teaching and preaching, the resources here will deepen and strengthen our faith. We have an amazing “feast” set before us! We desire and can find further understanding in our faith—of who God is and what God has done!

*Joining the Feast* helps pastors, educators, and worship leaders plan for education and worship. We want to assist in reflecting on how to incorporate scriptural and seasonal emphases across different parts of the church’s life.

*Joining the Feast* can be shared in education and worship committees. It enables important biblical themes to be integrated into the church’s study and worship experiences. A chart of suggestions for ways educational emphases can be used in worship is a feature of what follows here. Church school teachers can discuss these materials with each other to enhance education for all age levels in the church. Pastors who plan their lectionary preaching will find taking an overall look at this church season to be useful for their preparations. In all this we want to join teaching and preaching. We want the church’s educational and worship experiences to find fullness and blessing in the praise and service of God!

An important goal for pastors and educators in the church is to connect or join the church’s educational experience with the church’s worship experience. People of all ages who participate in church school study can find their Christian faith enhanced when the Scriptures read and proclaimed in worship reinforce and expand what they have been considering in their educational time. Education and worship can be mutually supportive in helping God’s word in Scripture come alive in the Sunday morning experience. Consideration of the same lectionary reading in preaching can deepen the insights gained in church school.

Pastors who want to build on what has been done in education welcome this *Feasting on the Word Curriculum* as a way to prepare congregational members for directions into which the sermon can lead. Those who participate in the education time will find the insights gained there enhanced by preaching which considers the same passage and brings God’s word to bear in fresh and nourishing ways. So as we “Join the Feast,” joining the church’s educational and worship dimensions can bring to life the richness of God’s word in Scripture.

Donald K. McKim



## ***Feasting on the Word Curriculum: Teaching the Revised Common Lectionary***

*Feasting on the Word Curriculum* is an exciting, ecumenical, downloadable curriculum resource. It incorporates the uniqueness of the *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary* series (12 volumes; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008–11), which provides four different approaches to each of the biblical passages for each of the lectionary readings in the Revised Common Lectionary.

*Feasting on the Word Curriculum: Teaching the Revised Common Lectionary* is designed for classroom use in the church among various age levels, including children, youth, and adults. Adaptable to a variety of learning settings and teaching styles, this innovative curriculum resource integrates the *Feasting on the Word* commentary style to explore one of the lectionary passages in ways suitable for all participants. This approach connects worship and faith formation like no other lectionary curriculum ever has.

Each age level of *Feasting on the Word Curriculum* provides comprehensive, accessible biblical background for teachers from four perspectives.

**What? (Exegetical)** Basic information about the backgrounds and meanings of Scripture is essential to understanding. This stream asks, “What?” What are the important things to know about the contexts, language, and settings of the biblical passage?

**Where? (Theological)** To understand the meanings of passages, we also need to ask, “Where?” Where is God in this passage? Where are God’s will and activities being expressed? Theological questions about where God’s word comes to us in the passage are significant.

**So What? (Pastoral)** The implications of the passage for our Christian lives make the biblical passage come alive. We ask, “So what?” What does this passage mean to me? What does it mean for my relationship with God and other people?

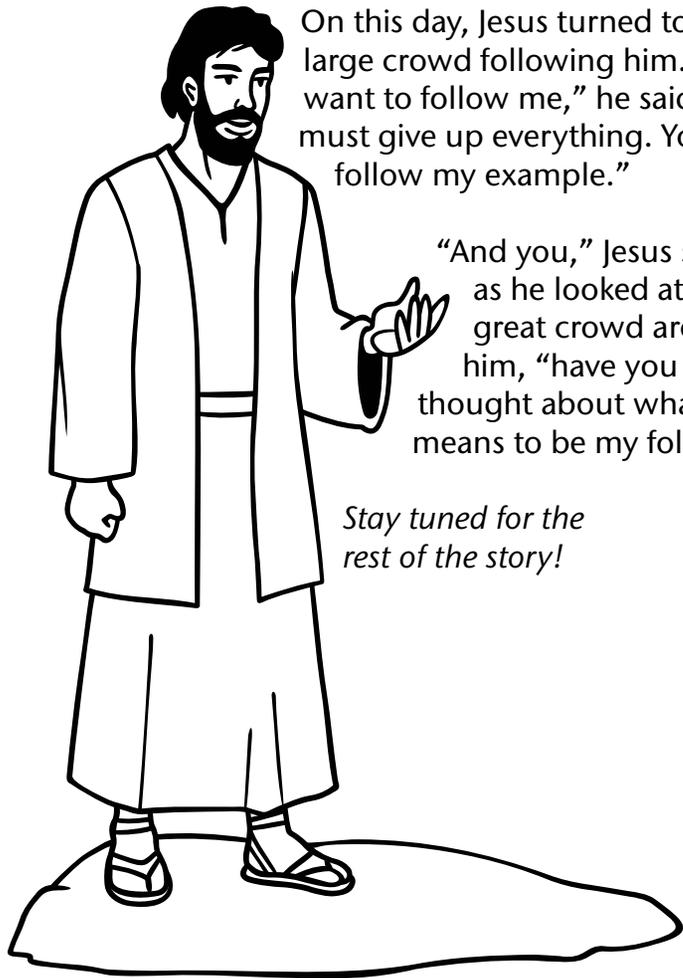
**Now What? (Homiletical)** Biblical passages shape our understandings and lives in the church. They connect us with needs in God’s world. So we ask, “Now what?” This prompts us to reflect on how our life and the church’s life can live out what the passage is saying.



## Follow Me

based on Luke 14:25-33

Jesus taught people about God's love by telling them stories called parables. He visited his friends, Mary and Martha, in a town called Bethany. He told people not to worry because God was always with them.



On this day, Jesus turned to the large crowd following him. "If you want to follow me," he said, "you must give up everything. You must follow my example."

"And you," Jesus said as he looked at the great crowd around him, "have you really thought about what it means to be my follower?"

*Stay tuned for the rest of the story!*

A 	E 	F 	H 	K 
L 	M 	O 	S 	W 

Use the key to decode the message Jesus had for the crowd.

