

THEWELL**(7.6) Read Luke 9:57-62**

Jesus is not a salesman trying to make a commission, nor is He a modern-day influencer trying to garner as many followers as possible. Actually, in this passage, Jesus seems to be almost trying to deter new followers, refusing to sugarcoat the high cost of following Him by painting the bleakest picture possible. He has no desire for fair-weather groupies who chase after earthly fame or worldly glory, so He speaks very clearly about the lack of earthly glory and renown they will know when they are with Him. Jesus' followers need to know that they will have to give up family ties, home, money, and security, and they won't be able to look back. It is only because of the surpassing goodness of Jesus that we are able to see past the veneer of all that the world offers us and instead look for the satisfaction of an identity firmly rooted in His person and work. There is no cost too high. He is worth it. When sharing the gospel, how can this passage inform how we communicate with others the cost of following Jesus?

(7.7) Read Luke 14:7-14

Jesus is often depicted as the bridegroom. In this passage, Jesus told the story of a wedding guest who knows not to exalt himself by sitting down in the place of honor without being asked. This would be the equivalent of marching up to the bride's table at an American wedding reception and sitting right next to her mother though the seating chart declared otherwise. Instead, Jesus told His listeners to humble themselves so that they will be exalted. He then encouraged them to seek the humble, blessing them through acts of honor and kindness. Jesus turns our traditional understanding of honor and honor-seeking on its head, reminding us that He chose His bride—the church—not because of her beauty and flash but in order to magnify her lack thereof with His own immeasurable worth. Jesus loves His bride not for what she can give to Him but because of what He can provide for her as a recipient of God's

grace. How can we as the children of God rethink what it means to give honor and to be honored?

(7.8) Read Luke 14:15-24

Here Jesus told another story about a banquet. This time, a king has invited many to partake of an expensive feast, but one by one, the guests give him an excuse and decline the invitation. Upset, the king sends his servant out to invite anyone who will come. Imagine this feast, fit for the wealthiest of society, being enjoyed by the lowliest. Those who should have appreciated the splendor turned it down, leaving those who would truly marvel at the spread to partake of it. Jesus came to earth offering salvation, a feast that surpasses any worldly sustenance we could imagine. While we'd like to believe that we would see the invitation for what it is, so often we turn Him down in pursuit of the mundane. In this story, He reminded His disciples that His table will be filled, and He cautioned them not to let worldly distractions cause them to miss out on being seated at the feast. How can we ensure that we place Jesus' calling in proper priority in our lives?

(7.9) Read Luke 14:25-27

Crucifixion was a brutal business. Men were tied to a wooden cross and left to suffocate once they tired of holding themselves up for air. This was often after a demoralizing and painful beating, but in Jesus' case, He wasn't tied to the wooden cross but nailed. Criminals in ancient Rome would have to carry their own crosses to the place of execution, buckling under the weight of their own torture devices. Yet in this passage, Jesus did not shy away from the brutality of what following Him would cost His listeners. He told them that whoever fails to take up his own cross is not a true follower of His. While we likely won't die on an actual cross, the call to follow Jesus is indeed a call to die. Far before they were martyred, Jesus' disciples were called to die to themselves. They were called to count everything—their family, their money, their status, their cultural capital—as loss in order to move Jesus into His deserved spot as Lord of their lives. This is not glamorous work but gruesome, agonizing, daily dying to our

own whims and desires in order to fulfill what Jesus has called us to do. What are the practical ways that you take up your cross and die to self each day?

(7.9) Read Luke 14:28-35

Following Jesus is not something we are encouraged to do without forethought. Our Savior does not hide the fine print from us but instead invites us to read carefully before we sign on the dotted line. He isn't being secretive about hidden fees; He wants us to know exactly what following Him will cost us. His desire is not to discourage sincere followers from worshiping Him but rather to encourage those sincere followers to know exactly what they're getting into before they start making bold proclamations of allegiance. Jesus wants us to be prepared for the sacrifice that He has called us to. Following Jesus will cost us everything. And if everything is not what we are willing to give, then we are not ready to commit to the calling of being His disciples. How can we understand exactly what it means to follow Jesus?

(7.10) Conclusion

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- Being Jesus' disciple requires a clear commitment (Luke 9:57-62).
- Being Jesus' disciple requires a total commitment (Luke 14:25-27).
- Being Jesus' disciple requires a costly commitment (Luke 14:28-35).
- How have you responded to these truths from Scripture? When you first believed the gospel, what made the potential cost of following Jesus seem worth it to you? What are some ways we can make sure we are clear to unbelievers about the costly commitment of following Jesus?