

Lesson 6 – How Much Does It Cost to Follow Christ?

(Read Luke 14:15-24) (Ask the student, What did all the guests do?) Everyone began to excuse themselves. Excuses. Apologies. Pretexts. Other things were more important to them.

Time for Christ

The first case. (Ask the student what the first excuse was) "I have bought a field, and I must go and see it." The man was more interested in his possessions than in sharing with friends. In this way Christ is telling us that materialism prevents many people from following Christ. For many people material things are more important than spiritual things.

The second case. (Ask the student what the second excuse was) "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I must go try them out." This case is very similar to the first. Here we see one of the most common excuses: "I don't have time." The man had chores that interested him more than the invitation to dinner. This represents Christ's invitation to the spiritual banquet to which He invites us.

We live in a material world. We live in a material body. You have to eat, sleep, and heal from diseases. You have to pay the bills. You have to... You have to... But, although we live in a physical body, we are spirits. The problem of the human being is that we can easily ignore the "must..." of the spirit. (Ask the student: In Matthew 4:4, what did Christ say we need in order to live?) "Every word that proceeds out of God's mouth." We can live physically without God's word, but we cannot live spiritually without His Word.

(Read Luke 10:38-42) (Ask the student what Martha's problem was) Martha was so busy and upset with many things. Certainly, Martha was a good woman who did a good deed, preparing food for Jesus. But Martha gave too much importance to the physical: "anxious and troubled." That attitude led Martha to try to take away Mary from the blessing of listening to Jesus. Said the Lord, "Mary has chosen the good part." He also said, "One thing is needed." One thing. We think that certain physical things are the necessary things and that we will attend to spiritual things only "if there is time." But Christ invites us to understand that the spiritual is more necessary. Yes, we have to eat, work, and sleep; but, when death comes, the only important thing is how we have lived spiritually.

Family and Christ

The third case. (Going back to Luke 14, ask the student what the third excuse was) "I have married a wife, and therefore I can't come." In this case, the family was more important than Christ. Of course, family is very important. But following Christ is even more important. In Luke 14:26, Jesus added, "If anyone comes to me, and doesn't disregard [some versions say "hate"] his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he can't be my disciple." Disregard or hate the whole family? Matthew 10:37 helps us: "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me isn't worthy of me." Whom do you love more? Our love for Christ must be so great as compared to our love for family that Christ uses the word "disregard" or "hate" to emphasize the difference.

Many times there are people who do not follow Christ because of family conflicts. There are those who do not follow Christ if the spouse does not agree. There are those who do not follow Christ because of all the chores of caring for their little children. There are people who do not follow Christ because they do not want to leave the religion of their parents. The reality is that if you truly love Christ, you will love your family more. How is that? Because Christ teaches us what true love is. However, if someone loves family more than Christ, they are lost.

You Have to Decide

Returning to Luke 14, Christ spoke of "hating" (disregarding, loving less) not only relatives, but also "his own life," adding "whoever doesn't bear his own cross and come after me can't be my disciple" (14:26-27). (Ask the student what his concept of carrying his cross is.) The cross has the idea of suffering. It symbolizes one's decision to endure whatever comes to serve Christ. Yes, there are many blessings in Christ. However, there will be difficulties as well. One has to decide to follow Christ, come what may. Jesus has to be more important to us than anything or anyone else.

After mentioning the cross that we have to carry, Christ continues speaking in 14:28-33 about calculating the cost. He does not want us to follow him blindly, but instead urges us to first meditate on whether we are willing to give our whole lives to Him, whatever the cost.

(Read Matthew 7:21) (Ask the student what they understand from this verse.) Professing to follow Christ is not enough. Praying to Christ for salvation is not enough. You have to do the will of God. One must sincerely commit to having the attitude of Christ when he prayed in the Garden: "Not my will, but yours be done." In other words, what it costs to follow Christ is giving up my will and deciding to give up everything God wants me to give up and do everything God wants me to do. It is a total surrender.

Questions

1. What is materialism? (to live only for physical things)
2. When someone says, "I don't have time," what do they really mean? (that I have other things that are more important to me)
3. What did Jesus mean by "one thing is needed"? (from the point of view of eternity, only the spiritual matters)
4. What did Jesus mean by "hating (disregarding)" relatives? (love them less than Him)
5. What did Jesus mean by "bearing/carrying the cross"? (it symbolizes the decision to endure whatever comes to serve Christ)
6. Who do you love most? (if it is not Christ/God, one is not prepared to be a Christian)