

Family Bible Series for March 5: Christ demands top priority in a Christian's life

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Christ demands top priority in a Christian's life

- Luke 9:57-62; 14:25-33

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“What is expected of me?” This is a question we often pose before making significant commitments. It is an appropriate and fair question.

This question also is appropriate as we contemplate our spiritual journey. As believers in Jesus Christ, what exactly does our Lord expect of us? Jesus was very clear in answering this question as he journeyed toward the cross.



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In our first text (Luke 9:57-62), the setting was a special training mission. It lasted only a few brief months between the Feast of Passover and Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus and his disciples were ministering in the Galilee region, and the Master was teaching his disciples some valuable lessons about following him. In approximately one year, Jesus would be crucified, and he wanted his disciples to have a solid foundation to follow.

In the second passage (Luke 14:25-33), the setting was more public. Great crowds followed Jesus, yet he taught them the same principles of discipleship. If you want to be a faithful follower of Jesus, then you must place him first above all.

Christ above personal comfort (Luke 9:57-58)

Frank Tyger once wrote, “Some people will do anything to be able to do nothing.” Jesus did not want his followers to have this attitude, so he spoke to them about the discipline of placing him above personal comfort.

As they were walking along the road, a man approached Jesus and made a bold proclamation. “I will follow you wherever you go” (v. 57). Matthew tells us the man was a scribe. Scribes were notorious for their bold promises, yet they often lacked follow-through.

Jesus reminded the scribe that following him meant rejecting shallow

commitments. Our Lord declared, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (v. 58). Jesus made it clear that following him often would cost the luxury of personal comfort.

As Jesus calls each of us to follow him today, we must be reminded, like the scribe, that complete discipleship calls for complete surrender. Jesus Christ must be placed above all, including any personal ease we must surrender.

We often hear stories of missionaries and vocational Christian workers who sacrifice personal comfort for the kingdom of God. We think their calling is above and beyond our own. However, God calls each believer in Jesus to place him over personal comfort.

Christ above family loyalty (Luke 9:59-62; 14:25-26)

As Jesus continued with the disciples, two other men were offered the wonderful opportunity of following him. Both men rejected the offer by giving excuses concerning their family. If these men were scribes, like the previous man, then these religious leaders were well versed in excuses.

The first man said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father” (v. 59). Most likely, the man’s father hadn’t died yet, but the man didn’t want to leave his father to wander the Judean hillside with Jesus. Jesus replied, “Let the dead bury their dead” (v. 60). Some theologians have contemplated such a harsh reply from Jesus. But he perceived the man only was offering an excuse.

Likewise, the second man declared, “I will follow you Lord, but let me first say goodbye to my family” (v. 61). Jesus responded with an ancient, agricultural proverb common in biblical days: “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God” (v. 62). You cannot plow a straight furrow if you are looking back.

Christians often are faced with the dilemma of how to relate to family members while serving the Lord. Are we to neglect our families in serving Jesus? Are we to turn our backs on loved ones in order to follow Christ? Should we stay home from worship when family drops by unexpectedly? Should we take God's tithe and use it to help family members?

Jesus gave us answers to such familial dilemmas when he boldly asserted in Luke 14:26 that believers must "hate" family members or they cannot be his disciples. "Hate" is a powerful verb, which our Lord chose to use. He was employing what was known in ancient writing as exaggerated contrast. Jesus did not mean we are to literally hate our family members. His point was that following him must take precedence over all others, including our family members.

Christ above any cost (Luke 14:27-33)

During Jesus' later Perea ministry, he further instructed his followers on the cost of discipleship. He told them there would be a cross to bear (14:27).

Then, our Lord punctuated his declaration with two analogies. The first referred to a person intending to build a tower first counting the cost to see if the funds were sufficient to complete the project (14:28-30). The second referred to a king contemplating war against another king and counting to see if his army was sufficient to win the victory (14:31-32). In either case, a calculated deliberation was required in order to determine the cost of the project.

In much the same way, Jesus said his followers are not to make rash, hasty decisions in following him. There will be costs associated with following Jesus. We must sit down, count the costs and then place Christ above all.

Martin Luther, the German reformer of the 16th century, once stated, “A religion that gives nothing, costs nothing and suffers nothing is worth nothing.”

Are you willing to pay the cost of following Jesus? The faithful follower of Jesus places unquestioned allegiance to him over any other cost.

Discussion questions

- Which personal comfort of yours are you tempted to place above service for Christ?
- In what ways have family members hindered you in your following Jesus? In what ways have family members helped your walk with him?
- What is the most costly item you have surrendered to follow Jesus?



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