

September 8, 2019  
The Cost of Discipleship



Adult Resource  
Sheet 1

## Focus on Luke 14:25–33

*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**

**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?**

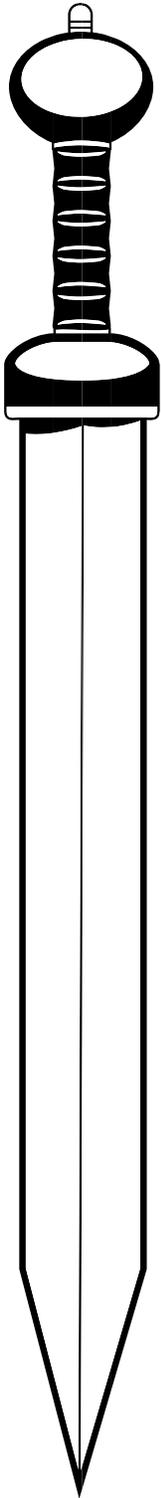
—From “*Pastoral Perspective*” by  
Charles E. Raynal

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.

## 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.