

A Decision to Follow Christ

Last week we focused on the most fundamental spiritual decision a person can make, a decision for Christ, to believe in Him and trust Him *every day*. But the next step is one Jesus Himself calls each of us to make – to be a *follower* or *disciple*. This decision has a price.

Jesus Christ must come before _____ .

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1. One of the most destructive errors Christians make in Scripture passages like this is to confuse *believing in* Jesus Christ with *following* (being a *disciple of*) Jesus Christ. Some pastors and theologians have contributed to this confusion by saying that ‘believing’ or ‘faith’ *includes* obedience. Read John 1.12; 3.16; 5.24; 6.47; Acts 16.31; Romans 3.20; 4.4-5; Galatians 2.16; 3.2; Ephesians 2.8-9; Titus 3.5; 1 John 5.10-13. What must a person do to receive eternal life? Is it a gift, or is it something you *earn* by doing good works? Now read Luke 14.26, 27, and 33. Is being a disciple a free gift, or does it require obedience?
2. In Luke 14.26, Jesus says that if we don’t “hate” our father, mother, wife, children, brothers, and sisters, we cannot be a disciple (or follower) of Him. Does God actually want us to abhor our closest relatives? Read Ephesians 5.25 and 6.1-4. What does the word ‘hate’ mean in Scriptures like Malachi 1.2-3; Romans 9.13; Matthew 6.24? What level of love, in comparison to our amount of love for all others, is Jesus calling for?
3. According to an English Idiom dictionary, ‘carry your own cross’ means ‘deal with your own burdens.’ Is this what Jesus meant in Luke 14.27? To help clarify the meaning, read Mark 8.34-35, where Jesus expands on His call. What was the cross a symbol of in Jesus’ day? What did it *cost* a person who carried their cross? What *must* a person who wants to follow Jesus give up? Does this mean we have to die? What else *must* a follower of Jesus give up (v33)?