

• For Jesus, quality was as important as quantity – discipleship is costly

### We must

1. Put discipleship above closeness to friends and family

• Our closest relatives may oppose our zeal for God

2. Put discipleship above our love of ourselves

• Lose our lives

3. Accept the painful 'crucifixions' God sends to us

When large crowds followed Jesus, it would lead Him to speak specially about the fact that discipleship is costly. The Sermon on the Mount was preached because of the great crowds that were listening to Jesus<sup>□1</sup>. Now again as Jesus is travelling to Jerusalem, something similar happens. There are crowds of people following Him and claiming to be His disciples<sup>□2</sup>. Jesus gives them a word of warning. For Him, quality was as important as quantity. Jesus wanted people to come to experience His kingdom. The more disciples the better! Yet it would not be very valuable to have a great quantity of followers, if the quality of discipleship were poor. So Jesus has something to say to them about the sacrifice and dedication that is required if His disciples are to inherit what God wants to give them.

1. **We must put discipleship above closeness to friends and family.** We have to 'hate' even people who are close to us if they get in the way of our responding to Jesus and His call upon our lives. 'Hate' is a relative term. It means to love God's will so much that in comparison what we feel for others is like hate. It means that we vastly prefer the will of God, above our love for those dearest and nearest to us.

When we seek to reap the blessings of God's kingdom, we may get some surprises. Sometimes our closest relatives and friends will be opposed to our having any kind of zeal for God and His kingdom. At such a point we have to put God above those who are most precious to us.

2. **We must put discipleship above our love of ourselves.** Jesus says, 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate... even his own life – he cannot be my disciple'<sup>□1</sup>. We love ourselves a lot! We love our reputation, our comfort, our pleasures, our security. But if we are to reap the blessings of the kingdom of God, we must deliberately put these in second place.

Jesus did not want anyone to follow Him carelessly or lightly. He gave advance warning that we have to lose our lives in order to find them.

3. **We must accept the painful 'crucifixions' God sends to us.** If we are to make progress in our experience of God, and in being used by Him, we shall need preparation. One kind of preparation God sends upon us consists of 'crucifixions', experiences that are very painful, but if we accept them they will bring immense blessing in our lives<sup>□1</sup>. What are these 'crucifixions'? It may be suffering that we have to go through without bitterness or complaining. It may be delay or opposition. It may be enmity from others that we have to handle without resentment. Or the thing that 'crucifies' us may be giving up something that is not God's will for our lives. It may be swallowing our pride. But God is likely to send something to us that is extremely painful. It was the habit of Roman soldiers to force a man about to be crucified to carry his own cross. He had to assist in his own crucifixion. God asks us to do something similar in our spiritual experience.

□1 see Luke 6:17

□2 14:25

□1 14:26

□1 14:27

**Jesus asks us**

4. To consider this costliness of the kingdom

4. **Jesus asks us to consider this costliness of the kingdom.** He puts it to the disciples – and to us as well – in terms of two illustrations<sup>□1□2</sup>. We are being asked to face this matter ahead of time. It will not be much use when some crisis comes to start deciding whether we want God’s kingdom. Jesus asks us to consider the matter now, before the crisis comes.

□1 14:28-30  
□2 14:31-33

If a man is about to build a tower will he not, before he starts building, consider what it is going to cost<sup>□1</sup>?

□1 14:28-30

5. To consider the power of the enemy, and the fierceness of the battle

5. **Jesus asks us to consider the power of the enemy, and the fierceness of the battle<sup>□1</sup>.** If an army general is about to start a battle, will he not consider, before he starts fighting, whether he is willing to endure everything that will be needed for him to get victory<sup>□2</sup>?

□1 14:31-33  
□2 14:31-33

**What is needed is**

6. ‘Saltiness’ – distinctiveness and sharp purity

6. **What is needed is ‘saltiness’ – distinctiveness and sharp purity.** Jesus says, ‘Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?’<sup>□1</sup>. Salt was famous for its sharp taste. It used to be rubbed into meat to keep the meat from going bad. The Christian needs to be ‘salty’, sharply different from the world. If, as life goes forward, we lose this ‘sharpness of taste’, it ruins our usefulness to God.

□1 14:34

• Saltiness – once lost is not easy to recover

Once this ‘saltiness’ has been lost, it is not easy to recover. If we compromise with sin we may be forgiven, but our usefulness to God might be lost beyond recovery. If we eventually become spiritually deaf, there is no recovery.

7. Attentiveness to what God says to us

7. **What will be needed is attentiveness to what God says to us.** We stay ‘salty’ by continually hearing from God<sup>□1</sup>. ‘He that has ears to hear, let that person hear,’ says Jesus. Some are so spiritually deaf that they don’t even have ears. Others have been woken up by God, and they are able to hear. They have ears to hear – but even then some don’t hear. The world does not have ears for Jesus. Disciples have ears, but not all of them hear. So Jesus says, ‘He that has ears to hear, let that person hear.’ We need two things, not one. First, we need ears: we need the Holy Spirit to make us new people so that we are able to hear God. But then there is a second thing: now that we have ears, we need to actually hear. Hearing and responding is the way forward in the kingdom of God.

□1 14:35

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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