

# Following Jesus in 2014

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[ 0 : 00 ] Why don't you take your Bibles this morning and open them to the ninth chapter of the gospel of Luke.

And I promise you we're going to be finishing that chapter. We've been in chapter 9 for some time. A lot of verses in chapter 9, a lot of things to preach on and teach on.

Our text will be verses 57 through 62 through to the end of the chapter. Luke chapter 9 starting with verse 57.

Now it came, or rather it happened, as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to him, Lord, I will follow you wherever you go.

And Jesus said to him, Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. Then he said to another, Follow me.

[ 1 : 09 ] But he said, Lord, let me first go and bury my father. Jesus said to him, Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.

And another also said, Lord, I will follow you, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house. And Jesus said to him, No one, having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

And that's God's word, isn't it? Now, as I was studying this passage over the last couple of weeks, the thought struck me.

I wonder if Joel Osteen has ever preached on this passage. Well, what do the, you know, the, quote, prosperity preachers of our day, what do they do with this text or texts like it?

And there are many of them like this very passage. And then the thought came to me, Don, what are you going to do with it?

[ 2 : 21 ] And, you know, I was, I have to admit to you, I was very tempted to postpone my preaching on this particular passage in Luke. Just kind of wait, maybe preach something else.

You know, it's the holidays and, you know, and I can just pick something else to preach on. And I thought about postponing it primarily because of this season, the Christmas season.

I know Christmas is over, but we're still kind of in that, in that kind of way of thinking. And even still, many are still celebrating the Christmas holiday. I thought I might just postpone it, you know, because of the season.

Because, obviously, you know, as I read the passage, Jesus in this passage is pointing to sacrifice. He's pointing to sacrifice, self-denial, abandonment of earthly comforts to follow Jesus.

He's pointing to the willingness even to forsake family. In order to follow Jesus. And I'm afraid to admit that the Christmas season, I mean, let's just agree to agree on this, that the Christmas season for most of us has little to do with sacrifice.

[ 3 : 33 ] It really doesn't, does it? It really has more to do with getting rather than losing. It's kind of the nature of the holiday.

Now, I know that we sacrifice, you know, to give things, and it's better to give than to receive, but we kind of like receiving too, you know. And Christmas, I think, has, at least in the way that it has evolved today, has very little to do with self-denial.

In fact, it has more to do with self-indulgence, especially when it comes to eating. Can I get a witness on that? All right.

So gift-giving, you know, we kind of indulge those we love with the gifts and shower our family and friends, especially our little children with gifts this time of the year, and it's kind of indulgence.

And all you have to do, really, is just look at the bags of wadded-up Christmas paper and bows that you carried out to the trash can, you know, on Christmas Day. I mean, I had this big old huge bag.

[ 4 : 46 ] Some of you may have had more than one. Now, please understand, I'm not trying to rob you of your Christmas joy. You know, to be kind of a killjoy here after Christmas is over.

I had a great time, and I spoke with a number of you, and you just really enjoyed your Christmas time, and I did as well. And I'm not trying to rob you of that, the happiness that surrounds that. You know, the overindulgence kind of put aside. I'm not trying this morning to make you feel guilty about the money that you spent this Christmas, the money that was spent on you.

No, that's not my intention. I'm not even trying to say that, you know, the way we typically celebrate our Christmas day or Christmas season is somehow inherently wrong.

I'm not saying that. And, you know, I would be a pretty sorry hypocrite if that was my goal this morning in my preaching. Besides that, God, let's just understand, God has graciously allowed us to prosper more than perhaps any other nation in this world, maybe even in history.

[ 5 : 57 ] Allowed us to prosper, and that's why we can celebrate Christmas the way we do. And there isn't anything particularly wrong with that, or at least nothing I want to get into this morning.

And yet I still would rather just not preach on this particular passage this morning. But I'm going to. I have to. It's not just because it's the next passage in our study or my preaching through the Gospel of Luke. But I have to because it is, this time is an excellent time to give pause to your life and to consider each one's personal commitment to Christ.

This is a good time for that. I mean, we are not on the very eve of the new year, but in the time, in the eve before 2014.

Can you hardly believe it? So it's a good time to give pause to your life and to consider your life and consider each one's personal commitment to Christ.

[ 7 : 03 ] And maybe ask the question, what was the nature of that commitment to follow Christ back when you first made it? It's good to reflect upon that and go back to that. And I would even ask, what is the nature of it now, your commitment to Christ?

What is the nature of it? What does it look like now? In your relationship with Christ, your commitment to Him? And, of course, then what will it be for the year 2014?

Now, looking at this passage, let me kind of give you a rather long introduction. In fact, I'd rather just call it a sermon before the sermon, okay?

Now, don't look at your watches. All right, you're thinking. Let me just point out a few things kind of by way of introduction. In the first place, looking at this passage, follow is the key word in the passage.

Now, that's pretty obvious, isn't it? Verse 57, the first man says to Jesus, I will follow you everywhere you go, no matter where you go. I will follow you, he said.

[ 8 : 11 ] Verse 57. In verse 59, the third man, or Jesus rather, says to the second man, follow me. And then in verse 61, the third man, again, says to Jesus, I will follow you.

So, obviously, clearly, following Jesus is the subject of the passage. I didn't have to tell you that. It's very clear. But I will go a step further.

Second, it is clear also that following Jesus potentially, maybe even always, and in some sense always, requires sacrifice.

There is always a cost to following Jesus, a cost to discipleship. And that's also very clear in the text.

And, of course, I would say to you that this is not a new subject, is it? I mean, if you've been here all along as I've been preaching through Luke, then you know that we've already dealt with the subject of the cost of discipleship.

[ 9 : 14 ] We've already dealt with that here in chapter 9. All we have to do is go back there to verse 23. And remember, Jesus said, if anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

So, there's the theme right there. The theme, which is the high cost of discipleship, is repeated over and over and over by Jesus. You can't miss it.

It is everywhere in Jesus' teaching. Now, you can avoid reading it if you want to. You can even try to explain it away, say that he means something else, and many do that.

You can even just simply disregard the teaching, and most do that. Third, again, this is just kind of introduction, just kind of set up this passage so that we can, I guess, fully grasp the real truth that is being taught here in this particular passage.

Third, the word follow, again, *akalutheo* in the Greek, is, when Jesus uses it, always, I'll give you a little Greek grammar here, always present tense and always imperative mood.

[10:29] Again, that's just, I'm talking about the grammatical form of the Greek verb there in the passage. Let me explain it this way and do it in kind of a reverse order.

Imperative mood, what does that mean? It means it's a command. Every time Jesus, and he did it many, many times in his ministry, every time Jesus said those words, follow me, it was always in the form of a command.

Never a suggestion. Never, you know, you know, it would be a good thing, good idea for you to follow me. It's always a command.

Jesus commanded to Peter and Andrew, follow me. He commanded Matthew, who was sitting at the tax collector's booth, follow me.

It was a command. Jesus said to all 12 of the apostles at one point or another, follow me. He commanded them. Jesus also commanded the rich young ruler, just to pull another example, and there are many other examples.

[11:29] He commanded the rich young ruler, remember, follow me. It is always a command. Always a command. In that sense, the gospel is a command.

And here in our passage, the second man in our passage, Jesus says to him, commands him, follow me. Follow me. It is a command. And I would say that the command is implied in all three instances here.

With all three of these men, the first and the third man, it is implied. The second man is made very explicit. Jesus commands, follow me. It is a command. So it's an imperative.

It is also, I said, in the present tense. Now, what does that mean? Well, in the Greek language, it means that it is to be a continuous action. This is very important to understand.

It is to be a continuous action. So Jesus means, from now on in your life, follow me. From now on. So it's not just follow me.

[12:36] It is follow me right now and from now on. It's continuous action. And I would insert here at this point that this is where American evangelism has evolved into something quite different from early New Testament evangelism.

That is, I'm talking about the evangelism of Jesus that we have presented on the pages of Scripture. The evangelism even of the apostles and the early disciples, the early church. Very different. The way evangelism is done today. The evangelism of today. And just think about this.

The evangelism of today is for the moment. It's for a moment. An emotional event.

You know the formula. Pray a prayer. Make a decision. Accept Christ. And that's all you have to do to be a Christian. It's for the moment. But the evangelism of Jesus focused not only on the moment, of course.

[13:42] But it really focused on a lifetime. And you just search the Scriptures and you search the Gospels and look at Jesus' evangelism.

Jesus never attempted to, quote, get people saved. End quote. You just won't find that. He never tried to move people to a moment of emotion, a moment of crisis, a moment of decision, a moment of acceptance.

Never. In fact, Jesus never led anyone to just pray a prayer. In fact, you won't find that in the New Testament where Jesus led someone to pray a prayer.

I'm not saying we shouldn't pray a prayer. And that coming to Christ involves speaking to Him and praying. I'm not suggesting that. But to make it just a formulaic thing.

You just won't find that in Jesus' evangelism. It's not there. Jesus was not interested in the moment. He was interested not in an event.

[14:49] And so, repeatedly, you have Jesus seemingly chasing would-be disciples away. That's the way it seems to us. That is, Jesus made things difficult.

He made things difficult for many would-be disciples. We, on the other hand, seek to make things so easy. So easy that who could refuse?

You remember the rich young ruler in Luke chapter 18? Perfect example. This rich young ruler. This young man. Very intelligent man. Very wealthy man. Did everything that anybody would ever want. And he came to Jesus and he said, What shall I do to inherit eternal life? That sounds like a good question. I mean, he kind of appears to be a can't-miss convert to Christianity.

And yet, Jesus said, Sell all you have and give it to the poor and come follow me. Wow. By today's evangelistic methodology, that would be a big mistake.

[15:57] In fact, you failed to draw the net at that point. And we would never do that. Most would never do that. In modern-day evangelism, that would be the same as running the guy off.

Which is, in effect, what Jesus did. You just look at all the evangelistic encounters recorded in the Gospels, and there are quite a few of them.

And you'll have to admit that it wasn't easy to get saved when you were talking to Jesus. He always raised the barrier of sin, which should be raised.

He always was raising the barrier of self-denial, and taking up the cross, and forsaking family, and being willing to give up everything you have, even if your life, even your life if need be.

And in our passage here in Luke 9, Jesus really effectively chased away all three of these guys. I think that's implied in the passage. Or so it seems, that he chased them away.

[17:05] But you see, here's the advantage, of course, Jesus has over every one of us, and any evangelist today. Jesus knew their hearts. He knew their hearts. He knew that these guys were enamored by Jesus' dynamic persona.

And he certainly had that. Very attractive, very alluring. People were very interested in him. They were drawn to him. Just his personality. And he knew that these guys were attracted by the power and the authority of his teaching and preaching.

And, of course, also, maybe even primarily, the wow of his miracles. They were attracted by that. And he also knew that they were responding.

At this point, when they said, I will follow you everywhere you go, he knew that they were responding to the emotion of a moment, of the moment, an event. That is why, in each case, Jesus chased them off.

He's not interested in a moment. He's only interested in a lifetime. He's not interested in a moment of decision.

[18:19] Brought about by some crisis. Or some emotion. Or some very persuasive preacher. Something like that. He's not interested in the moment.

A moment of decision. He's only interested in a commitment for life. Jesus said in Luke 14, 26. And it will be sometime before we get to Luke 14.

But listen to what he said in verse 26 of chapter 14. If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

And whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Now what Jesus meant by hating father and mother, that's what you want to know.

We have to wait until we get to chapter 14. But if you listen real close to the rest of this sermon, I think you'll discover what he meant. Because he means the same thing every time he mentions this thing about denying self and denying others and denying things.

[19:30] He always means the same thing. This is what we're going to ultimately get to. In fact, we'll get to that next. Because I want to give you a fourth thing. By way of introduction.

Or if you want to, this is the sermonette before the sermon. Fourth, the real issue here is the worth of Christ.

That's the real issue. What he is worth to you. The issue is not what you must give up to follow Christ.

That's what we want to know. You know, if you could just give me a list of things here so that I would know that. That's not the issue. Exactly what or what specifically you must give up to follow Christ.

That's usually what we focus on when we see these deny self passages and take up your cross passages. And the issue is not what you would be willing to give up if need be to follow Christ.

[20:44] That's not really the issue. You see, don't focus on the what in these passages. Focus on the who.

The who. Because the real issue here is the value you place on Christ in relation to everything and everyone else in your life.

That's the issue here. Is Jesus worth the loss of any and all other things in your life? That's a tough question to answer.

But that is what's wrapped up in this whole issue of true discipleship. A true follower of Christ. We're not talking here about, you know, a second or third or higher level of discipleship. We're talking about what salvation is. What conversion to Christ really is. What being a true disciple, a true follower of Christ, really means.

[ 21 : 48 ] What it really is. Is Jesus more important than anyone and anything in this world? That's the issue here.

And that, more than anything else, is what should characterize a true disciple of Christ. And I would say to you that we spend our entire lives actually learning the depth of that truth.

One more thing by way of introduction. Fifth, a disciple, a quote, disciple, is not necessarily a follower of Christ.

You say, what? It's not necessarily a follower of Christ. Not in the sense that Jesus means, what Jesus means when he says, follow me.

And here's what I mean. Here's the point of this. In Matthew's account of this same story, he even called one of these guys a disciple. Referred to him as a disciple. And yet, it is very clear, I think, in the text, that none of these three guys ultimately followed him.

[ 23 : 00 ] That is, none of them were ultimately saved. And so, Matthew calls him disciple. How can that be? Well, the word disciple comes from the Greek word mathetes, and it means basically learner.

That's the meaning of the word, learner. Or pupil. We might use that word. Now, sometimes the word is used in the narrow, very specific sense to refer to true believers, true followers of Christ. Even the apostles were sometimes referred to as disciples. But other times, the word is used in a very broad sense to refer to a larger number of people who were attracted to Jesus when he was on this earth, and they followed him around.

They were referred to as disciples in a very generic sense, in a very broad sense. They sat under his teaching and preaching. They observed his miracles. In fact, some of them, many of them, had been healed by Jesus.

And they were following him around. And they were called disciples. But they were not true believers and followers of Christ, not in the saving way.

[ 24 : 17 ] Remember Judas? And for these disciples, this broader number of disciples, ultimately, many of them abandoned him.

Abandoned Jesus. His disciples abandoned Jesus. Many of them did. In large numbers, as a matter of fact. Jesus said in John 6, 64, for example, But there are some of you, he said, speaking to this large group of disciples, the ones who are following him around.

He said, But there are some of you who do not believe. You don't really believe. For Jesus, he goes on to say, For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe and who would betray him.

And he said, Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to me unless it has been granted to him by my Father. From that time many, now listen to this, from that time, many of his disciples went back and walked with him no more.

They were disciples. They were not true believers. And, you know, there are these kinds of disciples in every church today.

[ 25 : 35 ] Even, I would suspect, here at Highland Park Baptist Church. Paul describes them in 2 Timothy 3.

2 Timothy 3, 5, he says, They have a form of godliness. That means from all appearance, from everything on the outside, what they say, what they do, how they act, they appear to be believers. Have a form of godliness. But deny its power. Translation, they don't really have the true thing inside.

Now listen to this. Always learning. Always learning. By the way, that's the verb form of mathetes. It's translated disciple.

So they're disciples. Learners. Pupils. Always learning. But then what does he say? Never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. That is, they never were really saved.

[ 26 : 43 ] Such were the three unnamed men in our passage for this morning. That's what we need to understand before we really look at this dialogue between these three would-be disciples and Jesus.

These guys were not disciples in the sense of true followers of Christ, believers in Christ. Each one was a disciple of Jesus in the broad sense of the word.

They were sitting under the teaching and preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were drawn to what he was teaching and preaching. They were drawn, I think, primarily to his miracles.

And they were drawn to what I think they hoped was a better life. What was the promise, they thought, of a better life.

And they were drawn to that. And so, they made a profession of faith. I will follow you wherever you go. I think each three, all three of them said that.

[ 27 : 43 ] They made a profession of faith. But it was not real faith. Not real. And Jesus knew that. And so, he exposed it and basically sent these guys packing.

That's really what he did. And they were just like the people in John 2.23. John says that when Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover during the feast, many believed in his name.

Wonderful! And then he added this. Many believed in his name when they saw the signs which he did. Well, maybe they were true believers.

No. But Jesus did not commit himself to them. That is, he didn't put his faith in their faith. Because he knew all men and he had no need that anyone should testify of man.

He didn't need anybody else to tell him, you know, I think they're true believers. Or, you know, bounce that off of somebody else. Say, what do you think? Do you think this is really genuine, really true? This is kind of something we do quite often.

[ 28 : 48 ] But Jesus didn't need anybody to tell him because he knew what was in man. And he knew that we're not true disciples. And he knew that of these three guys in our passage.

Now, looking at these three encounters, they have a number of things in common. First of all, there is the command.

In all three, there is the command to follow Jesus. Now, that is implied in the first and third guy, but it's very explicit in the second guy, but I believe we're to understand that all three were commanded by the Lord Jesus to follow him.

Second, there is a commitment to follow Jesus. That's true of all three of them. A commitment, a commitment. Each one made a sincere commitment to follow Jesus.

Third, there is the caveat to the commitment to follow Jesus. Each one added a caveat or a qualification.

[ 29 : 54 ] I will follow you, but first. And then fourth, there is the counter from Jesus.

Each caveat, each qualification is countered by Jesus with his own qualification. He basically says to them when it comes to following me, there can be no caveats, no qualifications.

That is, Jesus will not accept, I will follow you but first. These are the things in common. Now remember, I want to bring you back to the real issue.

The issue here is the worth of Christ over everything and everyone else. Jesus will not take second place. And listen, the Bible is not presenting for us here a standard of personal sacrifice in order to be saved.

The Bible is not providing a list of things here that you must give up, that you're going to have to give up or at least be willing to give up in order to be saved. That's not what we have here or any other place in the Bible by the way.

[ 31 : 06 ] And understand, He may require that you give up everything or He may not require that you give up anything except your sin, of course.

Oh, that's up to Him. The question is, does Jesus mean more to you than any other thing or person in this life? Does following Jesus mean more to you than any other thing or person in this life?

Alright, now, quickly, what these men said to Jesus and Jesus' response to what they said identifies for us, I think, I could call it, three idols.

Three idols. Idol is anything that comes before Jesus, comes before God. What these men said and how Jesus responded to them identifies for us three idols that keep us from following Jesus.

Here they are, earthly security, earthly prosperity, and earthly community.

[ 32 : 25 ] Those aren't your traditional idols, are they? Well, one of them, we might call it that.

These are three things that stand between us, three things or three broad categories that keep us or would tempt us to deny following Christ.

They are idols in our lives. They are things that come before Christ in our lives. Security, prosperity, community. And so, let's get to it. The first man reveals that we must, number one, follow Jesus

even at the expense of earthly security.

That's what we're to understand from this first encounter. Follow Jesus at the expense of earthly security.

Because knowing Jesus and following Jesus is more important than earthly security. He may require you to give that up in order to follow him.

He may not, but he may. But he must be worth it to you. That you would give up even your security. Verse 57, someone said to Jesus, Lord, I will follow you wherever you go.

[ 33 : 38 ] Sounds good. Sign that guy up. I mean, how could you miss? This guy's ready. Sign him up. Most churches would.

But wait. Jesus then says, you don't know what you're saying. or really what Jesus says is, you don't really mean it.

You don't really mean it. Verse 58, foxes have holes. Here's Jesus' response to what looked like a very genuine desire and faith to be a believer in Christ.

And Jesus responded this way in verse 58, foxes have holes. Everybody knows that. Birds of the air have nests. Of course they do. It's all common knowledge. Just nature.

But the son of man, that's a designation for the Messiah, the God-man. The son of man has nowhere to lay his head.

[ 34 : 43 ] That is, the creator of all creatures sacrificed all creature comforts. That's what Jesus said about himself. And that was true, wasn't it.

By this time, by the way, by this time in Jesus' ministry, no one even wanted him in their town. Even Nazareth, the people of Nazareth, Jesus' own hometown, had rejected him, didn't want him in their town.

The Samaritans didn't want him in their town or any of their villages. Neither did Gadara, where he exercised that fierce demon.

They didn't want him there anymore. and neither did the people of Capernaum and Jerusalem wasn't going to want him there either. So it's true. But what is Jesus saying to this man?

He is saying, you cannot be my disciple unless following me is more important than your earthly security. And the most basic of all earthly security is the security of a roof over your head.

[ 35 : 48 ] security. They took the most basic of securities to make the point that whatever it is that makes your life secure, house, clothes, food, you know, heat in the winter, cool in the summer, you know, whatever it may be, following me must be more important to you than even those securities.

securities. What is Jesus worth to you? This is the question that I must ask myself. And we all must ask, what is Jesus worth to us?

Is he of greater worth than even the most basic of human need? Your earthly security. Second, the second would-be disciple reveals that we must follow Jesus at the expense of earthly prosperity. money. Material wealth. Follow Jesus at the expense of that. He must be worth more to you than even your prosperity.

Verse 59, then Jesus said to another, follow me. Lord, let me first go and bury my father.

[ 37 : 16 ] So right off we're thinking, poor guy, his daddy has died. And he wants to go to his funeral. And that's a pretty reasonable request.

He wants to go to the funeral of his father. And that's what we're thinking. But what does Jesus say in response? Kind of catches us off guard.

Verse 60, Jesus said to him, let the dead bury their own dead. Basically, you follow me now. It's now or never. That's what he said.

And really, it's only because of our cultural ignorance that we might think that this is a little hard-hearted. maybe even unreasonable.

But you see, understand this, the man's father is not yet dead. He's not dead. The phrase, I must bury my father, was a common expression used in Jesus' day.

[ 38 : 19 ] And it did not mean that the father was dead. In fact, it meant just the opposite. It meant that he's still kicking, he's still alive. And that this man needed to stay home until his father finally passed away.

And the reason why he wanted to do that and needed to do that was because of his inheritance. And so, he would stay, he would have to be left there at the house until his father died, until the estate was taken care of, and then he could assure that he got his inheritance.

And if he left home before his father died, then he could risk the potentiality of losing his inheritance. inheritance. So it's all about money. It's all about prosperity.

Now, doesn't that make a little more sense to us? It's all about prosperity. And I'm sure that the man had rationalized the whole thing in his mind because we're very good at that.

I'm sure that he probably heard what Jesus said to the previous man about the fact that Jesus didn't even have a place to lay his head. And so he's thinking, just think what I could do for the kingdom of God with my inheritance.

[ 39 : 23 ] with my prosperity. I'm sure he was rationalizing that. You know, very logical. Very practical. Or so it seems.

You know, like, just wait till I win the lottery and think of the money that I could give to the church and to Christian causes. You ever had that thought in your mind?

Nah. Or, just wait until I'm retired. You know, and then I'll have plenty of money to spare and the time and I will follow Jesus wherever, whenever, wherever.

Or maybe even so basically as just wait until I earn and save a little bit of money and then I'll follow Jesus. And you just fill in the blank. back. But Jesus says, let the dead bury their own dead.

That is, let the unbelievers worry about inheritances and earthly prosperity and money and wealth. you follow me.

[ 40 : 34 ] It's very strong. Following Jesus at the expense of earthly security. Follow Jesus at the expense of earthly prosperity.

And then finally, this morning, the third would-be disciple reveals that we must follow Jesus at the expense of earthly community.

earthly community or communities. Verse 61, and another also said, Lord, I will follow you.

Sounds good up to that point. But, by the way, it's never a good idea to add that conjunction when you're talking to Jesus. All right.

But let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house. Now, I ask you, what could be wrong with that? Huh? I mean, tell the family goodbye.

[ 41 : 34 ] I could hear Jesus thinking that Jesus should say, sure, go tell them goodbye. Have a little celebration, a little sending off party. Let the family lay hands on you and pray for you.

What could be wrong with that? But Jesus said, no one has having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.

Now, this is perhaps the hardest one of all. Really. We may not want to give up any prosperity and sacrifice in that way, but we do understand, even if we are not willing to, we do understand that that is a very big potential for Christians, Christians, those who would really follow Christ.

We can at least get our head around that, but what about this one? This is hard, but Jesus, again, knew this man's heart. And Jesus knew that this man's family was more important to him than loving Jesus, than following Jesus.

Remember Matthew 10, 37, where Jesus says, He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he who loves son and daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

[ 42 : 59 ] You see, Jesus knew this man's heart, and he knew that this man loved his earthly community, father, mother, brothers, sisters, even close friends, more than he loved Jesus.

All right, but even after saying that, so preacher, I understand that. I still don't get this. Well, in America, you know, let's just face it, the reason why we can't get a hold of this is, in America, we don't typically have to give up family relationships in order to follow Christ.

And so, it is usually a non-issue with most new Christians in America. That's not true in every case. There are those who are saved out of a non-Christian family, even a pagan family here in America. And so, there is, you know, rejection, some level of rejection, ridicule. And certainly, there are many, and it's usually this scenario, many Christian wives who have unbelieving husbands who make it, you know, make it pretty hard on their wives.

So even in those scenarios, we can kind of begin to understand what Jesus is saying here, this scenario that's put before us. But by and large, we don't really have this kind of issue in America, this, quote, Christian nation.

[ 44 : 35 ] But what if you lived in Iran, for example, or Yemen, Pakistan, or Iraq, even, Afghanistan, some of these other countries that are dominated by Islam, in that kind of culture, what if you were born into a Muslim, very devoted Muslim family, an extended family, who must now reject you, reject you, expel you, even hate you, maybe in some cases, even seek your death, your execution,

just because you are now a follower of Christ and not Allah, but you love your family.

Can you kind of think of this scenario? Put yourself in the place of a new believer who is a member of a Muslim family, very, very radical Muslim family.

You still love them. And you want to be with them. You want to be accepted by them. And yet, you now must turn away from them in order to follow Jesus.

Something, by the way, that was very common, very prevalent when Jesus spoke these words, the people listening to this and the man he spoke to, they would have understood this without any problem.

But it's difficult for us to see that becoming a Christian means I have to give up my earthly community, father, mother, family. Well, that's what it means.

[ 46 : 27 ] It means that you may have to give up even those family ties. Is Jesus more important? That's the issue. Several years ago, I had some missionaries from Yemen speak in my church.

church. They shared how difficult it was for a Muslim to be converted to Christ, a Muslim in Yemen, how difficult that was, dangerous it was.

And someone asked the question, when you lead one to Christ, what do you say to them then?

Missionaries said, we usually say goodbye.

Why? Because either they are exiled from their family and community and we never see them again, or they're put to death.

Can you imagine? Would Jesus, the worth he has for you right now, to you right now, would it cover that kind of scenario for you?

[ 47 : 35 ] Well, we don't know, do we? It's something to examine your heart about. While most of us, maybe all of us in this room will never experience this kind of thing.

Maybe some of our children will one day. What is Christ worth to you? What would you give up to follow him?

Would you be willing to give up your security, your prosperity, your community to follow Jesus? Is he worth that to you? Jesus said in Matthew 10, 38, He who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.

Thank you.