

not a fan.

COMPLETELY.
COMMITTED.
FOLLOWER.

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Luke 14:25-35
March 2nd & 3rd, 2013

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I. Connecting With One Another

Tell the group about your family: parents, siblings, spouse, children, and grandchildren. Who are you closest to? What relationship is most difficult?

Where would your family relationships fit on your list of priorities in life?

II. Introduction to this Series and Study

We are in week three of our Lenten series entitled *Not a Fan: Becoming Completely Committed Followers of Jesus* (learn more at gspc.org/not-a-fan). Again, fans are great: They fill stadiums to cheer on their favorite sports teams, tune into award shows to applaud beloved actors and musicians, or stand in line for a popular author's latest book. But Jesus never calls us to be His fans, cheering from the sidelines, tuning in when "there's nothing better on," or getting involved when it's convenient. No, Jesus isn't looking for *fans* – He's calling *followers*, people who model their lives after His.

This week, in Luke 14, we encounter Jesus again surrounded by crowds. He is on his way to Jerusalem, on his way to his death. On this journey Jesus stops, turns and addresses the people. His words challenge them and serve to further define for them (and us) the difference between fans and followers.

III. Study the Text

- a. Read Luke 14:25-27. What is your immediate reaction to the words of Jesus here? How do they make you feel?

Scripture tells us elsewhere to love and care for our families (see, for example, I Timothy 5:8). If Jesus didn't literally mean for us to "hate" our relatives, what do you think he meant?

Read these two alternate translations of verse 26 and talk again about what Jesus meant:

²⁶ "If you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. (New Living Translation)

²⁶ You cannot be my disciple, unless you love me more than you love your father and mother, your wife and children, and your brothers and sisters. You cannot come with me unless you love me more than you love your own life. (Contemporary English Version)

- b. Read Exodus 20:4-6. What does it mean that God is a "jealous" God? What is God jealous for?
- c. Next Jesus instructs the crowds to weigh the cost of actually following him. Read Luke 14:28-33. What effect does Jesus want these examples to have on the gathered people?

How do you think the crowd responded to Jesus' words in verse 27 and in verse 33? How do you respond to these words?

- d. Read Luke 14:34-35. What message is Jesus trying to get across to the crowds?

In the time of Jesus salt had three general uses: 1) as a preservative to keep food from spoiling; 2) as flavoring to add taste to food; and 3) as fertilizer to help crops and plants grow. How do these uses of salt apply to the Christian life?

- e. Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Where does the ability to "hear" come from?

Read the opening verses of Luke 15 (verses 1-2). The word "hear" is used again. Have those gathered around Jesus really come to *hear* him, or do they have other motives? In your opinion, what does truly hearing from Jesus require?

IV. Reflect and Respond

- a. Brainstorm and come up with a list of things that people (even Christians!) give the same or greater priority than a relationship with God, through Jesus.

Now, is there anything on that list that applies to you and your relationship with God? Take time this week to surrender that to God and ask Him to help you make following Jesus first in your life.

- b. Jesus' main point in this passage is that there is a cost to following him. It's not going to be easy. How do you think middle to upper-middle class Christians in the United States—such as ourselves—understand this concept? What might being a completely committed follower of Jesus (not a fan) cost us? What might it cost you? What *has* it cost you?

- c. Think back in this study guide to your discussion of salt and the Christian life. Which of those uses of salt (as a preservative, for flavoring, or for growth) is most readily apparent in your life? In what area(s) would you like to be "more salty"?

Who has God used as salt in your life?

V. Spend some time in prayer:

- a. Praise God for the gift of life, the gift of creation, the gift of Jesus...adore God! Then...

- b. ...provide a time of silent prayer for each one to confess the ways in which they have loved other "things" as much or more than Jesus. Then...

- c. ...ask God to give you and the members of your group a growing desire to put following Jesus first in your lives, no matter the cost. Then...

- d. ...intercede for friends, family, the community, our church and its leaders, as the Holy Spirit leads. Finally...

- e. ...thank God for the grace and mercy extended to us in Jesus, that allows us to experience abundant life now and gives us the promise of everlasting life to come.

Christ has no interest in gathering vast crowds of professed adherents who would melt away as soon as they found out what following Him actually demanded of them. In our own profession of Christ's gospel, therefore, we need to lay a similar stress on the cost of following Christ, and make sinners face it soberly before we urge them to respond to the message of free forgiveness. In common honesty, we must not conceal the fact that free forgiveness in one sense will cost everything. –J.I. Packer