

Taking Strides

Disciples

Being A Disciple

To: Jesus, Son of Joseph
Woodcrafter's Carpenter Shop
Nazareth 25922

From: Jordan Management Consultants

Dear Sir:

Thank you for submitting the resumes of the twelve men you have picked for managerial positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests; and we have not only run the results through our computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant.

The profiles of all tests are included, and you will want to study each of them carefully.

As part of our service, we make some general comments for your guidance, much as an auditor will include some general statements. This is given as a result of staff consultation, and comes without any additional fee.

It is the staff opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in background, education and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept. We would recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capability.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership. The two brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, place personal interest above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale. We feel that it is our duty to tell you that Matthew had been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus definitely have radical leanings, and they both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has a keen business mind, and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious, and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man. All of the other profiles are self-explanatory. We wish you every success in your new venture.

Sincerely,

Jordan Management Consultants

[Tim Hansel, Eating Problems for Breakfast, Word Publishing, 1988, pp. 194-195.]

For Discussion

What imagery comes to mind when you think of "being a disciple"? What does it mean? What does it look like?
What are the qualifications for being a disciple of Jesus?

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Encounter

Read God's word so He can speak to you.

Luke 14:25-35

25 Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: 26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters-- yes, even his own life-- he cannot be my disciple. 27 And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. 28 "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? 29 For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, 30 saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' 31 "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. 33 In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

34 "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? 35 It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Examine

what the passage says before you decide what it means.

Read it carefully **three** times.

Underline anything you see as important. Write any questions you have.

Explore

God's Word by asking questions of what you saw.

The notes that follow may help you think through these questions.

1) Jesus states three absolute requirements for being His disciple. Explain what Jesus is NOT saying as well as what He is really demanding in each of these requirements:

a) Hate family and self (v. 26)

Not this -

But this -

Explore (con't)

1)

b) Carry own cross after Jesus (27)

Not this -

con't

But this -

c) Give up all possessions (33)

Not this -

But this -

2)

What do the illustrations of verses 28-32 say about the cost of following Jesus?

3)

Obviously Jesus requires a surrender that is all-consuming. What would you need to know about Jesus in order to make this kind of commitment?

What would this say about your heart and your relationship to Jesus?

4)

What are the results or consequences of not counting the cost to follow Jesus? See the illustrations (vv. 28-31) and the conclusion (vv. 34-35).

How might this actually look in a believer's life?

Explore (con't)

5)

Someone who does follow Jesus in this way will have the following characteristics. [Give examples or specific stories of what each of these looks like]

- a) Giving away their lives (I am willing to risk everything that's important in my life for Jesus Christ)

- b) Deciding that Christ is first (I desire Jesus to be first in my life)

- c) Embracing an identity in Christ (I exist to know, love, and serve God)

- d) Believing in the authority of the Bible (I believe that the Bible has decisive authority over what I say and do)

- e) Reflecting on Scripture daily (instead of frequently)

6)

Where are you in the process of moving toward Christ—curious, convinced, committed, or consumed? What are you doing to move even closer?

Notes On The Passage

(Adapted from Thomas Constable, *Expository Notes*)

Luke had just recorded Jesus' teaching about God's gracious invitation to everyone to enjoy the blessings of the kingdom. It was free for all who would respond—namely, believe on Him. But living out His new life and following Him are costly. That is what Jesus teaches here.

25 - It was evidently the great size of the multitude that accompanied Jesus that led Him to say what He did.

26 - Curiosity is one thing, but discipleship is another. There were many people who were accompanying Jesus who were not really following Him in the sense of learning from Him. They simply wanted to benefit from His ministry. So Jesus gave the first of three requirements for those who would truly be His followers: one must be willing to give up his or her primary allegiance to family and self. Jesus taught His disciples to love their enemies rather than hating them (6:27-38). He was not contravening the teaching of the fifth commandment either (18:20). He spoke positively about loving one-

Notes On The Passage (con't)

self too (10:27). He clearly meant hate in a relative rather than an absolute sense here. When love is juxtaposed against hate, it often means to choose something and reject (or not choose) the others. Matthew 10:37 clarifies this: love for and loyalty to Jesus must come before any other relationship.

27 – The second requirement for discipleship is that a disciple must put to death his or her own will and expectations in favor of God's will. For some this may even include bearing the burden of public identification with Jesus to death (9:23; cf. Deut. 13:4; 1 Kings 14:8; 18:21; 2

Kings 23:3). This is choosing to let go of control in each part of your own life, and allowing your Father to lead and control.

"Salvation is open to all who will come by faith, while discipleship is for believers willing to pay a price. Salvation means coming to the cross and trusting Jesus Christ, while discipleship means carrying the cross and following Jesus." (Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 1:232)

28-30 – To be a disciple, you must count the cost. Jesus illustrates this with two parables. The first parable describes the foolishness of someone who begins an ambitious building project without planning the cost. When long-term commitment is required to pay whatever it takes to complete the project, this person cannot do it.

31-32 - This second parable makes essentially the same point as the first one. However the cost of failure in this one is not just embarrassment but personal destruction. It is very important to assess the strength of one's enemy correctly. Asking for terms of peace is the equivalent of surrender. Whatever action is chosen will require a great cost, but only the choice based on thoughtfulness and commitment will result in good. Jesus was not encouraging people to stop following Him because they feared they could not withstand temptations. He wanted them to follow Him, but intelligently, not naively.

33 - Jesus now applied the parables (cf. vv. 26-27). Obviously the Twelve had not given away everything they owned, but they had adopted a lifestyle conducive to fulfilling their mission that involved relatively few possessions. Therefore we should probably understand Jesus' command as requiring a willingness to part with possessions as necessary to follow Jesus faithfully (cf. 12:33). He was not telling them to be destitute and for-

ever dependent on others. Elsewhere Jesus taught His disciples to manage the possessions that they did have wisely (16:1-12). A person should not begin a venture without the assurance of sufficient resources to finish it. Similarly one should not begin following Jesus without being willing to sacrifice anything to complete that project successfully.

34-35 - In conclusion, Jesus compared a disciple to salt. Salt was important in the ancient East because it flavored food, retarded decay, and in small doses fertilized land (Eugene P. Deatrick, "Salt, Soil, Savor," *Biblical Archaeologist* 25 (1962):44-45). All of these uses are in view in this passage. Most salt in the ancient world came from salt marshes or the like rather than from the evaporation of salt water, so it contained many impurities. The sodium was more soluble than many of the impurities. It could leach out leaving a substance so dilute that it was of little worth (Donald A. Carson, "Matthew," in *Matthew-Luke*, vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 138).

Just as a disciple can cease to follow Jesus, so salt can lose its saltiness. In that case both things become useless. What distinguishes a disciple of Jesus from a non-disciple, what makes him or her "salty," is his or her allegiance to Jesus (cf. Matt. 5:13; Mark 9:50). Farmers added salt to animal dung to slow down the fermentation process so they could preserve it as fertilizer until they needed to use it (Deatrick, p. 46). The disciple who does not continue following Jesus faithfully falls under divine judgment, not that he will lose his salvation, but part of his reward, specifically the opportunity for further significant service. Jesus urged His hearers to listen carefully to what He had said (cf. 8:8). Prospective disciples need to realize the implications of following Jesus and then choose to follow Him faithfully.

Going Further

One thing we can do to train ourselves to remember, is to memorize a part of what our Father has said to us. The Holy Spirit can use this to change our thinking so that our "heads" are more like Jesus.

This week, memorize Luke 14:33 .