

Series: Light of the World

Session Title: Jesus' caution (Matthew 7:13-14; Luke 14:25-35)

Date and Time: _____

Number of Students: _____

Materials Needed:

- ☐ 1 bowl or hat
- ☐ Slips of paper with the instructions from task one (one per person)
- ☐ Scrap paper
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ A picture of Montreal's Olympic Stadium (can be found on the internet)

Lesson Objectives:

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Define Jesus' call for top-priority commitment from his disciples.
- Decide and declare if they are willing to follow Jesus' call.

Pastoral Objectives:

Lead In:

Prepare slips of paper with the following instructions on them so that there is one slip per person. For example, if you have eight students you will need to write each instruction twice. Put all of the slips in a bowl or hat. Do this in advance. The instructions are as follows:

1. Write a budget for a vacation in Disney World.
2. Write out the instructions for building a go-cart.
3. List all of the supplies you would need to prepare a ten-year-old's birthday party.

4. Write a schedule for a young woman preparing for her high school formal.

At the beginning of the lesson, have the bowl ready along with scrap paper and pens. Have students randomly select one slip of paper and work alone for three to five minutes on their task. Then have the students find others with the same instruction and form a group. Have the group share their individual work and decide together on a complete list. When they are done, have every group share their list with the larger group. Have the larger group listen for omissions.

You could transition by saying something like this:

Anything worth doing is worth planning for, whether it is a prom, a party, a road trip, or building something. A plan tells us what we will need to accomplish something. Jesus, in the early part of his ministry, was doing some great stuff that attracted a lot of people. In fact, his ministry attracted a lot of people who wanted his miracles and healings to come to them. With one such crowd around him, Jesus spoke these words: "At this point, with a large crowd following him, he says these words: "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple"" (Luke 14:26-27).

Jesus' Caution (10 minutes):

The leader says something like:

Jesus' words are pretty intense. I want us to focus on the first part of what he said: "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple." Those are some serious words. If you think that it is reasonable for Jesus to demand that, go to this side of the room. If you think it is unreasonable, go to the opposite side of the room. If you aren't sure, stand in the middle. People on the sides: it is your job to convince the other people to move. This task isn't over until all of the people have chosen a side.

Allow students to move and recruit. Don't interfere. Let them do it until everyone has chosen a side. Now say something like:

All right, those of you who think it is reasonable, you can stay on your side if you have hated lost/hated your parent, spouse, sibling, child, or life in order to become Jesus' disciple. If you haven't, you can join the other side.

Allow students to move. Transition by saying something like:

The fact is, it is harder to do what Jesus demands than to talk about it. Jesus had high standards for total commitment. He gave some examples of what that might look like. Here they are.

Example One: Olympic Stadium

Ask the students to turn to the person next to them (now their partner). Each pair needs access to a Bible. Tell them that as they listen to the biblical story they should try to figure out where in the Bible it is from.

Show the students a picture of Olympic Stadium and provide the following information:

This is Montreal's Olympic Stadium. It was built for the 1976 summer Olympics and was to have the world's first retractable dome. The idea was that the cables attached to the inclined tower would retract and the dome would "open", like folding an umbrella. It's original cost: \$500 million, which was huge back then. It wasn't fully complete for the Olympics (but was operational) because of a strike that delayed the project. However, that was the least of its problems. The Quebec government tried to complete the project. But there were many problems that arose. Some examples include:

- *In 1986, they had to change the tower's structural system from concrete to steel after a study showed a concrete inclined tower would be too heavy.*
- *In 1987, the stadium was capped with a 60,696 sq ft of orange and silver Kevlar fabric, a synthetic fibre used in some bullet-proof vests. The 26 steel cables and the enormous fabric roof was supposed to fold into the adjacent leaning tower, much like a giant umbrella. But mechanical failures and rips and tears in the fabric made the dome unretractable; the Kevlar membrane roof cost \$700,000 in annual upkeep.*
- *In 1991: some beams within the stadium started to fall, thus requiring a renovation to the structure of the stadium.*

In the end, this stadium cost \$1 billion to build and to this day is still incomplete. So Jesus says, when you build something, it's bad enough to plan a budget and for it to go over. It's even more foolish not to even have a budget when you start building because if you don't complete it when you run out of resources, you'll look like a fool.

Now ask the students to find this example in their Bibles. Again, do not help them initially. Obviously, the example is not from the Bible as is, but it illustrates Jesus' teaching about planning ahead that is found in Luke 14:28-30. Wait for someone to find this in their Bible and have that person to read it aloud to the other students.

Example Two: Herod vs. Aretas IV

Tell the students that you have one more example of total commitment from the teachings of Jesus and that they should find that in their Bibles too.

There once was a ruler of Galilee, named Herod Antipas, who was originally married to the daughter of Aretas IV, King of the Nabataeans (that's south-east of Israel), as a political allegiance with the Nabataeans. However, when Herod wanted to marry the wife of his half-

brother Phillip, she got him to divorce his first wife. This didn't make Aretas IV happy at all (nobody dumps daddy's little girl). So Aretas, with his army of 20,000, decided to go to war against Herod and his army of 10,000. Being outnumbered two to one, you'd think Herod would have at least tried some other diplomatic way to resolve this situation or at least stop the war; however, Herod went to battle anyway and his army got crushed. Herod became a joke amongst the Roman Empire (if Air Farce was around then, they would have had a field-day with Herod). So Jesus uses this story, even though Herod was already mad at Jesus and going after him, to once again demonstrate that idiocy of not planning for what you're getting into.

Does anyone know where that is? Again, the story is not explicitly told in the Bible, but it is alluded to in Luke 14:31-32. Let the students find it and let one student read it aloud.

Conclusion:

Bring the lesson to an end by saying something like this:

The fact is, to follow Jesus without total commitment is like salt that just doesn't taste salty; it's totally useless. So is a Christian who isn't willing to totally commit to Jesus; that person is really useless in God's work on earth. So before we jump into following Jesus, we need to make sure we are willing to pay the price.

Take this week to think about some of the things we've discussed over the last three weeks. We've talked about who Jesus is, what authority he has to teach the way he does, and his atonement for our sins. The question you need to answer is, is this worth it? If so, then if you haven't done so already, talk to me or one of the other leaders this week to learn how to begin following Jesus. If not, then it's best not to step into that journey.

Close in prayer.