

Semicontinuous

Jer. 18:1–11

Ps. 139:1–6, 13–18

Complementary

Deut. 30:15–20

Ps. 1

Phlm 1–21

Luke 14:25–33

Disciples and Followers

**Goal for
the Session**

Children will consider what loving Jesus with all their hearts means for them.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Luke 14:25–33

WHAT is important to know?

—From “Exegetical Perspective” by Rodney S. Sadler Jr.

Jesus demands that a disciple would “carry the cross and follow” him (14:27). As such, this instruction is reminiscent of 9:23, where Jesus instructs would-be followers to “deny themselves and take up their cross daily,” then sets this in the context of losing their lives for his sake. What a harsh word this is for the contemporary Christian community, for we know where Jesus’ way leads. This is a word of obligation to a church obsessed with grace; worse, it is obligation with consequence, for those who refuse the cross are deemed unworthy of discipleship. The message is clear: discipleship costs. In fact, it will cost us everything (see also 12:33–34)!

WHERE is God in these words?

—From “Theological Perspective” by Emilie M. Townes

At the heart of discipleship is transformation. The cost of discipleship is not just becoming accumulators of new information about life and living it fully, or changing our behavior in regard to Jesus’ teachings. The cost is engaging in a profoundly radical shift toward the ethics of Jesus with every fiber of our beings. There is no driftwood in discipleship, as we are called to live lives of complete devotion to God. Jesus reminds us in today’s passage from Luke that following him means that we cannot be shallow or uncommitted believers—the adjectives simply do not fit the noun.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From “Pastoral Perspective” by Charles E. Raynal

Can the Christian community offer an interpretation of the cost of discipleship for daily life that is plausible and freeing for the people of God today? How would Calvin’s advocacy of freedom from selfishness, commitment to love, honest facing of suffering, and the faithful stewardship of creation and its gifts sound to people inside and outside the churches? The housing and economic crises; the damage to the earth by the burning of fossil fuels; and the hunger, poverty, and pandemics suffered by people in all parts of the world are certainly calling us in the church to give Jesus’ call to costly discipleship a new lease on life.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

—From “Homiletical Perspective” by Ronald P. Byars

It seems important to take Jesus’ exhortation with utter seriousness, recognizing that, for most of us, it poses a problem that needs to be thought through. Certainly it means at least that disciples should travel lightly, not unduly encumbered by acquiring, hoarding, or guarding one’s possessions against the other in her/his need. Certainly it must also mean that, when interests come into conflict, discipleship takes precedence over security.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Luke 14:25–38

Focus on Your Teaching

Most children are tied closely to their parents and other family members. Expecting them to forsake their families is not realistic. Therefore, verse 26 is not emphasized in the story, but making choices is. The younger children are beginning to make choices: what to wear to school, whether to play a team sport, who to be friends with. The oldest children have made many choices and are now facing even bigger ones about their faith and what interests to pursue. In this session, they are reminded that Jesus calls for decisions too.

*God, some choices weigh heavily on my mind. Others are made in a flash.
Prompt me to keep my love for Jesus at the forefront. Amen.*

YOU WILL NEED

- green cloth
- Bible
- offering basket
- candle and matches or battery-operated candle
- Singing the Feast, 2022–2023*; CD player
- Color Pack 1, 2, 3, 4, 27, 28
- tape
- Resource Sheet 1

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2; pencils; *Singing the Feast, 2022–2023*; CD player
- option 2: oven-bake clay or Model Magic, toothpicks
- option 3: Resource Sheet 2, card stock, index cards, stapler, markers
- option 4: Color Pack 28; *Singing the Feast, 2022–2023*; CD player

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, find one of the Bible translations recommended in Exploring, in print or on a Web site. Create the Discipleship Tree using Color Pack 2, 3, and 4. Cut out the squares with leaves.

Greet the children as they arrive. Invite the early arrivals to help set up the worship table. Place a green cloth on the table. On it place a Bible, an offering basket, and a candle. Place the Discipleship Tree and leaves from Color Pack 2, 3, and 4 nearby.

When everything is ready, gather at the worship table. Point to the green cloth. Explain that it indicates that the church year season is Ordinary Time. Tell about this season, using the information on Color Pack 1.

Light the candle.

Teach the signs for *glory* and *God* shown on Color Pack 27. Sing “Glory to God” (track 8 on *Singing the Feast, 2022–2023*) and sign these words as they are sung.

Pray, inviting the children to echo each phrase after you:

Dear God / be our guide / as we seek / to learn more about you / and how to follow / in the ways of Jesus. / Amen.

All: Amen! (Clap twice.)

Glory to God

Glory to God,
Glory to God,
Glory to God in the highest!

Repeat three times

Ask learners if they have ever played follow the leader. Begin with everyone standing in a circle. The children are to do whatever the leader (you) does. Begin with simple motions, such as a hand on top of your head or your legs apart, and progress to more difficult movements, such as combining two motions. After a few moments, ask:

✿ To play this game, what did you need to do?

Encourage their answers and help them see that they had to pay close attention to what the leader was doing and saying to be good followers. Ask:

✿ Who are some leaders you follow?

After they have named some leaders, explain that the Bible story today is about Jesus as our leader.

Exploring

Ask a child to get the Bible from the worship table and open it to the Gospel of Luke. Point out that the Gospels are at the beginning of the New Testament. If necessary, have the child find Luke in the Table of Contents. Then ask a child to turn to chapter 14. Keep the Bible open to Luke 14 as you tell the story on Resource Sheet 1 (Follow Me). Ask:

✿ What did Jesus want the people to know about being his follower?

✿ What do you think the people thought after Jesus told the two parables?

Explain that people who follow Jesus are called *disciples*, a name for more than the twelve apostles who traveled with him everywhere. This means that they can be disciples. With this definition and having heard the story, provide another hearing of the focus scripture as found in Luke 14:25–33. Read from a translation in contemporary language, such as the Common English Bible, the Contemporary English Version, or Today's English Version (the Good News Bible). Following verses 26, 27, 30, and 33, prompt the children to say this refrain together: Jesus says, "Be my disciple."

Conclude Exploring by noting that being a disciple or follower of Jesus means we have to think about what we do and whether our choices follow the way that Jesus teaches.

Responding

Offer at least two options so the children have a choice. One might be more challenging to interest children who can work on their own.

- 1. Disciples in Development** Although the children may be at various stages of faith development, they can encourage one another to move forward. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Disciples in Development) and pencils. Explain that this activity is to help them think about ways they can be more faithful disciples or followers of Jesus. Read the directions at the top of the resource sheet together. Play music softly as they work, something like "Music over Water" (track 16 on *Singing the Feast*, 2022–2023). When everyone has finished, invite volunteers to tell one thing they will do to follow Jesus in the coming week.

A *parable* is a story of comparison that teaches a religious truth. Jesus used parables to teach about God.

EASY
PREP

If two or more children need help reading the resource sheet, work with them in a small group as the others complete the sheet on their own.

- Pocket Cross** Children will make small crosses as a reminder to follow Jesus. Follow the directions on the package of oven-bake clay. Have the children mold crosses between 2 and 3 inches tall. Provide toothpicks for them to inscribe words, such as “follow me” or “I am with you” on their crosses. Bake the crosses. If necessary, do this at home and return them to the children at the next session. Together, memorize Luke 14:27, using the Bible translation from Exploring.

Option: Make the crosses with Model Magic, which does not have to be baked and will harden by air-drying.

- Disciple Book** To help the children think more about what faithful disciples do, make “A Disciple . . .” books. Begin by brainstorming all the things a disciple of Jesus might do to follow the ways Jesus taught. They may include: pray to God, give money to the church, read the Bible every day. (See Resource Sheet 2 [Disciples in Development] for ideas.) To construct the book, begin with a 12" x 4" piece of card stock. Fold up about 4" from the bottom of the 12" strip. Staple along the sides to make a pocket. Above the pocket, print “A Disciple . . .” Give each child three or four index cards (3" x 5"). On each one, front and back, they complete the sentence at the top of the pocket holder with words or illustrations. For example: “prays every day.” Slip the index cards into the pocket as they are finished.

**I’m Gonna Live
So God Can Use Me**

I’m gonna *live* so God can
use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
I’m gonna *live* so God can
use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!

I’m gonna *work* . . .

I’m gonna *share* . . .

I’m gonna *care* . . .

- Following Jesus in Song** “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me” (Color Pack 28; track 10 on *Singing the Feast*, 2022–2023), sung at the close of this session, is a musical reminder of how to follow Jesus. After singing it, talk together about how they might live so God can use them.

Closing

Gather at the worship table. Light or turn on the candle.

Sing “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me” (Color Pack 28; track 10 on *Singing the Feast*, 2022–2023).

Invite children to name ways to follow Jesus. Print their ideas on a few leaves and tape them to the Discipleship Tree.

Close with this benediction:

(*Name*), be a faithful disciple of Jesus this week. God be with you.

Tell the children you hope to see them next week.

Save the Discipleship
Tree and leaves for use
in future sessions.

Follow Me
based on Luke 14:25-33

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. But along the way he had dinner in the home of a leader of the Pharisees. He taught people about God's love by telling them stories called parables. He visited his friends, Mary and Martha, in a town called Bethany. He told people not to worry because God was always with them.

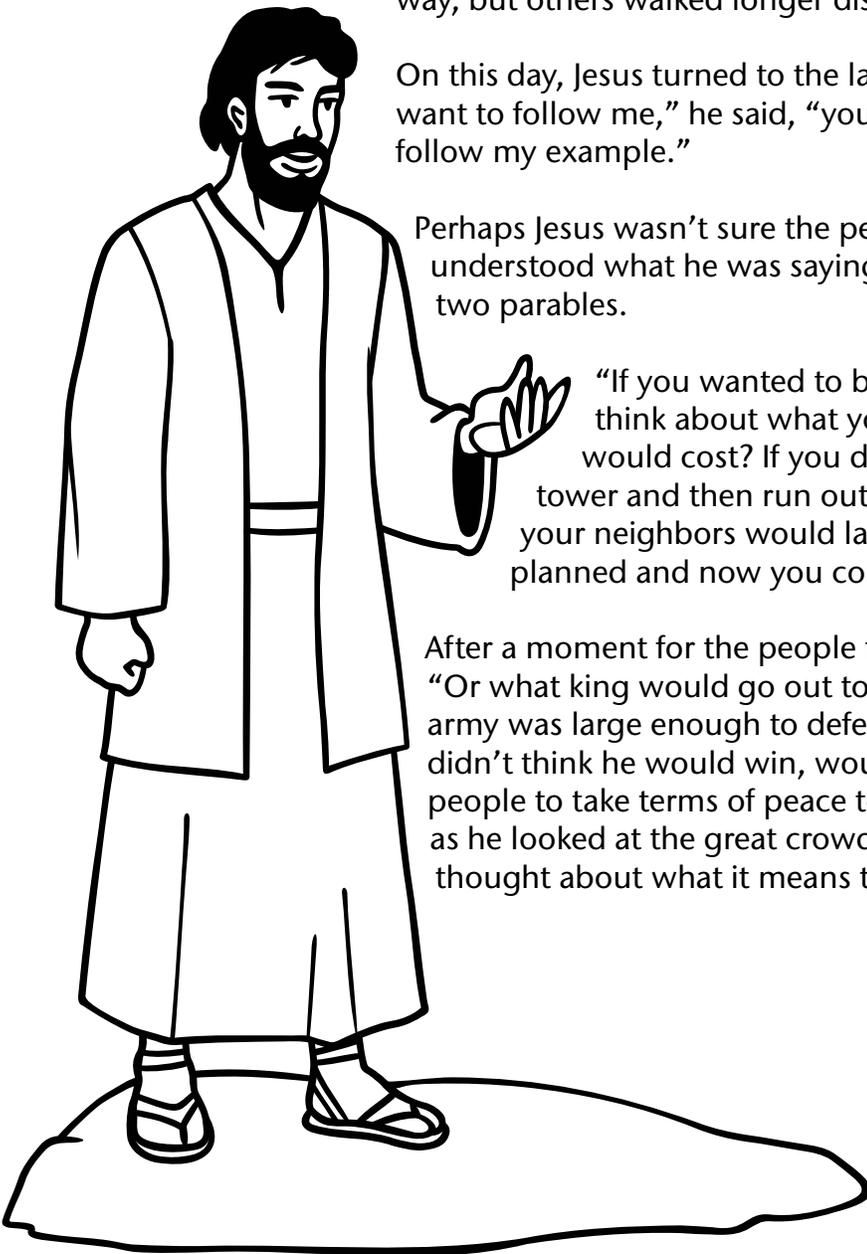
As Jesus and the 12 disciples walked from village to village, crowds of people, large crowds, walked with them. Some could go only a short way, but others walked longer distances with Jesus.

On this day, Jesus turned to the large crowd following him. "If you want to follow me," he said, "you must give up everything. You must follow my example."

Perhaps Jesus wasn't sure the people in that large crowd understood what he was saying, so he told them two stories, two parables.

"If you wanted to build a tower, wouldn't you first think about what you would need and how much it would cost? If you didn't, you might start to build the tower and then run out of materials or of money. Then, your neighbors would laugh at you because you hadn't planned and now you couldn't finish the tower."

After a moment for the people to think about that story, Jesus said, "Or what king would go out to fight without thinking whether his army was large enough to defeat the enemy's army? If the king didn't think he would win, wouldn't he send one of his trusted people to take terms of peace to the enemy? And you," Jesus said as he looked at the great crowd around him, "have you really thought about what it means to be my follower?"



Disciples in Development



Jesus expects much from his disciples. But Jesus also helps us so we can be faithful followers. How do we receive help from Jesus? Over many centuries, Christians have found that some practices (things we do over and over) help us grow into more faithful disciples. Read the lists below. Check the boxes of the things you already do or have tried. Draw a star next to something you want to try this week.



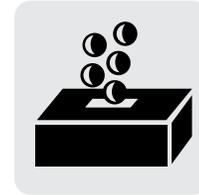
DAILY PRAYER

- Pray at a regular time each day:
 - Morning
 - Midday
 - Evening
 - Other: _____
- Offer prayers in the “ACTS” pattern:
 - A**dore (praise) God.
 - C**onfess your sins and ask God’s forgiveness.
 - T**hank God for the good in your day and life.
 - M**ake **S**upplications (requests) to God for others and for yourself.
- Pray a breath prayer. It can help you calm yourself when you are anxious. Find a short sentence about God in the Bible, or use Psalm 121:2: “My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.” Say the first part as you breathe in, and the second part as you breathe out. Repeat this until you are calm, ready to do what is next, or to pray to God in your own words.



DAILY SCRIPTURE READING

- Read from the Bible at a regular time each day, by yourself or with a family member:
 - Morning
 - Midday
 - Evening
 - Other: _____
- Read three or four verses from the Bible at a time. Read them two or three times, slowly. Spend time thinking about the verses, groups of words, and images they bring to mind.
- Copy Bible verses special to you in a notebook. Write your thoughts about them. Include questions or prayers that came to you. Draw pictures in your notebook or add information from newspapers or magazines that remind you of these verses.



DISCIPLINES OF GIVING

- Set aside some time each week to help other people at home or through your church or a community organization.
- Set aside some of your allowance each week to give to the church.