

BIBLE DISCOVERY

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LUKE: Cost of Discipleship

Luke 12:49-59

We're diving back into the Gospel of Luke. After nine chapters introducing us to Jesus and His call, Luke now takes us with Him on the road to Jerusalem (Luke 9-19). Along the way, we'll hear some of Jesus' most famous teachings and stories, as He shows us what it truly costs to follow Him and why following Him is worth everything.

The Big Idea

(What is the author's point?)

The decision to follow Jesus is serious for three reasons. First, Jesus' death came at great cost. Second, loyalty to Jesus will shatter and divide close relationships. Third, eternal consequences hang in the balance.

Why It Matters

(Why is this relevant to us?)

Imagine a commercial for the U.S. Marines that showed relaxed beachgoers having a fun, sun-filled day in the sand and ended with the slogan "Want to have fun? Join the Marines!" This would not only be laughable, it would be morally reprehensible. Why? Because it failed to show the true cost of serving your country as a soldier.

Just like you'd never want recruits thinking they're signing up for a vacation, Jesus didn't want His fellow Israelites to be caught off guard by the harsh realities that awaited them.

As Jesus progressed toward Jerusalem, the cross loomed larger and larger in His mind. In this passage, Jesus speaks like a military recruiter about the sobering realities the cross would unleash on His followers. He has been speaking to the crowds (Luke 12:1-21) and the disciples (Luke 12:22-53) about the significance of recognizing Him as the Messiah (Luke 12:8-9), as well as aligning with Him in His Kingdom (Luke 12:43). Everyone must do this before it's too late (Luke 12:35-48).

In Luke 12:49-59, Jesus ratchets up the weight of current events even further. He does this in three ways. First, Jesus claims that He has come to bring judgment on the earth (Luke 12:49), and this judgment will be closely connected to His upcoming "baptism" or death (Luke 12:50). Second, Jesus claims that loyalty to Him will inevitably divide the closest of relationships (Luke 12:51-53). Third, the time of Jesus' arrival and His upcoming death (Luke 12:54-56) serves as the foundation for reconciliation with God and the avoidance of eternal judgment (Luke 12:57-59).

Anyone who wants to truly follow Jesus the Messiah must grapple with these realities and surrender all to Him.

Good to Know

(What are some helpful insights into this passage?)

Verse 49: The language of “fire” that Jesus comes to “cast on the earth” could be interpreted as the positive fire of purification, or as a fire of judgment. The latter is more likely, due in large measure to the usage of “fire” elsewhere in Luke (Luke 3:9, 17; 9:54; 17:29), as well as the immediate context (Luke 12:41-48).

Verse 50: The “baptism” Jesus describes here is metaphorical for death. He will be plunged into the baptism of death. Jesus feels the weight of this upcoming act. We know later that this is because of His bearing the weight of sin and paying sin's penalty.

Verse 51: Jesus is still speaking to the disciples in this verse. He wants them to join Him in sensing the seriousness of the kingdom coming in and through His death. When they side with Him, they will inevitably lose intimate relationships, even with family.

Verse 56: As Jesus turns from the disciples back to the crowds (Luke 12:54), He returns to the topic of recognizing Him in relation to “the present time.” Here, Jesus expresses anger at how so many were missing the evidence. They missed how He was indeed the Messiah (cf. Luke 12:8-9).

Verses 57-59: This analogy here is likely related to the Old Testament practice of debt imprisonment (Lev 25:39-41). The main idea is that, just like falling into serious debt ruins a life, even more is on the line for those who reject Jesus. Now was the time to follow Jesus and enter the kingdom. Why? Eternal judgment was just around the corner.



THIS WEEK'S
Bible Discovery Author
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Group Guide

Following the series with your group?

- Start with some [icebreaker questions](#).
- Read the passage together before you dive in.
- Share any insights from the message. Use the questions below to get your conversation started:

Conversation Starters

1. How did Jesus' work on earth bring division? Where have you experienced division as a result of the work Jesus has done in your life?
2. How can we prepare for the division (and other struggles) we'll encounter because of following Christ?

3. Why do you think the Jews in Jesus' day failed to see the significance of His coming and understand the judgment that awaited them?

4. In what ways do we tend to minimize the seriousness of our sin and how does this passage serve as a reminder of its weight?

Prayer

Jesus, help us to remember the cost of following you, and to look to you for strength and perseverance. Spirit, help us to surrender to you, knowing that following you is worth it. Thank you for saving us from our sin, Jesus. We love you. Amen.