

## **Foundations Week 4: Building a Foundation of Discipleship Luke 14:25-33**

### **David Bawks - Pathway Community Church (Jan 24, 2021)**

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Hi Pathway! How are you doing today? We took advantage of the nice weather on Monday and the Martin Luther King Jr holiday to go down to Santa Cruz to the beach, and it was amazing, 80 degrees out on the sand. Just like summer, with even summer levels of traffic all the way back up highway 17. But it was very nice out and pleasant to enjoy the outdoors even in the middle of winter. It was unfortunate timing that it was the first day of our fast, it would have been great to get ice cream on the boardwalk, a churro, burger, so many options...I was like why couldn't this have been yesterday? Temptation man.

How is the 21 days of prayer and fasting going for you? This has been a mostly good week for me, I've trying to read less news and spend more time praying and it has been paying off. I do miss dessert, and meat, and other food, but it is nice to feel healthier. You can still join even if you missed last week, and you can check out the prayer page to get our prayer guide, a prayer sheet, information about fasting, and other resources.

Today is week 4 of our Foundations series. We started by taking stock and looking at what is in our hearts, and doing the examen to evaluate 2020 and how we experienced God's presence during last year. Two weeks ago, we looked at shaken foundations, and I shared my response to the events of January 6 in DC, focusing on the importance of using our words carefully, the consequences that our words have, and our responsibility to stand up for truth and peace. Then last week we switched our focus to how we can build up our foundations in different areas, and I started by looking at the importance of prayer in our lives.

Today we're looking at how to build a foundation of discipleship. Please turn with me to Luke 14. I'm going to read from verse 25 to verse 33.

<sup>25</sup> Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: <sup>26</sup> "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup> And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

<sup>28</sup> "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? <sup>29</sup> For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, <sup>30</sup> saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'

<sup>31</sup> "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

This is a very hard passage! Let's see how we can understand what Jesus is saying here. This passage takes places during the second part of the gospel of Luke. Matthew, Mark and Luke can each be divided into two parts, with the first part of the early life and ministry of Jesus and the second part being the journey to Jerusalem. In each gospel, the signal for the end of part 1 is when Jesus asks his disciples, who do you say that I am? When Peter says Jesus is the messiah, the Christ of God, that's when Jesus says he is going to be killed and then raise again. After that, the focus of the story moves to the upcoming death in Jerusalem.

The gospel writer tells us at the beginning of our passage that huge crowds were following Jesus; clamoring for his attention; pleading for his healing touch; anxiously waiting for the next miracle; and pledging to follow Jesus where ever he was going; hoping that Jesus could save them from all their problems. But these people don't understand this journey, and they don't know the destination. Only Jesus knows that he is on his way to Jerusalem; headed straight for the cross. Only Jesus knows what horror lies ahead. Even though the disciples have been told, they do not understand or believe it.

Jesus says if anyone does not hate his father or mother, he cannot be a disciple. That is a harsh statement! Just reading it like that, it seems impossible. We are commanded to love our parents and our children. God Himself is love. Why must we hate our family, and even our own life?

First, we must realize that Jesus is using hyperbolic language, deliberately exaggerating to make a very strong point. He here as he does frequently in his teachings, like when he said if you hand offends you, cut it off. He didn't literally mean that, you can see I still have both hands, but he just means you must get rid of anything that comes in the way of your faith.

This word "hate" reflects a phrase, a Semitic idiom that is used in Hebrew. Jesus most likely spoke Aramaic, a similar language to Hebrew, and these words were later recorded in Greek as we have them in the gospels. This Semitic expression means "to love less, to turn away from or detach oneself from." Do you remember when Jacob married both Rachel and Leah? It says in Genesis 29:30-31 that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah and that Leah was "hated" by Jacob. Jacob didn't completely hate Leah, she remained his wife and had many of his children, but he preferred Rachel over Leah.

We think of hate in terms of emotion, how we feel about someone, but this passage is focusing of the issue of allegiance or priority. The meaning becomes clear when we compare this saying in Luke with its parallel in Matthew (10:37): "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." This saying indicates that our primary allegiance must be to Jesus rather than to family. Jesus is not calling his followers to hate their families in terms of emotional response; instead, he calls for undivided loyalty to himself above family loyalties.

Our commitment to Jesus is very expensive. It is most expensive and demanding commitment we can ever make. I have three points for us today **in regards to how we build a foundation of discipleship.**

### **1) Discipleship means counting the cost of following Christ.**

What does it mean to count the cost? It means taking into account everything that will be required of you (or as much of it as you know) and making the decision anyway. It means you are making a commitment. It means knowing that you will have to 'pay'. It means you need to plan, to organize, to follow through. **You need to have a strategy, a strategic plan.** You need to understand the implications of following Christ. You may not always know "how much" you will have to pay in order to follow Christ, but counting the cost means making a commitment that when the time comes, no matter how difficult, you will give up whatever is necessary in that moment to do God's will.

As Christians, the cost we have to pay can be **extremely high**. Many Christians around the world have paid for their faith **with their life**. Christians have been gunned down in church, and in school, and in other places. In many parts of the world, Christians experience persecution and cannot worship openly or freely. Perhaps you are being called out of your job, and that requires giving up security, income, and stability. Perhaps you have had to give up something in your career for the sake of Christ.

A religion that gives nothing, costs nothing, and suffers nothing, is worth nothing. – [Martin Luther](#).

## **2) Discipleship means giving something up to follow Christ.**

Sometimes before we can build up, we need to tear down first, and get rid of whatever is in the way that distracts us from God. What do you desire and value the most? What are the things that come between you and God?

This means you may not have a life of luxury and riches. You may not have the car and house that you desire. You may have to give up your career or your family to follow Christ. There are many who say that the good news is about getting rich. But that is not the good news of the Bible! That is the good news of money. God says we will have to pay, not necessarily get richer! Sometimes God blesses us with money. Sometimes he does not. But discipleship **always involves sacrifice**.

Sacrifice can take different forms, not just giving up material things...sometimes it will cost us relationships, or opportunities at work- you might get passed up for a promotion because of your beliefs or even have to turn down a promotion because the new position is not in line with what you believe God has called you to.

Sometimes we might have to sacrifice certain desires- like the desire to get married because God is leading us in a different direction. Some of you need to give up a group of friends who are not helping your life, but are leading you down the wrong path. Sometimes you will lose relationships with your family members because of what you do as a follower of Jesus.

In **an affluent area like the Bay Area**, one of the likely areas that can come between us and Christ is our wealth. Jesus said it is very difficult for those who are rich to be saved, and that is a warning to each one of us, **including me**. You need to look at your heart very carefully to see your attitude toward the resources God has blessed you with, and see how you can give up anything that comes between you and God. But as I said, what we need to give up can be far more than just money or material resources.

Story about the possible IT job in Boston, and giving that up: When I was graduating from my studies in 2011, I was asked if I would serve at an Anglican missions college in Nairobi, and I agreed. That required raising my salary, and so I began that process by sending an email to all my friends and family announcing what I was doing, and asking for their support. That same day, I received an email out of nowhere offering me a job doing software for an American company, but with a position based in Nairobi! I was shocked. When I decided to study Bible in college, I gave up any hope of getting a corporate job. I assumed that I would never have that opportunity. And here it was! On the same day that I'm looking for support – how could that be a coincidence? What if this was God's way of providing for me to stay in Nairobi?

I went to Boston for two weeks of training, and I found out that what I had been told was somewhat overly optimistic – there was no position in Nairobi, and they were still negotiating their contract with a client in Nairobi. If I wanted to work for this company, I would have to apply for a Boston position, agree to work for 2 years, with only a possibility of ever moving to Nairobi. But on the other hand, if I wanted to raise support, I had been out of the US for three years, so I hadn't seen people very much. I didn't have a sending church. The economy was not good, and people had really cut back their giving. Many people were unemployed, and couldn't find a job. Some people I talked to recommended that I take the job, and he said this is a great opportunity, what if you can't raise enough to get back to Nairobi?

It was a difficult decision, but I couldn't bring myself to apply for the position in Boston. I went back to raising support, and it took longer than I had hoped but I was able to raise enough, and I found a church that was willing to send me. God provided all that I needed. But I had to give up something to be here.

What do you need to renounce? Jesus says to renounce all that we have. This is hard! We commit to Jesus first, everything else second. If that order is reversed, we are in disobedience. This brings me to my third point.

### **3) Discipleship means taking up your cross.**

When Jesus calls us, he is calling us to a life of sacrifice and death. That is what it means to take up our cross. It means we are marching to death behind Jesus. That is the only reason you would be taking up a cross. Notice that Jesus says, 'his own cross'. We are not carrying someone else's cross! We are carrying our own cross, and that means our own means of death.

Another passage that has a similar message is Galatians 2:19-20.

**Galatians 2:19-20** <sup>19</sup> For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. <sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Paul is writing to the church in Galatia, and he says the same thing that Jesus said earlier. He actually claims to have been crucified with Christ. We think of the cross as a Christian symbol. But really the

cross is a symbol of death! The cross is an instrument of torture. It is interesting to note in church history that people did not wear crosses until hundreds of years after the crucifixion. They only started using the cross as jewelry or an ornament when the cross stopped being used as a means of killing people. Before then, putting a cross around your neck was too disturbing, because it was too real. You would not have done that if you had ever witnessed a real crucifixion.

Another symbol of death that we regularly practice is baptism. Baptism is actually in one sense a ritual drowning! We don't always think of it that way but that is what it is. In baptism, the old self, with all its struggles to justify its own existence, is drowned, put to death as we are lowered into the water, and then resurrected into a new creature as we are lifted back out of the water.

Following Jesus means dying to self. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German church leader who lived during World War II said that "When Christ calls a person, Christ bids them come and die." The cost of discipleship is everything. Not just everything you have, everything you are. But following Jesus – discipleship, baptism–also means being raised with Jesus. It means new life.

Just like the wheat, Paul says he has lost his life, but he now lives in the power of Christ who lives in him. He lives by faith in the Son of God. If we are to be true disciples, then we must also be crucified with Christ, and live only through the strength of Jesus.

Have you taken up your cross to follow Jesus? Have you been crucified? I know this process for me has continued for a long time, and I continue to stamp out all the remnants of my old life. I pray that God will continue to refine me and destroy all the selfishness and pride that remains in me.

Discipleship is one of the things that I struggle with most as a pastor and church leader, because while it is one of the things we talk about a lot, it is one of the things that we often do not do. My hope is that all of us can live in a discipleship relationship with someone else – meeting with them regularly, asking them how they are doing, and mentoring them in faith.

As we move into 2021, it will be helpful to know where we are at as a church on discipleship and other topics. To help us do that, we're starting an online survey that asks about our services, our mission, about discipleship and a few other topics. Please take a few minutes to fill out this survey. This will give us some information about where we are at as a church, and will help as we seek to move forward.

To review, building a foundation of discipleship means:

- 1) Counting the cost of following Christ.**
- 2) Giving something up to follow Christ.**
- 3) Taking up your cross.**

## **Reflection Questions**

1. What has following Jesus cost you?
2. How can you build a foundation of discipleship?