

**Message: Your One and Only****[watch video clip: “Resume or Reference”]**

**The video illustrates a truth in a humorous way.** No matter what we may have done because we know *about* Jesus, if we don't have a relationship *with* Jesus, then we're relying on our own beliefs, feelings and strength. And that's insufficient. Only God can save us. That's why a relationship with Jesus is so important. That's why following is more than just believing.

**The Scripture passage we read (Luke 14:25-26) is easy to overlook.** Telling someone, “Love Jesus, hate your Mom” isn't going to make friends. In fact, it's pretty much a showstopper. We need to take a closer look to understand what Jesus is teaching us.

**At the time of the story, Jesus is a superstar.** He's filling stadiums wherever he goes. Think of the 10<sup>th</sup> inning crowd at Wednesday's World Series game between the Dodgers and the Astros and you've got it. But, instead of a game, people are flocking to see and hear Jesus.

**At first, Jesus is okay with the crowds.** He welcomes those who are curious and glad people are inspired by his teaching. But the time comes when he wants to move beyond the big tent atmosphere. Jesus wants to talk about relationship. Opportunities aren't of most concern, the level of commitment is.

**Do we come for the show or the motivational speaker?** Jesus wants to know. Jesus teaches a hard truth to the crowds following him one day. He stops, turns and says, “*Anyone who comes to me but refuses to let go of father, mother, spouse, children, brothers, sisters - yes, even one's own self! - can't be my disciple. [If you] won't shoulder [your] own cross and follow behind me, [you] can't be my disciple*” (vv25-27).

**Why did Jesus say that?** Here's what Pastor Kyle Idleman thinks we really want to hear: “What a great crowd! I want everyone to go invite one friend and come back tonight for a carnival. We'll have live music. All the loaves and fish you can eat. We'll even have a ‘water to wine’ booth. I may even get in the dunk tank. And whoever invites the most

friends get one free miracle. Let’s pack this hillside out!”<sup>1</sup> Instead of bread and entertainment, Jesus tells we have to hate our family, even our own lives, if we follow him. In fact, he goes on to say we have to give up our plans and careers as well (v33).

**What’s up with that?** Without a doubt the crowd split into two groups: fans and followers. And some of the fans are packing up to go home, just like those who leave in the eighth inning when things are looking bad. Some people try to soften the text by saying that it only applies to Jesus’ closest disciples – those destined for ministry, like pastors and seminary students. But the text says “large crowds” and “everyone” means everyone. So that doesn’t help.

**It leaves us with a tough question:**

**Does following Jesus mean you have to hate your grandma?**

**Let me assure you. The answer is a definite “no!”** Jesus would contradict self when he said, *“Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you’re my disciples - when they see the love you have for each other”* (John 13:34-35). Jesus wants us to passionately pursue him.

**The decision to truly follow Jesus is radical.** It may mean you’re going against the wishes of your family, effectively walking away from them. Some of you get it. In some cultures, if you follow Jesus without your family’s blessing, you’re thought of as hating or rejecting your family. That’s the idea here.

**Jesus is being honest about what it may cost you to follow him.**

It may mean offending your parents or grandparents. It might mean being cut out of the will or even cut off from your family. Some people put off following Jesus because they don’t want to hurt their parents’, grandparents’ or even their spouse’s feelings.

**Is Jesus talking directly to you? Yes!**

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<sup>1</sup> Kyle Idleman, *not a fan.*, Zondervan, 2014, p. 56

**“If you follow Jesus, it may mean ...**

... your Mom or Dad won't approve. They may roll their eyes, mumble about you getting carried away or even take actions to prohibit you from going to church;

... your brother or sister don't know what to make of your decision and might distance themselves;

... your boyfriend or girlfriend might breakup with you;

... your friends at school might laugh at you; and

... there's a good chance your husband or wife will criticize you.”<sup>2</sup>

**Jesus is saying**, “Yeah, that's part of it. And if you're not willing to choose me over your family and friends, then you're not ready to follow.” It's hard. We fear rejections, but that's what an “all in” commitment means. Jesus doesn't want to be one of your many loves or even the first of your many loves.

**Jesus is clear: he wants to be your one and only!**

**Picture a time when you had “the talk” with someone special.**

If you're married, it's best if you picture your spouse. After the talk, you realized this was the person for you. They were “the one.”

**So it happens: there's a proposal, a ring and you're waiting...**

...and your loved one smiles and says, “I love you. Yes.”

Yeah!!! You're on cloud nine!

...then your loved one says, “I'm willing to commit to you for the rest of my life. I just have one condition: I still want to be able to see other people.” Thud.

**That's what a fan says to Jesus. “I love you. I'm committed to you. But let's not be exclusive.”**

It's like carrying old girlfriends' or boyfriends' pictures around in your wallet. You have your loved one's picture in front and the others behind, but it doesn't work, does it? No. We insist on being “the only one.” Jesus makes it clear he expects the same thing from you.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 60

## **Jesus wants your whole heart, your undivided attention.**

### **What’s competing for your love and attention?**

Here are a few thoughts that may help you find out.

### **How do you invest your money?**

Jesus said, *“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* (Luke 12:34). Jesus talked about money more than anything else because our pursuit of money can become his chief competitor. The world teaches us to be consumers. Satisfaction comes with a price tag. Jesus wants to be our satisfaction. In fact, Jesus describes himself as living water that will satisfy our thirst forever (John 7:38-39).

### **When you’re hurt, who do you go to for comfort?**

We may go to a parent or spouse. Some of go to the refrigerator, there’s a reason it’s called comfort food. Maybe you bury yourself in work or in the children. Those things aren’t bad, but they can compete. Difficult or painful times reveal who we follow. If our first response is anyone or anything other than Christ, it shows our affection is divided. Go to Jesus first and then go to others in a healthy way.

### **What excites you the most?**

If the excitement your family saw in the 9<sup>th</sup> inning of last night’s ball game was the most excited your family has seen you in the last month, maybe there are things that are robbing God and others of your whole heart, your love. Don’t hold back! Show that excitement and love for God and others more often.

**“Imagine a child who is excited that their father is going to take them fishing.** As the day goes on the fish just aren’t biting. The more time passes, the more frustrated and disappointed the father becomes. On the drive home, he is silent, but clearly upset. Isn’t that an indication that the most important part of the day for the father wasn’t spending time with his child, but it was catching fish?”<sup>3</sup>

**Following Jesus means following him alone.** Fans want to hedge their bets, keeping their options open. Followers are “all in.” Refusing to share isn’t being insecure, possessive or exclusive. It’s a sign of love

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 62

and devotion. And that’s something we can share, freely and openly with all others.

**So don’t cringe when you read “hate your mother” (Luke 14:25).** We need to follow without fear of losing our influence or relationship with others. Trying to follow Jesus half-heartedly won’t work. We’ll end up living half a life. Keep in mind, Jesus’ terms aren’t negotiable. Jesus wants your whole heart, mind and spirit put into the relationship.

**Jesus isn’t going to play tricks on us, either.** There’s no “sign on the dotted line for one year interest free” agreement, with the shock of seeing the real terms after the year is up. Jesus isn’t trying to lure us with tricks. He makes no misleading promises. There’s no “bait and switch” con going on.

**Jesus is clear up front.** He’s not using fine print to give his message. Jesus’ message is the main point. Jesus loves you so much that he died for you, so you could be free and have eternal life with him.

**I don’t know about you, but that’s good enough for me.**

**I invite you to say after me, “Jesus, be my one and only.”**

Let us pray...

*Gracious God, we come wanting to be close to you. We want all of the good things that come by your grace and mercy, yet we struggle to get past our own doubts and self-interest. Fill us with a spirit of love, truth and give us the courage to make you our one and only. Give us the courage to admit those things that distract us. Show us how to truly follow you, no matter what it may cost. Jesus, we pray this in your name. Amen.*

**Luke 14:25-35 (CEB)**

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus. Turning to them, he said, “Whoever comes to me and doesn’t hate father and mother, spouse and children, and brothers and sisters - yes, even one’s own life - cannot be my disciple. Whoever doesn’t carry their own cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

“If one of you wanted to build a tower, wouldn’t you first sit down and calculate the cost, to determine whether you have enough money to complete it? Otherwise, when you have laid the foundation but couldn’t finish the tower, all who see it will begin to belittle you. They will say, ‘Here’s the person who began construction and couldn’t complete it!’ Or what king would go to war against another king without first sitting down to consider whether his ten thousand soldiers could go up against the twenty thousand coming against him? And if he didn’t think he could win, he would send a representative to discuss terms of peace while his enemy was still a long way off. In the same way, none of you who are unwilling to give up all of your possessions can be my disciple.

“Salt is good. But if salt loses its flavor, how will it become salty again? It has no value, neither for the soil nor for the manure pile. People throw it away. Whoever has ears to hear should pay attention.”

**Luke 9:23-24 (CEB)**

Jesus said to everyone, “All who want to come after me must say no to themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow me. All who want to save their lives will lose them. But all who lose their lives because of me will save them.”