

**II. Group discussion** *Each number below includes a set of questions that relate to the scripture text. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for “the big question.”*

Read Luke 14:25-33 aloud.

1. When Jesus spoke these words, who were the listeners?

How do you think these words impacted the crowd?  
*Delight? Shock? Offended? Encouraged?*

What do you think Jesus was trying to do by speaking this way to the crowd?

How concerned was Jesus about his popularity?

How are your feelings different among a large crowd of fans vs. being in an unpopular minority?

2. Re-state verse 26 in your own words.

Why would Jesus want us to hate our family members?

Why would Jesus want us to hate our own life?

After Jesus, what is the second most important thing in your world?  
How could this become a competitor to following Jesus?

3. How many of Jesus' listeners had seen a crucifixion?  
*Probably all of them – it was common. About 100 years earlier, a Jewish king (Alexander Jannaeus) punished his opponents by crucifying over 800 Jewish men while their wives & children were butchered at their feet.*

How do you think the idea of following Jesus to a cross would have affected ancient Jews?  
*Probably heard it as a call to fight Rome, even if it meant death.*

In what ways was Jesus issuing a call to battle?  
*Not a power struggle against Rome, but a heart struggle with ourselves.*

4. When Jesus calls us to take up a cross, what do you think it means for us today?  
*Following Jesus often means doing the right thing and paying a price for doing it. What happened to Jesus still happens to us.*

Why did Jesus bear a cross? What had he done to deserve it?

In what ways are “everyday” trials different from bearing a cross?  
*Traffic jams, a cold, even facing a life-threatening illness are part of life on a broken planet. Not the same as paying a price for doing the right thing.*

How have we spiritualized the concept of carrying a cross? Would Jesus really want us to suffer or pay a price for following him?

How should we respond when we encounter a price to pay because we are doing the right thing?  
*Whining is definitely the way to go! Or maybe strike back in anger?*

5. What are some rewards of bearing a cross? Why would anyone in his or her right mind consider doing something painful?

Who is someone you have seen bearing a cross to follow Jesus?

6. What is the meaning of the stories about building a house or facing an enemy army?  
*Make sure you understand the commitments you make.*

How do these stories fit with verses 26-27?

† **The big question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It's okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

What has it cost you to follow Jesus? Why are you willing to pay such a price?

### **III. Other resources**

**The point** – Every day, we are striving to become like Jesus by denying ourselves and serving others.

#### **Prayer**

Ask God how group members should be bearing a cross.

Pray for strength & courage to be like Jesus.

Invite God to show us what it looks like to imitate Jesus today.

Pray for God to guide the Lockes, our leaders and our congregation through the preacher transition.

**Kid-friendly activity.** *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

Play two games, with a Bible lesson in between.

#### 1. The greed game

Bring some individually-wrapped candy. (Gum would be ideal.)

Bring enough for each kid to get 3 or 4 each.

Gather the kids, dump the candy, and see who can grab the most.

An alternative - hide the candy & let the kids find it.

See who got the most candy.

How did you feel when you were trying to beat kids to get candy?

Have each kid pass his or her candy to the kid on the right. Do it

again. How did it feel to give away your “hard-earned” candy?

#### 2. Read Mark 8:31-36 aloud.

Ask the kids to re-tell the story in their own words.

What does it mean to “take up a cross”?

What does it mean to “deny yourself”?

#### 3. The nice game

Say something nice about another person.

That person say something nice about someone else.

Each person say something nice, until everyone has heard & spoken kind words. Keep going for 2-3 rounds.

How did you feel when you were giving & hearing encouragement?

Which game feels better – the greed game or the nice game?

Which game is more like the way Jesus wants us to be?

## **LIFE Group Guide**

### **Luke 14 – Following Jesus**

By John Grant (jgrant@collegehills.org)

**The theme: Jesus invites us to give up our rights and needs in order to follow him and serve others.**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Christian leader executed by Hitler, wrote: “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.” It is rare for Christians in America to die for our faith, but the call to self-denial continues to apply to us. This guide will challenge your group to reflect on the demanding calling of Jesus.

**Leadership tip:** Make time for “the big question” at each meeting. It is the most important and most powerful part of the discussion, because it applies the biblical text to people’s lives. Always go around the circle and invite everyone to answer it. Otherwise, your quiet people will miss an opportunity to speak, and everyone will miss the blessing of hearing from them.

**I. Relate** *Use a few of these to introduce the theme and “break the ice.” No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage individuals through these questions.*

- ❖ Who or what has encouraged you lately?
- ❖ How many places have you lived?
- ❖ What was your most recent major purchase? Why did you buy it? Has it been worth it?