

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

***The Tower Builder and the King:
Counting the Cost***
Luke 14:25-33

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the “Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study”. That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session “Background” located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day’s study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God’s will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Go online and read more about Alexander Bilideau so that you can make his story very interesting to your group.

Bible Study Leader:

Worship Time Leader:

Copy the Scripture reading from the final page of this session for each of the children and/or youth who will be participating. Give them the copy ahead of time so they can practice and if possible, review the reading with them before the worship time. Help them understand that their contribution is an important part of the worship experience.

Music Sources:

Wherever He Leads I'll Go, *The Worship Hymnal*, #437, CCLI #25194

Step by Step, *The Worship Hymnal*, #480, CCLI #696994

Yes, Lord, Yes, *The Worship Hymnal*, #445, CCLI #12224

I Have Decided to Follow Jesus, *The Worship Hymnal*, # 434, CCLI #5077724 or 2151540

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***The Tower Builder and the King:
Counting the Cost*****Focal Text**

Luke 14:25-33

Background Text

Luke 14:25-35

Main Idea

Following Jesus calls for such a radical change in how one lives that counting the cost is both wise and necessary.

Question to Explore

How much of your life are you willing to devote to following Jesus?

Teaching Aim

To lead your church to evaluate the extent to which you are willing to be Jesus' disciples in light of the radical discipleship Jesus demanded.

Gathering together:

Sing **Step by Step** and **I Have Decided to Follow Jesus**

First thoughts:

In the 2010 Olympics held in Vancouver, Canada, Canadians were proud of a 22 year old young man from Quebec, Alexander Bilideau, who won the first gold medal won by a Canadian at an Olympic game held in Canada. This winsome young man endeared himself even more when his story became widely known. His family is a close knit family and one of the important elements of their family is the older brother, Frederic age 28, who has cerebral palsy. Frederic daily overcomes many obstacles and is a source of encouragement and example to his younger siblings, Alexander and a younger sister. When Alexander was younger, he was on a hockey team and appeared

to have promise as a hockey player. The family faithfully took him to his hockey games and his siblings waited on the sidelines for him to practice or to play.

However, at some point Alexander realized that this lifestyle was not conducive to real family participation and he decided to stop playing hockey and find another sport which allowed the family as a whole to participate. He began to ski and eventually to do moguls and acrobatics. That led to his triumphant win at the Olympics in which his brother was joyfully cheering him on and in which his entire family participated.

However, on the day he decided to stop playing hockey, he had no way of knowing that somewhere down the way this triumph would come to him. He made a decision based on counting the cost of continuing his hockey career and comparing that to a more family-oriented sport. He decided that playing hockey exacted too great a cost to family life.

Our study and worship time today will lead us to consider what counting the cost of serving Jesus might mean in our own lives. What changes might need to occur?

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

The Tower Builder and the King: Counting the Cost

Focal Text

Luke 14:25-33

Background Text

Luke 14:25-35

Main Idea

Following Jesus calls for such a radical change in how one lives that counting the cost is both wise and necessary.

Question to Explore

How much of your life are you willing to devote to following Jesus?

Teaching Aim

To lead your church to evaluate the extent to which you are willing to be Jesus' disciples in light of the radical discipleship Jesus demanded.

Introduction to your personal study:

Statisticians tell us that the number of Christian martyrdoms in the twentieth century surpassed the total of all previous centuries of church history put together. From all indications that continues to be true in the twenty-first century. For some readers of this lesson, that reality seems far away and almost impossible. For others, the possibility of dying for one's faith is a daily reality. Whatever our current life situation, it is imperative that we consider the cost of following Christ. That is true whether we are a brand new believer or one who has professed faith in Christ for many years. What will be the cost – what should be the cost – of following Him this year?

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study**”, found at the beginning of this Unit. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

The teachings in these verses occur after a semiformal dinner in the home of a ruler of the Pharisees. Jesus used the occasion to include a series of sayings about eating, humility, banquet etiquette, and the open invitation to the kingdom (Luke 14:1-24). It was the Sabbath and following the worship at the synagogue, various friends of a ruler of the Pharisees were invited to his home for a meal. However, the worshipful attitude which should follow a Sabbath experience was broken by the desire for the most prominent place which was expressed by those attending. The Pharisee was aware of his ability to confer favour by giving positions of honour to those he wished to impress. Jesus addressed these attitudes of pride and jealousy.

We are in the middle of Luke’s long travel narrative that occupies nine chapters of the centre part of his gospel. Jesus has been journeying toward Jerusalem since chapter 9, verse 51. He alternates between teaching large groups and smaller groups of disciples. It is important to note that in verse 25 he is speaking to large crowds. Discipleship is for everyone. It would be easy to assume here that Jesus was speaking to his twelve disciples or to a smaller group of faithful believers, but verse 25 clearly says, **“Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ‘If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes even his own life – he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.’”**

Both a reality and an opportunity around the world today is that trained clergy are fewer in number and simply not available to minister in many places of the world. Lay-people, like most of those in house churches, take leadership. They teach, preach, minister to one another, share the gospel and enjoy fellowshiping with one another. Some are strong in one area of ministry; another is strong in a different way. They are all disciples and it was to us that Jesus was speaking so many years ago. Never was there the separation between the “trained clergy” and the “laity” that became so firmly entrenched in Christianity for so many years.

The mention of the multitudes is Luke’s way of saying that Jesus has become popular. This popularity will soon be tested as Jesus enters Jerusalem and meets his death on the cross. Only the truly faithful will continue to follow. A necessary corrective to the idea that following Jesus will be easy must happen.

Focusing on the Meaning:

Jesus begins by saying ***If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple*** (Luke 14:26). This is a difficult passage and needs to be understood in the context of the Greek words influenced by Hebrew or Old Testament

background. Unlike English words, the Greek words used here by Jesus for “love” and “hate” refer not to an emotion, but to a commitment. The words here may mean “choose” or “not choose”. Matthew’s reporting of this almost identical declaration says ***Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves a son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me*** (Matthew 10:37).

This passage does speak to the cost of discipleship. Our first loyalty is to Christ and that loyalty influences our other relationships. Particularly in cultures where the parents’ desires determine the occupation or the marriage of a child, this commitment to put Christ first is enormous. But even where parental influence is less obvious, the choices which parents make about how children spend their time, what schools they attend and what friends they keep can keep a young person from freely choosing to follow Christ wholeheartedly. There will be tension in living out the teaching of this passage. Sometimes we may prefer to do “ministry” or travel to “mission opportunities” rather than care for an elderly parent or deal with a difficult teen. Our commitment to Christ will not give us an excuse for neglecting those kinds of responsibilities.

Another way of considering this passage is to realize that these relationships we cherish so highly – father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters – even our own life – are only ours because they are God’s gift to us. How can we hold apart from God those very things that he has given to us.

Verse 27 emphasizes the cost of being a disciple. ***And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.*** The word picture is dramatic. Carrying a cross was not a task for the weak. Before Jesus began to carry his cross to Calvary, he had prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, been betrayed by one of his disciples, been tried before the chief priests and teachers of the law, gone before Pilate, heard the very people who a week earlier had praised his entrance into Jerusalem call for his crucifixion, been flogged, and had a crown of thorns placed on his head. However, even prior to that he had lived the final three years of his life anticipating that he would be killed. As a adult, Jesus must always have understood that his ministry would eventually lead to his death.

Marjorie Holmes’ beautiful book called **Three From Galilee: The Young Man from Nazareth** is a fictional description of how Jesus grew into the understanding of his role as the Saviour. As a child, he was sensitive to animals and children and illness and the downtrodden. He felt keenly the beauty of the world and equally keenly the ugliness. As he grew into manhood, he began to realize that he was set aside for purposes which would preclude his having an ordinary marriage and family life. Marjorie Holmes portrayed the relationship of Mary and Joseph, his earthly parents, as one of extraordinary tenderness and understanding. Jesus was human and he wished for that kind of relationship himself.

Carrying the cross for Jesus was not a week end experience, but a total commitment of his life. It will be that way for true followers of Christ in any age.

“The twin parables of the Tower Builder and the King Going to War (Luke 14:28-33) focus on the self-examination necessary to make a decision for surrendering to the call of Jesus. The ultimate commitment is demanded of every disciple. No one should make such a decision rashly. Just as cost estimation is needed to build a tower in a field and intense strategic planning is required to wage war, the one considering discipleship must weigh the cost. To complete the task successfully, one must consider each demand in Jesus’ teaching concerning the kingdom of heaven. Only after intensive self-testing should the decision be made to follow Jesus in his call to radical discipleship” (Young, Brad A. *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation*. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers. 1998. p. 222.)

“The parables of the Tower Builder and the king going to war are found only in Luke. The first parable is taken from the agricultural world of that day.

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish’” (Luke 14:28-30).

The building of a tower in a field was common. These stone towers served numerous functions. Sometimes, during harvest season, they were occupied by guards to make certain thieves would not steal the produce. Even when unoccupied, they served a function because they provided the semblance of a human presence somewhat like a scarecrow guarding the field. Thick-stoned towers provided shade and a cool place for the workers to rest in the hot afternoons. Sometimes field tools or other valuables were stored there. Sometimes the foreman could sit in the tower and supervise the workers in the field (Young, p. 226). All of these uses emphasize the practical wisdom of planning to build the tower. If one needed the tower for all or any of these uses and he needed to build one, he would need to know that it could be finished.

The shame-and-honor culture of the day (and perhaps of our day as well) would indicate the necessity of planning to finish the job started. Building a stone tower in a field was not a major construction project. The shame of failure to complete it would be comparable, for many Middle Eastern people, to a king losing a war. The shame would be unbearable.

Jesus would not want his disciples to count to cost only in order to avoid being shamed before his/her peers. However, counting the cost of discipleship does involve remembering that we do not act as individuals once we have become a part of the Christian family. Every failure of the individual impacts the body of believers.

A number of years ago, a large ostentatious home was being built on a busy highway near Denton, Texas, U.S.A. However, that home was never finished and fifteen years later it stands as a sad monument to someone’s lack of planning or of difficult circumstances in someone’s life.

In the little town in Alberta, Canada where the author of this lesson material lives, the small town newspaper carried a picture of a new barn being built a few kilometres outside of town. It was a tall, rather impressive structure and we watched for it the next time we drove down the road. We have watched it nearing completion and have speculated on its usage wondering why it is such a tall edifice. Even without the newspaper article, the barn would have been of interest to passersby. When the builder began to build so close to the busy highway and his building plan deviated somewhat from the norm, he invited interest and comments.

It is like that with the Christian life. We do not have to begin to build a life with Christ, but once we do we can be sure others will be observing the building process. Like the unfinished house or the barn in progress, our life is open to observation. We need to count the cost as we make that commitment to begin to build. We cannot know the obstacles that will be in the way. We may underestimate the temptations we will face. But, inasmuch as is possible, we need to understand that the Christ way demands a commitment until the finish.

A second parable related to counting the cost of discipleship is found in Luke 14: 31-33. ***“Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 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. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”***

In this second parable, the consequences of the decision have been increased considerably. If a barn fails to be built, the builder may face embarrassment; his cattle may be poorly cared for; there may be a blight on the landscape; but lives will probably not be lost.

If a king is about to go to war against an enemy of greatly superior power, then his decision has implications for many other people. The smart king will ***“sit down and consider”***. This implies that he will ask for advice, think about any possible advantage he would have which would overcome the difference of ten thousand soldiers and make an appropriate decision. If his decision is that fighting would be death and destruction to his army and most likely to his kingdom, he will ask for terms of peace. In the power structure of the Biblical times, that probably meant he would surrender to the superior army. This may involve paying costly tribute money.

The meaning of the parable is a clear one. Before entering into an endeavour which will cost a great deal, consider carefully.

Proverbs 24:3-6 says ***“By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful***

treasures. A wise man has great power, and a man of knowledge increases strength; for waging war you need guidance, and for victory many advisors.”

The parallel between this teaching and the teaching of the parables we are considering seems obvious. Jesus’ formal educational experience consisted of learning the Torah – the law- and other scripture available to synagogue leaders. This understanding of the importance of wisdom in decision-making must have formed a part of Jesus’ instruction.

If we carry the picture given in Proverbs into our discussion of discipleship we can appreciate that the process of discipleship is similar to filling a room with rare and beautiful treasures. We do that through understanding and through knowledge – both heart and head learning.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

The parables stress two main points: (1) the disciple of Jesus must think things out very carefully, and (2) he must be willing to give things up for Jesus.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

The Tower Builder and the King: Counting the Cost

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the *Focal Text* in their Bibles. Also, share with them the *Main Idea* to be learned from the Scriptures, and the *Questions to be Explored* by the group.

Focal Text

Luke 14:25-33

Background Text

Luke 14:25-35

Main Idea

Following Jesus calls for such a radical change in how one lives that counting the cost is both wise and necessary.

Question to Explore

How much of your life are you willing to devote to following Jesus?

Teaching Aim

To lead your church to evaluate the extent to which you are willing to be Jesus' disciples in light of the radical discipleship Jesus demanded.

Connect with Life:

Ask if any one remembers the story of Alexander Bilideau in the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver, Canada. Are there similar stories which inspire us to want to accomplish great things?

Guide the Study:

Note to the Leader: The scripture passage for the lesson today is brief and tight. You may want to have it read from more than one translation. Begin by having the entire passage read.

Comment: We begin today's study with a difficult saying of Jesus found in verse 26. Have it read again and say: We will think about this passage silently for a few minutes before we share commentary about it.

Ask: To whom is this passage addressed? (large crowds were travelling with Jesus and he said to them, "If anyone...")

Continue: Can we assume that this teaching of Jesus applies to us today?

Have someone read verse 27.

Discuss how you imagine carrying a physical cross would be.
(too heavy for most people, embarrassing, frightening because you are thinking of the pain and death to come, an extreme form of physical torture).

Look for an answer: Why would Jesus use this word picture to describe what being his disciple is like?

(we cannot do it alone- we must depend on him; we may experience embarrassment or alienation from people important to us; it is a symbol of death to self; it indicates that we are to experience what Jesus Himself experienced).

Request another person to read verses 28-30.

Ask someone to describe what is happening in these verses.

Give an opportunity for someone to share a story of a job begun, but not finished. Use examples from the preparation material if necessary to get the discussion started.

Seek a response: What are some feelings we experience when we fail to finish a job we have started? (Discouragement, shame, tiredness, the need to excuse ourselves)

Now ask: Why would Jesus tell this story after his strong statement about the necessity of the disciple carrying his/her cross?

Read verses 31-32.

Ask someone to describe what is happening in these verses.

Encourage a discussion: Why is this a more serious situation than the story of building a tower (other people are involved; soldiers will be killed; the entire nation would be affected).

Add: What is the teaching here about our discipleship? (What we do affects other people; if we fail to count the cost and give up our Christian life, others will be very negatively impacted)

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Have someone read verse 33.

Seek an answer to this: What does it mean to “give up everything” to be a disciple?

Tell the group this story: During World War Two, partisans (those loyal to their own nation and the Allied cause in France, The Netherlands, and other countries occupied by enemy soldiers often asked those who wanted to join the partisan group to state aloud what they would be willing to give up to secretly fight the enemy. If they would not commit to giving up everything – and even being willing to die for their cause, they would not be permitted to become a member of the group.

Have your participants briefly discuss their own willingness to give up everything to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Note: Be very careful to not embarrass anyone who is not yet ready to make that commitment. However, it may be appropriate to ask those attending to publically commit their willingness to give up everything, even their own lives to this call to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

Close the Bible study with a prayer for the ability to commit everything to follow the Lord.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

The Tower Builder and the King: Counting the Cost Luke 14:25-33

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Goals, Action Plans, and Costs???

Think of a big event for which you are planning. Are you making application for university? Do you hope to travel to Europe or Australia later on? Are you planning on immigrating to a new country? Are you thinking about buying your own bicycle, motorcycle, or car?

What plans do you have to make before you hope to achieve your goal? How important is it to plan properly. What would happen if you left on a trip without enough money to get home again?

Counting the cost is a part of life. To bring to completion any great idea, we have to have a plan. In today's lesson, Jesus was speaking to people who were all excited about the prospect of his being the new ruler of the Jews. They hoped he would defeat the Romans, bring prosperity to their country, and heal their illnesses.

Jesus knew his destiny was a different one. His kingdom was not to be an earthly one. We have been invited to follow Jesus. We will have many wonderful opportunities to live life abundantly here on this earth. But we need to count the cost. We need to make plans which will enable us to stay faithful to him over the years.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***The Tower Builder and the King:
Counting the Cost***
Luke 14:25-33**Beginning the Service:**

Sing Yes, Lord, Yes

Have children and/ or youth read the following scripture:

Reader One:

The one who loves his life will lose it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Reader Two:

If anyone serves Me, He must follow Me. Where I am, there my servant will also be.

Reader One:

If anyone serves Me, the Father will honour him. I am the light of the world.

Reader One and Two or use a Third Reader for contrast:

Anyone who follows Me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.

John 8:12; 12: 25, 26

Offering:**Praying for the World:**

When political upheaval comes in a country, missionaries serving there are impacted immediately. They must decide if their presence is a danger to fellow national Christians. They have to think of the safety of their children. In today's technological world, their parents and extended family quickly become aware of the danger and are

concerned. Yet to leave too quickly may seem to be thinking only of themselves. Their work will be negatively impacted. New Christians may be unable to continue the worship services and evangelism started and planned. Pray for missionaries who must weigh all of these issues when political change, coupled with violence, comes to the country where they live and work.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

Are You Listening? Really Listening?

The one who said, ***"Come unto me, all you who are weary and burdened..."*** (Matthew 11:28) also said, ***"Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple"*** (Luke 14:27). Jesus also told us ***"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God"*** (Luke 9:62).

We have been considering the necessity of counting the cost of discipleship. Jesus had been freely inviting people to follow him. ***"Come unto me, all you who are weary and burdened,"*** he said and Luke tells us in chapter 14 that large crowds were traveling with Jesus. Everyone wanted to be in on the excitement of healing, miracles, and Jesus' teachings.

But Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem and the cross. He began to speak clear words to those followers about the cost of their commitment to him.

The Message states it this way ***"Simply put, if you're not willing to take what is dearest to you, whether plans or people, and kiss it good-bye, you can't be my disciple. Salt is excellent. But if the salt goes flat, it's useless, good for nothing. Are you listening to this? Really listening?"*** (Luke 14: 33-35, The Message.)

A word study of the word disciple indicates that it simply means follower. It is related to the word discipline which we interpret to mean punishment but which in reality means teaching. A disciple is a follower of one who teaches; he is a learner of those teachings and a doer of those teachings. A disciple is one who follows for the long term – ***"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God"*** (Luke 9:62).

In verse 33 Jesus says ***“Any of you who does not give up everything he has can not be my disciple.”*** The Greek verb “to give up” in verse 33 would better be translated “renounce”. Twenty-first century people are not good at renouncing; we are better at claiming more and more.

This verse strikes at the heart of who we are as believers – whether we are brand-new believers or have followed Christ for a long time. The renouncing has to be done again and again.

But to fail to renounce leaves us failing to experience the fullness of Christ’s blessings as yet unknown to us.

This chapter in Luke ends with another strong statement from Jesus. ***“Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out.”***

True saltiness cannot lose its saltiness. However, in the first century what passed for salt was often an impure mixture of elements which could indeed lose its ability to flavour or to preserve. ***“Thrown out”*** is never used elsewhere in the Bible for mere loss of reward. Jesus is talking here of those whose commitment to follow was never a real commitment. They were caught up in the excitement of the best show in town. Being thrown out here refers to being lost – being separated from God.

Salt which is not good is not even fit to be used for compost. It will damage the soil if placed on the soil and unlike most kitchen waste such as potato peelings and coffee grounds, it cannot be placed in the compost barrel with the hope that it will some day be good to use again.

These are strong warnings from Jesus. Don’t start on this journey with me if you cannot count the cost and commit to the long term involvement which will bring victory in the end. Between the beginning and the end will be some “carrying the cross” kinds of events.

Jesus ends this message by saying ***“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”*** The Message says ***“Are you listening? Really listening?”***

Craig L. Blomberg in his book *Preaching the Parables: From Responsible Interpretation to Powerful Proclamation* (Baker, 2004, p.186) tells of the commitment he and his wife have made to a graduated tithe, which means that as their annual gross income increases above and beyond any simple cost of living increase, a percentage of their giving to the Lord’s work goes up as well. In recent years their family has topped 40 percent in their level of giving, all without any huge sacrifices, though with a smaller house and car and entertainment center than most of their peers and probably through eating out considerably less. This family chose this way (undoubtedly among others) of counting the cost of discipleship in their North American situation. For another family, the counting of the cost might look very different.

We began our study today with thinking about a remarkable young man, Alexander Bilideau of Montreal, Quebec, Canada. He gave up playing hockey as a young man because he felt the long hockey practices took too great a toll on his brother and sister and their family life. He began to ski and eventually won the first gold medal won by a Canadian on Canadian soil at the 2010 Winter Olympics.

There is, of course, not a one-on-one parallel to Alexander's story and ours. We may give up something and never see in this life the result to how God used that sacrifice. Nonetheless this passage speaks to us as it did to Craig Bloomberg who wrote, "Because of this passage I approach each day with a sense of urgency."

And so must we. This Christian life is not about the easy way. What about counting the cost is our task for the day. Is it a re-evaluation of how we spend our money? Do we need to consider how much time we spend in activities with no return in better health, service to others, or an enriched mind? Have we skills or resources which would alleviate suffering somewhere in the world. Can we teach an immigrant to read or help a young person to learn self-esteem. Do we have any friends who have never heard the gospel? Will our next door neighbour be in heaven with us?

Call to Commitment:

Are you listening? Really listening?

Concluding the Service:

Conclude with the children and/or youth rereading the Scripture with which the Worship Time began.

Have children and/ or youth read the following scripture:

Reader One:

The one who loves his life will lose it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Reader Two:

If anyone serves Me, He must follow Me. Where I am, there my servant will also be.

Reader One:

If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him. I am the light of the world.

Reader One and Two or use a Third Reader for contrast:

Anyone who follows Me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.

John 8:12; 12: 25, 26