

TITLE AND NUMBER: 96. With all your heart

REFERENCE AND KEY VERSE(S): Luke 14:26-28

[Jesus 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. Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost?"

LOOKING FURTHER: Luke 14: 25-33; Mark 12:30; Mark 4:1-20; James 4:8



What does this Bible passage tell us?

Someone who was not a Christian once asked me whether it was true that Jesus told us to hate our father and mother. We need to understand what He is saying in this passage, not just for our own benefit but so that we can answer others.

We know that God is Love; that is His very nature, and He could not possibly be telling us to do anything except love others. The Amplified Bible is a translation that uses many more words to explain the underlying meaning of the original text, which was written in ancient languages no longer used today. It explains that Jesus is saying that loving our families, important as that is, must take second place to loving God. In Mark 12:30, Jesus points out that the most important commandment is to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." Loving others comes after that, but actually the more we love God, the better we can love others.

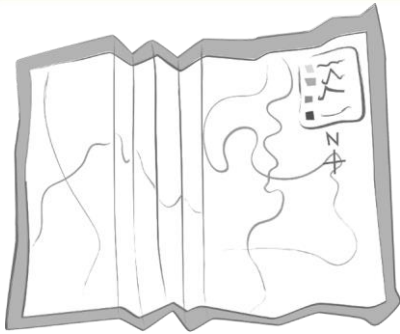
Jesus wants followers who are fully committed to Him. He wants us to understand the commitment needed as we start out on the journey, so we do not give up. It may be easy to see bad things that we need to leave behind, but sometimes even good things can take too much of our attention. One of my colleagues talks about seeing the difference between a "good idea" and a "God idea."

In Mark 4:1-20, Jesus tells a parable about a farmer sowing seed; some of the seed bears good fruit, but much is wasted as it falls on the path, or in among weeds. The parable shows that for the Gospel to bear fruit in our lives, we have to be free of distractions and to devote ourselves to following Him. Let us examine our lives to see what might be diverting us from following Jesus wholeheartedly. And try, with His help, to set those things aside.

Reflections:

- What might be distracting you from spending time with God? Think about how you can give Him "quality time" in your day, despite the challenges of the regime and environment. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you, claiming the promise of James 4:8: "Come near to God and he will come near to you."
- Reflect on Mark 12:30 (quoted above). As you declare your love to God, invite his Holy Spirit to fill you with His love, so that in turn you can better love others. Sit quietly and prayerfully with your hands open to receive His love.

Write or draw something you read in this Bible Study that stood out to you.



Do you have any questions about this week's Bible Study?



How does this week's message apply to your life?



What can we learn about God from this week's passage?



What would you like to ask God this week?



Has God responded to your prayers this week in the way you had hoped for? It's okay to talk to God about this.

