

Ashland BIC Church – Ohio

July 13, 2025

Personal Introduction & Remarks:

Greetings in the most precious and beautiful name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I've known Pastor Keith for more than a decade—first met him in Goa. We loved hosting him in our church there.

Dan Deyhle says Keith is one of his all-time favorite guests he ever hosted.

As Pastor introduced me, I am Stephen Badiger. I'm visiting with my lovely wife, Kery, and our 5-year-old son, Zebedee.

I'd like to briefly share about BIC World Missions and my current role.

< PPT sharing about the BICWM & my current role >

One of the joys of my role is that I get to hear stories of God's goodness and His work around the world.

I also get to hear about the challenges our brothers and sisters face in following Jesus and making disciples.

The cost of following Christ varies from place to place: it's different in Malawi than in Zambia, different in Nicaragua, in India, and in the Middle East.

Today, I'd like us to go on a small journey to reflect on what it really means to follow Jesus—what it costs to be His disciple.

Whether we acknowledge it or not, all of us, wherever we live, are called to pay the price. We'll look into Scripture and I'll also share a glimpse of what it looks like to follow Christ in India.

Introduction:

As we meditate on today's passage, my prayer is that our hearts will be stirred and that we will respond to whatever God is calling us to do in this season of our lives.

Please turn with me to the Gospel according to **Luke 14:25-34** (Read the whole passage).

Large crowds were following Jesus, and He turns and addresses them.

Many were following Him with different expectations—some hoping He would establish Himself as the Messiah in a political or military sense.

But here, Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem, and He tells them clearly:

It's not going to be easy—

- Following Him,

- Obeying Him fully,
- Joining in His mission.

What's interesting is that instead of saying who **can** be His disciple, Jesus says **three times** who **cannot** be His disciple.

1. Verse 26: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother... he cannot be my disciple."

- In a culture where family loyalty meant everything, and honoring parents was one of the Ten Commandments, what Jesus says here is radical.
- It's one of the most controversial verses.
- I've heard non-Christians debate: *What kind of religion tells you to hate your family?*

Let's be clear—

- The Bible teaches us to love and honor our parents, spouses, and children.
- The word "hate" here is not about active hatred but a comparison: that **no relationship** should take priority over our relationship with God.

Let me give an example from India:

- When someone gives their life to Jesus, their parents might say, *"If you become a Christian, you are dead to us."* And they mean it.
- Choosing Christ may be seen as dishonoring your family.
- I've met believers whose families haven't spoken to them for years.
- One brother I know hasn't spoken to his family in over two years. He recently got married, and his family didn't come. The church became his family.

So what do you do in a situation like that?

That's what Jesus meant.

You still love your family—probably even more than before—and pray for them because they need Jesus too.

But if a choice must be made, Jesus says: *If you choose anyone over Me, you cannot be My disciple.*

This seems like a clear-cut choice—but what about daily temptations?

- When it's between Jesus and our friends, who do we choose?
- When it's between cultural norms and Jesus' way, who do we follow?

It's not just in life-or-death decisions, but in everyday choices that we're called to honor Jesus.

There are always temptations to turn away.

Jesus reminds us: He takes our relationship with Him seriously.

He died for us.

And by His grace and the help of the Holy Spirit, we are called to do the same—

To honor Him above all else.

2. ***“Whoever does not carry their cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple.”***

- This isn't about minor inconveniences or changing some weekend plans.
- This is serious.
- It means submitting to the Father's will—whatever the cost, wherever it takes us.

If you've been around toddlers, you know how hard it is to say “no” when they look up at you and ask sweetly, *“Can I have it?”*

It's tough.

But the hardest person to say “no” to is ourselves.

Daily, we face the temptation:

- To choose our own way,
- To go after temporary pleasure,
- To sneak back into our old ways.

But Jesus calls us to deny ourselves, to carry our cross—

- Whether that's rejection,
- Being honest when it's costly,
- Showing love when it's hard,
- Even being hated or shamed for the Gospel.

We're called to deny ourselves and carry the cross—**no matter what it means.**

These two statements are heavy.

So Jesus gives two examples:

- A builder planning to build,

- A king preparing for war.

The point? **Know the cost.**

This isn't just a New Testament concept:

- Abel did what was right and was killed.
- Joseph was imprisoned for refusing sin.
- David, Daniel, the prophets—all faced great suffering.

Let me share a glimpse of what it costs to follow Jesus in India:

- Some believers are ignored at work during lunch breaks.
- You might be rejected by landlords 100 times because you're Christian.
- You could be expelled from your village, denied food or water.
- You might be threatened, or if found evangelizing, forced to tear up your tracts and chant other gods' names.
- Some have been paraded through villages, garlanded with sandals.
- Some have faced mobs attacking churches—destroying, burning, and beating worshippers.

12 Indian states now have anti-conversion laws.

- You must request government permission 60 days before baptism.
- It's a non-bailable offense.
- Even third parties can file complaints.

Pastors have been jailed, churches raided.

And yet, Jesus doesn't sugarcoat it.

He promises:

- He paid for our sins.
- He gives us peace beyond understanding.
- His Spirit lives within us.
- He prays with us and for us.

But He also says: **There's a cost.**

We still live in a fallen world, and we are called to deny ourselves and carry our cross daily.

3. “Those who do not give up everything they have cannot be My disciples.”

That sounds demanding, doesn't it?

Didn't Jesus say, “*My yoke is easy and my burden is light*”?

Yes—but here's why this sounds strong:

Because Jesus compares us to **salt**.

- We're not just a forgiven group waiting for heaven.
- We are called to be **salt of the earth**—
 - Salt brings flavor.
 - Even though it's little in quantity, it changes the whole dish.

Likewise, we may be small in number, but empowered by the Spirit, we bring the flavor of Christ to the world.

Being a disciple means:

- Paying the cost,
- Making disciples,
- Choosing God over everything—every day,
- Denying ourselves, carrying the cross, even unto death.

We are all salt—not just special Christians or leaders.

Each of us, like grains of salt, together bring taste and life to the world.

Application:

What areas of your life is Jesus calling you to surrender?

Where is He asking you to choose Him over other alternatives—whether it's money, fame, relationships, or comfort?

Am I ready to deny myself, pick up my cross, and follow Christ every day?

Am I ready to pay the cost of discipleship?

Is my life reflecting the salt and light of Christ in the world around me?

Am I ready to recommit myself to Jesus, to the Cross, and to follow Him—no matter where it takes me?

