

# REFLECTION OF GRACE

A Weekly Reflection on Stewardship from our Members



Sunday, September 4 | Gospel  
*Luke 14: 25-43*



Now large crowds were traveling with Jesus; and he turned and said to them, "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions."

## JESUS CHRIST, PROJECT MANAGER By Harry Breda

In reading this passage, I was struck by the word "hate." It's such a loaded term in today's politically charged climate. Between hate speech codes at colleges and universities, organized campaigns to out "haters" online and in public, and "hate in your heart" on the campaign trail, it seems that hate is everywhere, and it's ... hated.

Of course, I found it odd that Jesus told the crowd anyone who does not "hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, even life itself" is not ready to be His disciple.

But there's more to the story.

The critical part of the passage is His direction to those in the crowd who are thinking of joining the party. Are you in? Seriously, are you truly in? Because if you're not, He says, fully committed with your whole heart, your mind, and your soul, then you're not ready (if you'll begrudge me mixing gospel messages).

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Then Jesus turns into the first project manager in recorded history. He tells us that if you're planning to build a tower, you need a foundation; if you're going to wage war, you need to have an army, not to mention supply lines, a division to build latrines, and so on. Anyone who has ever managed a project with a timeline, a budget, and some insane, irrational requirements, can sympathize.

And this is the crux of the lesson.

When you start a project, you assess what you need to successfully complete the task. Whether it's money, material, personnel, permits, or some combination, you get your list of stuff you need. If you're building a house, you have to get blueprints, permits, lumber, probably a toilet or two, and of course, some people skilled in building stuff. Gather these things, prepare and complete the checklist, and you're ready to build that house. Until you put in that work, you're not ready.

In the same way, you have to start the project – and put in the work – to be a follower of Christ.

Jesus tells the crowd: If you want to be a part of this merry band, this group of disciples, you've got to do the work. He tells the crowd to "carry the cross and follow me" – before father and mother, before wife and children, before life itself. If you can't do that, then you're not ready.

It's a tall order.

But it makes sense. If you're going to commit to Christ, clear away what might interfere with your pledge. Ditch the wife (or husband) ... ignore the kids ... and Mom and Dad? You're on your own. Focus on your promise to Christ above all else.

I'm not a Biblical scholar – heck, I'm not even much of a regular scholar – but I can understand the requirement. I'm not sure I agree with the translation of the word "hate," particularly as it's used in today's common parlance. Maybe something like "set aside" would be a better word choice – otherwise, we're in conflict with the fifth commandment, honoring your father and mother, right?

To prepare yourself for Christ, to be His disciple, be that project manager. Take a look at the requirements and clear your calendar. Put Him first if you're ready to be His disciple.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- What are some things that keep you from putting Christ first in your life? What can you do to move some of those things aside?
- Today is the first day for you to make that commitment to Christ. What's the first thing you can do to start your project?

Harry Breda is Lisa's husband, Anne's son, and father to two pretty good kids, Shelby, a sophomore at Texas State University, and Thomas, a busy eighth grader. In his work life he does marketing and product management for investment companies, while the rest of his time is spent taking kids to events, playing with dogs, setting up parties at Ascension, running on occasion, and supporting University of Texas athletics. Though he was raised Catholic, he switched to the Episcopal team in 2003 and has never looked back. The Breda family has been members of Episcopal Church of the Ascension for eight years, since moving to Dallas from Colorado, and despite warnings, Harry has served as both Clerk and a member of the Vestry.

