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Sunday School That Clicks

Lesson 11 / February 14, 2010

Committed to Carry a Cross

for use as

STEP 1 

Lesson 11
Focus:

Take up your cross and follow Jesus.

Lesson 11
Bible Basis:

Matthew 16:13-27

This week's lesson focuses on what it takes for us to be fully committed to following Christ. We discuss why making a commitment to Christ involves some serious consideration and reflection, then look at what we need to lay down in order to take up our cross and follow Christ fully.

OPENING ACTIVITY: Not for the Faint of Heart

According to a Harris telephone survey, 54% of men and women believe Valentine's Day is the most romantic day of the year to "pop the question," with Christmas Day a distant second. However, popping the question means making a serious commitment, a word that can strike terror into some hearts. To commit to marriage, cold-footed bachelors must give up a whatever-I-want-to-do existence and shoulder some big, lifetime responsibilities.

Often those who understand the weight and meaning of a full commitment are those who are most hesitant to make one. But that doesn't mean we should run from the realities of commitments—especially the commitment to follow Christ wholeheartedly.

But what does it mean to follow Christ fully? In Luke 14:27-33, Jesus talked to His disciples about "counting the cost" of following Him. Read those verses together, then answer these questions as you discuss the meaning of "counting the cost" of commitments, and especially of commitment to Christ:

- ▶ What is the principle behind "counting the cost" before committing to something?
- ▶ What are some commitments you've made for which you counted the cost in advance?
- ▶ Have you ever failed to count the cost of a commitment and been disappointed or embarrassed? Explain your answer.
- ▶ Why do you think it is important for a follower of Christ to count the cost of discipleship?

Lesson 11
Memory Verse

Simon Peter answered,
 “You are the Christ, the
 Son of the living God.”

—Matthew 16:16

OPENING STORY: [Read the story aloud to your class, or make copies and pass it around.]

UNEMPLOYED CHICAGOANS GIVE TO QUAKE VICTIMS

The headline reads like something out of a Frank Capra movie: “Unemployed Chicagoans Giving to Quake Victims in Their Own Time of Need.”

Felecia Thompson is World Vision Chicago’s Executive Director, and as \$15,000 in donations poured in from 17 area churches on Chicago’s West Side, she was moved by the generous spirit of the community: “It’s wonderful because folks in this community . . . it isn’t always feasible for them to give.”

Twanda Mitchell is one example of the community’s spirit of sacrifice. She’s an unemployed mother of two children, who gave \$450 from her savings account to help Haiti’s earthquake victims. From her perspective, it wasn’t about what was feasible; it was about what was right. “They went to bed that night, and woke up the next day and didn’t have anything, so I kind of put myself in their shoes,” Mitchell said.

While many millions of dollars have poured in worldwide — including cash from celebrities and corporate big wigs—to help the people of Haiti, 17-year-old Dimitri Crittle from Chicago’s West Side dug deep into his heart and savings, donating birthday money he’d earmarked to buy a pair of shoes for himself.

“I seen on TV, young kids being mother and fathers to little brothers with no parents and no home or anything, and I just felt like if I was in that situation, I would want somebody to help me out.” Crittle says that the feeling he has from giving is better than buying a pair of shoes could have ever been. “I know the shoes are just an accessory, but this could go a lifetime. It could help a whole nation,” he said.

The LEADERS Network organization, to which the seventeen West Side churches all belong, plans to hold more collection drives in the coming weeks. Those who have already given sacrificially plan to give still more. World Vision says that kind of generosity will allow them to send all kinds of supplies to Haiti, from basic food and water, to school supplies and toys.

Even the simple gift of a football can help a child find a bit of comfort after the trauma of going through an earthquake, World Vision’s Felicia Thompson said. “Imagine being able to take your mind off of being hungry for a moment. Imagine what it would be like to take your mind off ‘Where is my sister, brother? Where is my mom or dad?’ This could do it.”

It's knowing they're make that kind of a difference in the lives of hurting people that has mobilized the West Side community to give so sacrificially in their own time of uncertainty and need. Those who donated say that knowledge—the knowledge that they're helping someone else during a difficult time—is all the thanks they need.

[Now form small groups and have your class discuss the following.]

- ▶ In this situation, how are these Chicagoans picking up their cross to follow Christ?
- ▶ How does their attitude of willing sacrifice speak to you?
- ▶ How has your commitment to Christ impacted your reaction to the Haiti crisis?
- ▶ What do you think that your response reveals about your commitment to Christ?
- ▶ What does picking up your cross daily to follow Christ look like in everyday life?
- ▶ Which is harder for you—the everyday sacrifices of commitment to Christ, or the big, life-interrupting crises that come up from time to time? Explain your answer.

(When you are finished with the questions, go on to Step 2 in your *Adult Teacher's Guide*, where you read the Scripture and begin to discuss it; your Step 4 appears below.)

News Source:

CBS2: Some Making Big Sacrifice To Donate To Haiti: Unemployed Chicagoans Giving To Quake Victims In Their Own Time Of Need
<http://cbs2chicago.com/local/unemployed.haiti.donors.2.1458513.html>

http://www.redlobster.com/press/media_kit/romantic_lobster.asp

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STEP 4 

Lesson 11
Focus:

Take up your cross and follow Jesus.

Lesson 11
Bible Basis:

Matthew 16:13-27

EMPTY MY HANDS, PICK UP MY CROSS

If I'm holding on to my own stuff—to my material possessions, my agenda, my sin, my ways, whatever—I won't be able to pick up my cross to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. If I haven't committed my heart and mind to following Him, if I haven't counted the cost and determined that I'm willing to cut my temporal "losses" to move forward to the surpassing rewards of eternal life, I'm not a disciple of Jesus yet.

So are there things you are clutching that you need to let go of? Are your arms too full of your own stuff so that you're unable to be committed to the way of the Cross? These are important questions, and the answers to those questions can bring freedom and renewed commitment to the following Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.

[Activity]

Have students return to the small groups they had in Step 1 and use the following questions to think about how to renew their commitment to Christ by laying down their own "stuff" and picking up their cross to follow Him:

- ▶ What things do you feel yourself anxious about letting go of if God were to call you to let go of them? Explain your answer.
- ▶ What things do you feel God has no right to touch in your life? Explain.
- ▶ Think to yourself, is there recurring sin in your life you are aware of that you know you have not given over to God? (As you think about this question, give the sin or sins a name in your own mind: is it gossip? Hatred? Unforgiveness? Lust? Pride? Fear?)
- ▶ When you count the cost of letting go of the things you are holding on to, what loss do you perceive?
- ▶ What is to be gained by letting go of the things you are clutching in order to follow Christ wholeheartedly?

Lesson 11
Memory Verse

Simon Peter answered,
“You are the Christ, the
Son of the living God.”

—Matthew 16:16

- ▶ For you, if you empty your hands of these things, what will picking up your cross and following Christ look like?

Close the lesson in prayer, thanking God for the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross and asking Him to help us each take up our own cross daily and be better followers of Him.

(David C. Cook is not affiliated with and does not endorse any Website listed on these pages.)