

“Is Jesus Really Your One and Only?”
by Rom A. Pegram (10/22/17)

In Luke 14, we find Jesus having another DTR (Define the Relationship) talk; but this time, it's not with an individual ... and certainly not in the shadows of the night. This time, it's with a crowd... By this time in Jesus' life, word had spread about this incredible teacher:

- The lame were made to walk...
- The blind were made to see...
- And funeral processions were turning into family reunions...

People were coming from all over to fill the hillsides and listen to this incredible man; it was a bit of an atmosphere of a stadium filled with raving fans!

For awhile, Jesus was alright with the crowds. He was fine with people coming to be inspired by his teaching. He didn't mind, at least at first, that some were coming just to see him perform some miracles. No doubt, many of them came as if they were coming to a show—a performance. And Jesus welcomed them all, for awhile...

But, the time came when he wanted to talk about the relationship. He draws a line and wants to know where people stand. Ultimately, what concerns Jesus the most is *not* the size of the crowd, but the level of commitment. And here's how the conversation went that day, as we turn to our Bible story found in Luke 14:25-33 (NLT):

A large crowd was following Jesus. He turned around and said to them, ²⁶ “If you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ “But don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it? ²⁹ Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of money, and then everyone would laugh at you. ³⁰ They would say, ‘There's the person who started that building and couldn't afford to finish it!’ ³¹ “Or what king would go to war against another king without first sitting down with his counselors to discuss whether his army of 10,000 could defeat the 20,000 soldiers marching against him? ³² And if he can't, he will send a delegation to discuss terms of peace while the enemy is still far away. ³³ So you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own.

Can you believe this? Can you believe what Jesus said? That didn't seem very sensitive to the un-churched, did it? One biblical commentator (Kyle Idleman) thinks this would have been a more effective approach:

A large crowd was following Jesus. He turned around and said to them, “What a great crowd! I want everyone to go invite one friend and come back tonight for a carnival. We'll have live music. All the loaves and fish you can eat. We'll even have a 'water to wine' booth. I may even get in the dunk booth. And whoever invites the most friends gets one free miracle. Let's pack this hillside out!”

But, that wasn't his approach, was it? Instead, Jesus tells them that if they want to be followers of his, they'll need to hate (love less) their family, not to mention their own lives! What kind of growth strategy is that? And what about that 'hate' word?

Folks, what does the 'hate' Jesus is talking about here really mean? Obviously, hating your family would contradict the other teachings of Jesus, wouldn't it? So, what does he mean? Here's a thought: Perhaps a decision to follow Jesus would have been interpreted as turning your back on your family and walking away from them (many coming from Jewish backgrounds, etc.)... What do you think?

There was a young woman once who was so moved by a preacher's words one day at church, that she came up to him afterward and let him know that she wanted to be baptized. The pastor was excited, assuming that she meant she wanted to be baptized sometime in the future. He told her that he'd look forward to celebrating that moment in the future with her. To which she replied, "No. You don't understand. I want to be baptized right now!"

Having a baptistery in house, they found themselves backstage getting ready in a matter of moments. In an effort to make her feel more confident about her decision, the pastor asked if she didn't have any family or friends that she would like him to call, so they could be there in support. She said 'no' and then added: "My parents are not going to be happy about this!" She looked down, took a deep breath, and then walked on into the water...

Fans don't do that. Fans are not willing to follow Jesus if it means disappointing their family. When their relationship with Jesus begins to hurt their relationships with others (or change them), that's asking too much... I think this is what Jesus meant by using the strong word 'hate' (to love less). He meant that if we wanted to be followers of his, NO ONE could come before him—NO ONE!

So, how is it with you today? Where is Jesus in your pecking order of those you relate to? We need to find out, don't we—all of us... As we have yet another D.T.R. talk with Jesus today, ***I want to ask you some questions—questions that should help to reveal if Jesus is one of many, or your one & only! These aren't rhetorical questions.*** They really do need to be answered, as we ponder the idea of 'fan or follower.' For your convenience, I've included these questions on the back of your note sheet in your bulletin today... So, here they are: First...

FOR WHAT DO YOU SACRIFICE YOUR MONEY? Matthew 6:21 (KJV) says, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." What you spend your time and money on often reveals the true desire of your heart and shows who/what you are truly following! The reason Jesus talks so much about money in scripture is because it can easily become his chief competition! We end up following money and things money can buy (satisfaction) ... instead of Jesus! Unfortunately, it's easy to do in this world!

Matthew 6:24 (NIV) says, "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money." Those are two paths that go in opposite directions; we have to choose but one!

There was a pastor who'd done some financial counseling with a man; he found out that there are some common ways that FANS talk about their finances. A fan will ask: "What's the most I can spend on my house?" But when it comes to giving they'll

ask: “Does God want me to give to him out of net income or gross income?” In other words, “What the most I can spend on what I want, and what’s the least I can spend on God?”

How we spend our money tells a clear story about what matters most to us—who or what is our God... Here’s another question:

WHEN YOU’RE HURT, WHERE DO YOU GO FOR COMFORT? When you experience the pain of this life, how do you deal with it? Where or to what or to whom ... do you turn? Maybe it’s to a parent or spouse... Maybe it’s to the refrigerator... Maybe it’s burying yourself in your work... All these things have the potential to compete with Jesus for our devotion and affection...

Picture this: A mother visits the school where her kindergarten son attends. The mother’s felt a bit threatened because her son loves his new teacher and talks about her constantly. During recess, the mom stands next to the teacher and discusses her son’s progress. Right before their eyes, her little boy swings from the monkey bars ... and falls hard. He gets up, crying, and runs toward his mom & teacher. As he approaches them, to whom do you think he’ll go for comfort?

Folks, he wouldn’t even have to think, would he? He’d run into the loving arms of his mother! The pain he experienced created an honest moment where his true affections were revealed... So, when is the last time you experienced the pain of this life ... and how did you deal with it? To whom did you run? Answering that can be most telling... Here’s another question:

WHAT DISAPPOINTS OR FRUSTRATES YOU THE MOST? When we feel overwhelmed with disappointment or frustration, it often reveals that something’s become too important in our lives... It may be something as significant as the loss of a job ... or something as insignificant as the loss of a ballgame...

My son, Josh, discovered this to be true in his life a few years back. He was living and pastoring in the small village of Lime Ridge. I think it was a Packer game that he was watching on T.V. He got so upset during one game—because of the poor play of the Packers—that he absolutely couldn’t function the rest of the day. The problem was, because of his agitated state, he totally missed a ministry opportunity (appointment) with one of his parishioners. And, I’m thankful to say, it was on that day that he said, “Never again!” Nothing was going to be more important than the work of the Kingdom ... ever again...

Do you see how excessive disappointment or frustration can be—how it can consume a life? Do you see how it can reveal a heart’s true passion? It’s a great mirror to look into, if you want to know what’s truly going on inside of you ... and it may reveal that something is out-of-order, as it did for Josh. Here’s the final question:

WHAT IS IT THAT REALLY GETS YOU EXCITED? Have you ever been so excited about something that you even surprised yourself?

There was a young dad who loved to watch college football on T.V. One day he was doing just that and getting very—genuinely—excited about the game. His little daughter walked into the room and said, “Daddy, I’ve never seen you so excited....”

- She’d seen him at church events...

- She'd seen his reaction to the birth of her baby brother...
- She'd been out with her dad for daddy/daughter dates...

But, she had never seen him more excited than when he was watching a college football game! *Ouch!*

Like the things that disappoint or frustrate us, the things that excite us can also point to something or someone that is in competition with Jesus in our lives... And most of these things are fine and good, but are they robbing God of your whole heart? There's the question that begs to be answered...

Following Jesus, folks, means following him alone. Fans don't want to put Jesus on the throne of their hearts. Instead, they want to put him on a couch and, at the most, he gets just one cushion of several... He's asked to share the space. But, Jesus makes it clear that if you desire to be a follower of his, he's not interested in sharing your heart...

In Luke 14, Jesus defines the relationship (D.T.R.) by making it clear that if we follow him, we follow him and him alone. He's not going to share us with money, or career, or even with family. Maybe when you read a passage like this, it just doesn't seem quite fair—like God's being a little possessive or jealous. **BUT UNDERSTAND THIS: JESUS ISN'T JUST SAYING HOW HE WANTS TO BE LOVED BY YOU; HE'S MAKING IT CLEAR HOW HE LOVES YOU, TOO! With HIS whole heart—HIS whole being...**

So ... is Jesus your one and only? Or, are your affections for him being shared with other people ... or other things? Are you a FAN or a FOLLOWER? Who or what comes first? That's the D.T.R. conversation Jesus wants to continue with all of us ... today...