



the visual **faith** project

A Visual Faith Experience The Cost of Following Jesus

By Dr. Dick Hardel

Theme: The Cost of Following Jesus (Luke 14:25-33)

Intended Audience

Small discussion group of youth or adults, men's group, women's group, or intergenerational small group. Ethnic diversity as well as a diversity of age is very helpful to the learning process of Visual Faith because of the variety of experiences of the people.

Outcome of Experience

The participants will gain understanding that to confess Jesus as Lord and Savior and daily live in faith and follow Jesus does not mean an easy life. Following Jesus can be very controversial to people and cause broken relationships in families, with friends, and with communities. There are places where Christians are persecuted. That is true today as well as during the time Jesus was on earth.

Introduce Experience

It was at great cost that God redeemed us. The cost of our salvation was paid in full by the suffering and death of Jesus. His resurrection is the certainty of God's promise of eternal life for us by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. God calls for us to live a life worthy of the calling to which we have been called (Ephesians 4:1). That does not mean that everything will go well for you. You might have struggles within your own family or friends because of your faith in Jesus. In a pluralistic culture of the USA it becomes more important to understand your faith as well as the faith of others who are not Christian.

Scripture (Luke 14:25-33)

25 Now large crowds were traveling with him; and he turned and said to them, 26 "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. 27 Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. 28 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? 29 Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, 30 saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' 31 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? 32 If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. 33 So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.



the visual **faith** project

The Cost of Following Jesus continued...

Image Selection 1

Give each participant a copy of this text. Instruct them to read the Scripture text carefully and circle or underline the phrases that are most striking or difficult for them. Then invite them to go to the tables with all the images and choose two images that connect to the phrase or words that are most difficult for them.

Facilitator Questions To Guide Group Discussion

1. To what phrase does the image(s) you have chosen connect?
2. What feelings to you have upon reading this phrase?
3. Why would Jesus say these things to the crowd?
4. Have you experienced difficulty from others because of your faith in Jesus Christ or have been ridiculed?
5. What emotions arise in you as you recall that experience?
6. What questions do you have concerning this difficult Scripture text that you would like this group to tackle or respond?

Image Selection 2

Now choose one or two images that depict emotions that you have felt during this Visual Faith exercise.

Facilitator Questions To Guide Group Discussion

1. Use the image(s) you have chosen to describe your emotions during this exercise.
2. Who is or who are the persons that the Holy Spirit has used to build the foundation of your faith?
3. What might “carrying the cross” have to do with maturing in faith or giving strength to keep growing in faith?
4. What makes this Scripture so conflicting?
5. How does it connect to you?

Image Packs

We recommend Assorted Set B (set of 100 printed images) for use with this experience or other images that you may already have. You can find Assorted Set B at: <https://vibrantfaith.org/shop/visualfaithcards>



the visual **faith** project

The Cost of Following Jesus continued...

Application

In many countries in the world where the cultures were not build on the foundation of Christianity, confessing Christ as Lord and following Jesus can divide families or even ostracize the Christian from the community, cause the person to be imprisoned, or even killed. Missionaries to such places must truly understand the cost of discipleship and be very careful in their ministry.

A wonderful follow up to this Visual Faith Exercise would be for the group to read **The Cost of Discipleship** by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer was a German pastor, theologian, anti-Nazi dissident, and founding member of the Confessing Church during World War II. He taught in the United States and was safe, but his faith led him to return to Germany where he was imprisoned and hanged. Because most of us have grown up in the wonderful freedom of the United States of America, we have been isolated from such burdens of faith. Many do not even know of people like Bonhoeffer and thus understanding this text can cause great conflict.

Prayer

As the facilitator, create a holy space, a safe place, for the individuals and group to engage in prayer. Place a cross in the center of a small table and place lighted candles near the cross. Share the following as preparation for prayer:

In the USA we are privileged to pray and safe to confess our faith. Yet in our communities, people are ridiculed, isolated, hated, treated cruelly, and suffer injustice because of the color of their skin, the language they speak, their disabilities, their gender, etc.

Think of these people and the cost of following Jesus and let us pray by heart in silence. (This is another opportunity to use some of the images).

Genuine prayer is never “good works,” an exercise or pious attitude, but it is always a prayer of a child to a Father. Hence it is never given to self-display whether before God, ourselves or other people.

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship.