

Jesus Matters More Than Anything

Matthew 10:39

He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

The demands of the kingdom are so offensive to a world already convinced of its rightness that they provoke that world's hostility.

Opposition from Unconverted Family Members (10:34-37)

Although Jesus values families (5:27-32; 15:4-6; 19:4-9), the division his mission brings is particularly evident in families (compare 10:21; 1 Cor 7:16; of course more people prefer to quote Acts 16:31). Jesus' example demonstrates how this division is accomplished: although we are "harmless" (Mt 10:16; 12:19-20), God's agents proclaim the kingdom uncompromisingly and thus face hostility from others (13:57). Jesus' mission separates us from the values of our society, and society responds with persecution. Jesus selects these specific examples of in-laws (*mother-in-law* and *daughter-in-law*) because young couples generally lived with the man's family. Jesus matters more than the approval or even the civility of our family (10:37). Many viewed honoring one's parents as the highest social obligation (*Ep. Arist.* 228; *Jos. Apion* 2.206; *Ps-Phocyl.* 8); for many, God alone was worthy of greater honor (Deut 13:6; 33:9; 2 Macc 7:22-23).

Love Jesus More Than Life (10:38-39)

We must love Jesus not only more than our families but more than our own lives. For all our talk about low self-esteem these days (and most of us do view ourselves as less than what God has called us to be), the vast majority of people still cling desperately to life (compare Eph 5:29; *Epict. Disc.* 2.22.15-16). But the moment we become Christ's followers, our own lives and wills become forfeit; we die with Christ to sin (that is, to the right to make selfish choices; Rom 6:3-4) and choose a path that could lead any day to our execution for Christ's name (Mt 16:24). Although we may speak glibly today of "our cross" as the need to put up with Aunt Molly or a leaky roof, "taking up the cross" in Jesus' day meant being forced to bear the instrument of one's execution past a jeering mob to the site of one's imminent death as a condemned criminal (see Hengel 1977).

The Promise

The promise of eternal life should be sufficient motivation for any who genuinely believe Jesus' claims—it doesn't take a math major to recognize that the greatest mortal longevity pales in comparison with eternity—but we sometimes prove less committed than we suppose (26:41). That even the first disciples were not initially prepared for such a demand (26:56) does not mitigate the level of commitment our Lord seeks from us: if we want to be followers of Jesus, we must be ready to *die*. If I value my life in this world more than I value Jesus and the life of the next world, I cannot be his disciple.

*IVP New Testament Commentaries are made available by the generosity of [InterVarsity Press](#).
BibleGateway.com is © Copyright 1995-2006 [Gospel Communications International](#)*