

I Have Decided 2

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Jesus introduced his disciples to the principle of first.

Luke 14:25-26 (NIV) – ²⁵ Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ²⁶ "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters — yes, even his own life — he cannot be my disciple.

Did Jesus really tell us to “hate”?

Matthew 10:37-39 (NIV) - ³⁷ Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸ and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

“More than me” is the true issue.

Luke 9:57-62 (NIV) – ⁵⁷ As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." ⁵⁸ Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." ⁵⁹ He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." ⁶⁰ Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." ⁶¹ Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." ⁶² Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

It was an issue of who came first.

There are two outcomes of honoring the principle of first.

1. The lordship of Jesus is established in my life.

Luke 6:46 (NIV) – ⁴⁶ "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

“Why” we don’t “do what he says” is a profound question. “WHY WE DON’T” is directly connected to what we believe about God. Not “doing what he says” declares I don’t trust the goodness of God and I doubt His mercy.

My struggle to believe this:

“It seems that your mercy is so easily ignored and other things take hold of my heart. Your mercy defines who you are toward me and your desire toward me. You make the way wide open. You tell me that every morning, with billions of people on the earth, that you renew your mercy toward me. Help me to receive and let that mercy define who I am and how I think about approaching you. Somehow, there is a healing and satisfaction that my heart craves that only knowing and experiencing your mercy on a daily basis can fulfill. Why is it that I so easily let my heart settle for scraps and moldy food, when the banquet of your mercy awaits me at every meal? "Heart hunger" can never be satisfied without your

mercy being revealed, received and acted upon. Today, I am aware of your abiding presence and you telling me, "John, today I will treat you better than you deserve! Live every moment expecting good from my hand. Live every moment craving to seek my face and not only what is in my hand for you. It is in seeing my face that you will expect to receive what is in my hand. Stop settling for counterfeits and leftovers. Let me be your father today. Let me love you, the same way you love your children. Understand and feel what you desire for them and how desperate you are to see them experience it and then multiply it beyond reason and that's how I feel about you and what I desire you to experience. Don't settle for an empty heart and an unfulfilled soul. Don't fill your day with distractions and soulish food that never satisfies. Your days will pass and be consumed in the realm of time and you will miss out on the good I have for you each day. Don't regret and cry out to change the past. Cry out to experience me today. Don't let your heart be distracted by what has been, but rather what already IS! My mercy is brand new toward you today!"

2. A "faith" that pleases god is established in my life.

Faith that pleases God is a heart persuasion that causes action. Faith believes that obedience isn't sacrifice.

Mark 10:17-22 (NIV) – ¹⁷ As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁸ "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good — except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'" ²⁰ "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." ²¹ Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." ²² At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

He "believed" that doing what Jesus said would cause him loss. What do you think he believes about "his wealth" today? Tithing is putting God first in your money. Tithing declares "I trust you" every time you do it. The opposite is also true

Mark 10:28-31 (NIV) – ²⁸ Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!" ²⁹ "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel ³⁰ will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields — and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

Water Baptism is declaring he is first before all.

It pays rich dividends to put God first in both time and eternity.

Matthew 6:33 (NIV) – ³³ But seek first His kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.