

## PENTECOST: IN FAITH WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

**Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 18)  
September 9, 2007**

**Deuteronomy 30:15-20**

**Psalm 1**

**Philemon 1-21**

**Luke 14:25-33**

### **Do You Know What You're Getting Into?**

Think of a time when you agreed to do something for a friend, your church, a school, or even a family member *before* you really knew what you were getting into. Or think of plans you hastily made for a project, a trip, or a social function *before* you knew all the details. Often we volunteer for something or agree to an idea without knowing all the so-called fine print...all the *ifs, ands, so forths, and buts*.

Two of the readings for today—Deuteronomy 30:15-20 and Luke 14:25-33—can be thought of as the fine print, the details, of what it means to live a life of faith and discipleship.

The words of Moses in Deuteronomy 30:15-20 were delivered at the very end of Moses' life, just before the people of Israel were to cross the Jordan River and settle in the promised land of Canaan. Moses would not enter Canaan himself, but he was especially concerned that the descendants of the people he had led from Egypt and through the wilderness would clearly know what was in store for them. The choice was clear: obey God and be blessed, or disobey God and be punished.

The words of Jesus in Luke 14:25-33 are similar in many ways. Jesus turned to the crowd of people around him and pointedly told them what to expect: Give up all your possessions and carry your own cross; then—and only then—can you be called my disciple. *All* your possessions, Jesus said, not just some of them or your least favorite or the easiest to give up.

Unfortunately, some churches, pastors, and television evangelists make living a life of Christian faith and discipleship out to be easy. They try to “sell” Christianity by making it sound glamorous, comfortable, and profitable. But Moses and Jesus said nothing about faith and discipleship being easy. On the contrary, they called for a complete reorientation of values, relationships, time, energy, and financial resources. Both Moses and Jesus wanted their hearers to know clearly what they were getting themselves into by entering into a life of faith and discipleship. Neither, especially Jesus, was interested in an easy, casual acceptance of expectations and demands.



After reading these two passages, maybe it's time to reexamine our commitments to the Christian faith. If I had known that Jesus expected so much of me, would my decision to follow him have been different? How do I define his words that I am to completely change my priorities, my energy, my relationships with others?

Most scholars agree that Jesus knew that no one—or at least very few of us—would be able to give up everything and everyone in our lives. Jesus was not so interested that we live as hermits and paupers. He seemed to be more interested in making sure that people considered in advance what the cost of discipleship would mean for them. And what that means is a full-time commitment. Jesus has never been interested in part-time disciples.

This week's Reflection was prepared by Steve Berneking, Ph.D., who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Senior Translations Officer in the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

+ + +

**This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Morocco** – With prayers for the importing of Scriptures without difficulties, that supplies of Scriptures will be sufficient to meet demand, for local printing work and relations with bookshops, and for the translation team and the distribution of Scripture Portions published so far; **Algeria** – With thanks to God for the widespread distribution of Scriptures in that country, and with prayers that Bible work can continue despite new laws that restrict the Bible Society's activities; **Tunisia** – With prayers that Christians will be able to obtain imported Scriptures and for continued freedom of the national and expatriate churches to worship freely.,

**Activity Corner: “Reading the Fine Print” exercise**

Supplies needed: Bibles

Read 2 Chronicles 7:12-22; Isaiah 1:18-20; Matthew 7:24-29 and 1 Timothy 6:6-10.

These passages speak to behaviors we ought to practice. Can you see any similarities in the “fine print?”

