

Disciples of Hate
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Luke 14:26

(NA 28th ed.)

εἴ τις ἔρχεται πρὸς με
καὶ οὐ **μισεῖ** τὸν πατέρα ἑαυτοῦ
καὶ τὴν μητέρα καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ τὰ τέκνα
καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ τὰς ἀδελφὰς
ἔτι τε καὶ τὴν **ψυχὴν** ἑαυτοῦ,
οὐ δύναται εἶναί μου μαθητής.

(NASB)

If anyone comes to Me,
and does not **hate** his own father
and mother and wife and children
and brothers and sisters,
yes, and even his own **life**,
he cannot be My disciple.

Line 5 is emphasized, “**yes and even**”—or, “especially.” One’s own “**life**” (or, “soul”) is from *psuchē*, as in “psychology.” But by far the most interesting word here is in line 2, *miseō*, “hate.” Think “**mis**-anthropy.”

In Luke, *miseō* is closely associated with an enemy (1:71) or an undesired lord (19:14). It depicts animosity leading to conflict. See Luke 6:22, 27, 16:13. The Septuagint glosses Hebrew *shanee* with *miseō*. “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated,” highlights the struggle between Israel and Edom (Mal 1:3). Leah the “hated” wife (Gen 29:31) underscores her “great struggle” with her sister (Gen 30:8). Note that these are family references.

Of about six Greek words from the semantic domain of “hatred,” Luke choose *miseō*. If Jesus meant, “Be repulsed by your family” or “wish them ill,” Luke could have used *kakoō* or *apostugeō* or other words. But with *miseō*, I think Jesus means to regard one’s family and soul (preferences and agenda) as mortal enemies. Refuse their rule. Once disciples contemplate their own hearts, and discover they are ruled by many things, they must strive to purge these things from their controlling position. Just so with loved ones.

Our Lucan text is sometimes translated to mimic Matt 10:37 – 38. NLT inserts, “by comparison.” NCV flatly throws out the language of “hate” and replaces it with the language of “love.” But in Luke, Jesus demands that a would-be disciple actively hate; it is not a “love less” comparison like Matthew.

Consider this Lukan passage:

Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.” (Luke 12:51 – 53)

This is the very sort of enmity and strife that *miseō* connotes. Jesus brings real discord and animosity within families.

Peter said, “Behold, we have left our own homes and followed You.” And He said to them, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life.” (Luke 18:28 – 30)

Discipleship may at times demand forsaking one’s family. Jesus calls disciples to love their enemies—*and* to reject their loved ones. Both of these require setting aside natural feeling. Both are aspects of self-denial, of taking up one’s cross daily, of mortifying one’s own soul. Those most dear are most dangerous since they have power to seduce from Jesus. Enemies can’t.

The conflict within families because of the gospel will continue through history until its climax when Jesus returns. “But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, and you will be hated by all because of My name” (Luke 21:16 – 17). There is *miseō* again. When the war heats up, the true character of family members becomes evident. They will hate Christians, will treat them as enemies, and deliver their own family members to death.

Although Muslim and Jewish converts and Christians under repressive regimes can suffer this to some extent now, the normative mode of conflict today is relatively mild. For most in America, familial strife is little more than disagreement on how to educate your kids, how to spend your money, what entertainment is appropriate, how to date, what principles go into voting decisions, and the like. Think of a continuum with mere lifestyle differences at one end, and fleeing from family for fear of one's life at the other.

Here is Luke 14:26 again, this time my own paraphrase:

If you presume to call yourself a Christian, and do not take sides with me against unbelieving family members, and do not reject your own agenda and refuse to let it rule you, then I will not acknowledge you as mine.

How should we then live?