

Did Jesus Really Say “Hate Your Family”?

Overview

Luke 14:26, “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.”

Luke 14:26 explained through the passage itself: this study examines Jesus’ hard saying, the Greek wording, and Matthew’s parallel. This video examines one of Jesus’ hardest sayings: the command to “hate” family and even one’s own life. The inherited reading can make the verse sound like Jesus is against family love, but the passage offers more to work with. We walk through the Greek word, the surrounding context, and Matthew’s parallel wording to see why the verse becomes clearer when Scripture interprets Scripture. The question is not how to make Jesus easier, but how to understand what His words actually meant.

Summary

Did Jesus really mean that a disciple must hate father, mother, wife, children, brothers, and sisters? The passage sounds severe because it is, but the severity concerns discipleship, not cruelty. Why would Jesus use a word like hate if He also teaches love? Luke gives the sharp form of the saying, while Matthew gives the comparative form: loving family more than Jesus. Does this mean the translation is wrong? Not exactly. The Greek word is real, but context determines how it functions in the passage. Does this erase the cost of following Jesus? No! Luke keeps the cost in view through cross-bearing, counting the cost, and renouncing every rival attachment. The verse becomes clearer when the question shifts from “Did Jesus command family hatred?” to “What kind of allegiance was Jesus demanding?”

Luke 14:26 uses μισέω (miseō, a verb meaning "to hate," "to detest," or "to pursue with hatred"), which is derived from the noun μῖσος (mísos, meaning hatred), a sharp Greek word commonly translated “hate.” The force of the verse should not be erased. But the meaning is clarified by context. Jesus is speaking to the crowds about discipleship, cross-bearing, and counting the cost. The next verse moves immediately to σταυρός (stauros, meaning an upright stake, pole, or cross), showing that the issue is costly allegiance, not family contempt. Matthew 10:37 offers a parallel lens, using φιλέω (phileō), meaning "love" or "affection," in the phrase about loving father or mother more than Jesus. That comparison helps explain Luke 14:26 properly: Jesus is not commanding malicious hatred toward family. He is confronting every love, bond, and attachment that could become higher than Him. This is why the inherited reading feels

so tense. The verse is severe, but it becomes more precise when the original word, Matthew's parallel, and Luke's context are read together.

An Examination of the Text

Many people read Luke 14:26 and stumble over it. Jesus says that if someone comes to Him and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, that person cannot be His disciple. For a serious believer, this creates a real problem because the same Jesus who tells us to love our enemies also seems to say we must hate the people closest to us. The same Bible that says to honor father and mother now includes a verse that seems to pull family love apart. So, what are we supposed to do with that? Ignore it? Explain it away? Pretend the word is not really there? No! Luke really does use a sharp word. But Scripture also gives us the context that explains how that word is being used. In Luke, Jesus is speaking to the crowds about the cost of discipleship. In Matthew, the same demand is expressed through comparison: whoever loves father or mother more than Jesus is not worthy of Him. This article is not about making Jesus easier. It is about reading His hard words carefully enough to see what He actually meant.

Let's begin with the verse exactly as Luke gives it, because the shock is part of the passage. Luke does not introduce this saying softly. He does not begin with a small correction, a gentle proverb, or a private word of comfort. He places Jesus before great crowds, and then Jesus turns and speaks a sentence that cuts straight through every natural attachment. He names father; He names mother; He names wife; He names children; He names brothers and sisters. Then He goes even further and says, "even his [your] own life." That is why this verse cannot be handled carelessly. If someone reads it quickly, the obvious reading is that Jesus sounds like He is saying that discipleship requires emotional hatred toward the very people we are normally commanded to love. The tension is not imaginary; it is built into the verse. A serious reader should feel its weight. Jesus is not talking about enemies here. He is talking about the closest human bonds. He is talking about the relationships that most people would protect first.

When the reader asks, "Did Jesus really say to hate your family?" that is not rebellion against the text. That is attention to the text. But the mistake begins when we isolate the shocking statement from the surrounding passage. A sentence can sound one way by itself and very differently when it is placed back into the scene, the audience, the argument, and Matthew's parallel saying. That is where the verse begins to open. The first step is not to soften the word. The first step is to ask why Jesus would use such a severe word in this exact moment. Luke gives us the clue before the sentence even begins. Jesus was not telling one family to despise each other. He was not giving a general command to become cold toward parents, spouse, or children. He was addressing a crowd. And that is crucial to its understanding.

Luke says great crowds were traveling with Jesus. That detail is easy to overlook, but it sets the whole frame. Jesus is not speaking to a small circle of mature disciples who already understand the cost. He is speaking to a large public following. People are moving with Him,

near Him, and interested enough to travel along with Him. However, being near Jesus is not the same as being His disciple. That is the pressure underlying Luke 14. Crowds can be drawn by miracles, curiosity, hope, need, and expectation. But Jesus does not let the size of the crowd define the depth of discipleship. So He turns and delivers a statement that forces the issue. The hard saying is not random harshness. It is a dividing line. Jesus presses the crowd with a question every follower must eventually face: “Are you following because He is interesting, or because He is Lord?” That is why the next verse matters so much. Right after the family sentence, Jesus speaks about bearing one's cross and coming after Him. Then He gives examples of counting the cost before building a tower and a king measuring whether he can go to war. Finally, He speaks of renouncing all that one has. The whole section is about cost.

This means Luke 14:26 is not floating by itself as a strange command about family emotions. Rather, it belongs to a larger warning about what discipleship demands when every competing loyalty is tested. Jesus is not asking the crowd to feel religious excitement for a day. He is asking whether anything in their lives will have authority above Him. And this is where the inherited reading begins to strain. If the verse is read as literal emotional hatred, it creates a contradiction. Jesus would be commanding hostility toward family, while the wider biblical witness commands love, honor, mercy, forgiveness, and care. Conversely, if the verse is read in context within Luke 14, the issue becomes clearer. Jesus is confronting divided allegiance, which does not make the saying easy—it makes it precise.

Before we can say more, we need to look at the word that creates the problem, because Luke really does use the word that English Bibles translate as “hate.” And that word cannot be erased. The Greek word behind “hate” in Luke 14:26 is μισέω (miseō). It is not a harmless word; it can mean to hate, to detest, or to regard with hostility. Thus, the answer is not “The translation is simply wrong, and Jesus never used a severe word.” That would be too easy and would not honor the passage. A Scripture-respecting reading has to admit what is actually there—Luke uses a sharp word. The English preserves the shock, but the question is not only what a word can mean in isolation. The true question is how the word is functioning in this sentence, in this setting, and in the wider way Scripture uses love and hate language, because words have ranges. Even in English, the word hate can move across a range. For example, a person can hate injustice, hate a food, or speak harshly about his own life. Each sentence works differently. The context tells you how the word is being used.

In the same way, miseō can carry true hatred in many places. The Greek lexicons also recognize that, in certain contexts, it can function comparatively: to love less, to regard with less affection, or to esteem less. Now this is where we have to be careful. The safe claim is not, “The Greek literally means love less,” because that is too flat. The word is sharper than that. The safer claim is this: Luke uses a severe word, but Luke's context and Matthew's parallel show that Jesus is using that severity to describe comparative allegiance, not malicious hatred. That difference matters. If we say the word only means love less, we weaken Luke's force. But if we say it must mean emotional hostility, we create a reading that conflicts with the rest of the passage. The text itself gives us the way through. The word is sharp. The setting is costly discipleship. The next

verse says cross-bearing. The following verses are about cost-counting and renunciation. Matthew makes the same demand in a way that removes confusion without diminishing its seriousness. We are not trying to avoid the word “miseō”. We are trying to let Scripture explain how the word is working. And Matthew gives us the missing lens.

Matthew 10:37 records the family demand in different wording. Instead of saying "hate father and mother," Matthew says that the one who loves father or mother more than Jesus is not worthy of Him, and the one who loves son or daughter more than Jesus is not worthy of Him. That one phrase, "*more than me*," is the lens. Matthew does not present Jesus as commanding contempt for family. He presents Jesus as confronting love that is ordered wrongly. Father, mother, son, and daughter are not treated as evil. They are treated as real loves that must not become ultimate loves. Matthew does not cancel Luke; he clarifies the relationship between love and allegiance. Where Luke gives the severe form, Matthew gives the comparative form. Put them together, and the meaning becomes much harder to misunderstand. Jesus is not saying, "Stop loving them." He is saying, "Do not love them above Me." But even that needs care, since Jesus is not offering a light religious reminder. On the contrary, He is speaking to a world where loyalty to Him could bring pressure from parents, spouse, children, siblings, community, and even the instinct to protect one's own life.

Matthew's wording does not make Luke easy. It makes Luke exact. The issue is not whether family matters. The issue is whether one's family can occupy the throne that belongs to Christ. That is the real collision: when family affection, social belonging, safety, reputation, inheritance, and personal survival all pull one way, and Christ calls another, which voice has final authority? That is what Luke's word presses, and why Jesus includes one phrase that many readers miss: "even his own life." If this passage were about literal emotional hatred, then Jesus would also be commanding literal self-hatred. But the wider discipleship language shows something else. He is speaking about self-denial; He is speaking about refusing to let the self-preserving life become the final master. The family language and the self-life language belong together: no earthly love, no household bond, no natural instinct, and no private security can stand above Him.

The verse is now beginning to become clearer. But clarity does not mean softness. The corrected meaning is not that family is worthless, that love is dangerous, or that Jesus wants disciples to become cold, detached, or cruel. That misses the spirit of the wider Gospel. Jesus rebukes hypocrisy and cruelty. He calls people out of divided loyalty, but He does not command contempt for the vulnerable. He honors the weight of God's commands, including the command to honor father and mother. Thus, Luke 14 cannot be used as a basis for neglecting, abusing, abandoning, or despising people.

The verse is about allegiance. That word matters because allegiance is deeper than emotion. Allegiance is about ultimate loyalty. It is about who has the highest claim and which voice rules when loyalties compete. Most of the time, love for family and obedience to God should not be enemies. In a rightly ordered life, love for God should purify family love, not destroy it. But Jesus is speaking about the moment when even the most sacred earthly bonds can become rivals.

That is why His words are so severe. He is not attacking the family. He is attacking anything that tries to take first place.

Think of it as order, not rejection. If something is first, other things are not hated in the emotional sense. They are placed beneath what is first. A judge who honors truth above friendship is not commanded to hate his friend; he is commanded not to let friendship outrank truth! A servant loyal to a king is not commanded to despise his household; he is commanded not to let the household overrule the king. That is the kind of pressure described in Luke 14. Jesus speaks as the One who must hold first place. This is why Matthew's version is so clarifying. The issue is loving father or mother more than Him, and loving son or daughter more than Him. The issue is comparative love, ordered love, final love. Luke's language feels like a sword because it cuts through the divisions in discipleship. But the cut is not meant to make the disciple hate people. It is meant to expose what the disciple loves most. That is why the next part of Luke 14 does not turn into a discussion of family conflict. It turns into counting the cost. Jesus is not asking, "Can you become emotionally hostile enough?" He is asking, "Have you understood what following Me will cost?"

In this hard saying, Jesus offers two pictures. First, He speaks of a man who wants to build a tower. Before building, he sits down and counts the cost to see if he has enough to finish it. Second, Jesus speaks of a king preparing to meet another king in battle. Before going, he considers whether he can meet the opposing force. These examples are not random; they explain why Jesus spoke so sharply to the crowd. He tells people **not to begin casually what they are unwilling to finish faithfully**. A crowd can gather quickly, but a disciple must endure. A crowd can be excited by the beginning, while a disciple must count the cost of the end. That is why the family saying belongs exactly where Luke places it. Family is not mentioned because Jesus hates family. Family is mentioned because it is one of the deepest costs a human being can face. For many people, the strongest pressure against obedience does not come from strangers; it comes from the people whose approval matters most: the dinner table, inheritance, reputation, a parent's disappointment, or the pain of being misunderstood by those who know you best.

Jesus names those relationships because He knows their power. Next, He names one's own life because He knows the deepest rival is not always another person; sometimes it is the instinct to preserve yourself at any cost. That is why Luke 14:33 says no one can be His disciple without renouncing all that he has. Again, that does not mean every disciple performs the same outward action in every situation. Rather, it means nothing possessed, nothing loved, and nothing protected can remain above Him. This is the cost logic of the whole passage. The inherited reading says, "Jesus wants me to hate my family." The context says, "Jesus is asking whether family, possessions, safety, and even self-preservation have become more important than Him." Allegiance runs deeper. It asks what you will obey when love, fear, comfort, and loyalty pull against the voice of Christ. That is why we should not reduce this verse to a simple phrase like "Just put God first" and move on. The saying is more serious than that. It asks what being in the first place really means when it becomes costly.

At this point, someone may object: "Are you just softening Jesus' words?" That is a fair objection, since many hard verses are weakened by explanations that remove the force of the original text. We would be wise not to do that here. Luke 14:26 is severe because Jesus meant it to be. The word hate is sharp because the crowd, and we, need to know what it would cost. The next verse speaks of bearing the cross, **and** the following verse speaks of renouncing all. So no, this is not about making Jesus easy. The question is not whether the verse is demanding. The question is what kind of demand it is. If the demand is emotional hatred, then the verse conflicts with the broader commands of Scripture, but if the demand is supreme allegiance expressed through severe comparative language, then the verse fits the entire passage. It fits Matthew 10:37. It fits "cross-bearing"; it fits counting the cost; it fits renouncing everything; and it fits the pattern of Jesus calling people to follow Him, placing Him above every competing loyalty.

Thus, the correct reading does not lower the cost; it removes the cruelty. That distinction is important. Removing cruelty means Jesus is not commanding disciples to despise parents, reject children, or become emotionally harsh. Keeping the cost means Jesus is still saying that even the closest earthly love cannot overrule His call. That is why this verse is *not a weapon against family*. It is *a warning against divided discipleship*. It asks whether we are willing to follow Christ when obedience costs approval, when self-protection resists, and when other loves compete for final authority. This also keeps us from making another mistake. We should not turn this into an attack on what people were taught. Many believers inherited a simpler reading because the English word is genuinely shocking. Others heard the verse used in ways that made Jesus sound colder than He is. But the answer is not mockery; it is clarity. The passage itself gives us what we need. Luke gives the sharp word; Matthew gives the comparative lens; and the context gives the cost. Together, they show us a Jesus who is not cruel but absolute.

Now we can finally answer the question that began the article, "Did Jesus really say to hate your family?" Luke records the sharp word. However, Jesus was not commanding malicious hatred toward father, mother, spouse, children, siblings, or self. He was using severe discipleship language to say that no earthly bond, not even the most sacred, can outrank Him. Matthew helps us see it clearly: the issue is loving family more than Christ. Luke helps us feel the cost: whether we can be His disciples when everything closest to us is asked to be given up. The surrounding passage shows why He spoke this way: great crowds were following, but Jesus was defining what real discipleship requires. This means the old weight can be lifted from the verse. You do not have to read Luke 14:26 as Jesus telling you to become hateful. You do not have to imagine Him commanding contempt for the people Scripture elsewhere teaches you to honor, love, and care for. But you also do not get to make His words small.

The verse still asks difficult questions:

- If your father pulls one way and Christ calls another, who has final authority?
- If your family approval pulls one way and Christ calls another, who has final authority?
- If your own comfort, safety, reputation, or self-preservation pulls one way and Christ calls another, who has final authority?

That is the heart of the saying. Jesus is not anti-family; He is anti-rival. Remember that the first of The Ten Commandments states, “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3). He does not abolish love; He orders it. He does not command contempt, but He does demand first place. Once you see that, Luke 14:26 becomes clearer. It remains serious, but it no longer makes Jesus sound cruel. It remains costly, but it no longer tells you that holiness requires hatred. That is why the translation shock matters: It stops the crowd, it stops the casual follower, it stops anyone who wants Jesus as an addition to life, but not as Lord over life. The context tells us what the shock is for. It is not there to make you hate the people closest to you. It is there to ask whether even the closest people to you can take His place. That is the line that Jesus draws. Not because He is cruel, but because discipleship cannot be divided at the throne.

Thus, the verse finally comes into focus. Jesus did not call you to hatred as a way of life. He called you to an allegiance so complete that every other love must find its proper place beneath Him. That is not a lesser command. It is the only command that makes the hard saying make sense.