

The Cost of Discipleship: Getting Committed

Luke 9:57-62(NKJV) ⁵⁷Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, *that* someone said to Him, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go." ⁵⁸And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His* head." ⁵⁹Then He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." ⁶⁰Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God." ⁶¹And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go *and* bid them farewell who are at my house." ⁶²But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Series Introduction

Jesus was sent to save mankind from the penalty of sin. He came to seek and save that which was lost. God was in Jesus reconciling the world back to himself. His single greatest task was completed with his death on the cross.

For three years leading up to his work at Calvary, Jesus chose disciples and taught them the ways of God. When his work of redeeming the world was completed, he met with his disciples and commissioned them to go and make disciples just as Jesus did with them.

That Great Commission still stands for disciples today. We are to go into the world, and make disciples baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We often get the baptizing part right. It doesn't require a lot of commitment to fill the pool, immerse people in water, and sing a few songs. It's the other part that we often struggle with. The other part of the commission is making disciples.

Making disciples requires certain sacrifices and efforts. At the beginning of the month we shared with you a message entitled Getting Buy-in. Next we continued with Getting Free. Today we will conclude with Getting Committed. It is my prayer that each of us will learn the true cost of discipleship and then choose to follow Christ.

Introduction:

Luke chapter 9 is rich with teaching and instruction given by Jesus to his disciples. Our attention today is on yet another passage where Jesus talks about what it means to follow him. So picture this in your mind: Jesus has just left a Samaritan town with his disciples and is walking along the road to Jerusalem. The disciples are walking and talking, having various conversations and then one of them steps up to pledge his commitment to Jesus. The end result is three short conversations between Jesus and his disciples where Jesus issues three challenges to commitment. Jesus challenges them to Commit to His Leading, Commit to the Big Picture, and Commit for the Long Haul. We will discuss these three commitments and conclude for the day.

Luke 9:57-58(NKJV) ⁵⁷Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go." ⁵⁸And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

1. Commit to His leading.

When Jesus has this conversation with this follower, there was an underlying truth that may not have been understood by the disciples. Jesus is just passing through. Jesus was born to die for our sins.

He wasn't creating a place for himself on the earth. He wasn't trying to make a name for himself. He wasn't setting up permanent residence in the world. Jesus wasn't getting stuck in the culture or latest fads. He wasn't setting up an earthly kingdom.

*Jesus may not be going where you think he's going.
What does that mean?*

Marriott Example

In 1927 two men started a curbside food stand in the DC area. They started selling A&W Root Beer and a few other items. They added some hot food items and named the food stand The Hot Shoppe. They grew and started doing food service and expanded to Baltimore Maryland in 1934. During World War II they started managing food services for defense plants, and government buildings such as the U.S. Treasury. By the 1950's this company was providing services for public schools and hospitals. This company invented "in-flight" food service and had a growing chain of restaurants.

Then in 1957, the owner who had built such a powerful food service company decided to build a hotel. As you can probably imagine, there were some people who didn't see the logic behind the move. But that was where the company was going because the leader was moving forward. The company was expanding and growing and doing well. They were purchasing other food chains and it seemed like their destiny was in food service. But in 1957 the owner and leader of this company, Mr. J. Willard Marriot, Sr. opened his first hotel.

Christ is the head of the church, amen? Christ is the head of our lives, amen?

Some people are going to be surprised by where Jesus is going. He is leading the church and the community in directions we didn't consider before. He is doing things in ministry that we haven't tried before.

The question is: are we willing to follow him into uncomfortable places.

Jesus was headed to the cross. He was headed toward hard times. He was headed toward being abandoned by his disciples. He was headed toward death. He was headed toward our redemption. He was headed in the direction God wanted him to go. So if we want to follow him, we have to let him lead where he wants us to be.

2. Commit to the big picture.

59 Then He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."
60 Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God."

This challenge from Jesus sounds extreme but that all depends on your perspective.

All of us have lost loved ones. Some of us have lost parents, siblings, children, distant relatives, friends, classmates, and other special people. Death doesn't discriminate. We have all suffered

losses to Death's sting. The pain and sorrow we may feel when we lose loved ones can be debilitating sometimes. We all grieve in our own way. And sometimes the grieving process is complicated further when we are responsible for taken care of terminally ill loved ones or we bear the burden of making their final arrangements.

So here is a disciple, a follower of Jesus who is singled out by the Lord. Jesus extends to this disciple an opportunity to join in the work of God. This is not just a call to discipleship. The man was already seeking Jesus. He was with Jesus. He was near Jesus. He was already walking along the road with the rest of the disciples. What more could Jesus want from him? Maybe this example will help.

Five Circles Example:

In his book "The Purpose Driven Church", Pastor Rick Warren describes 5 groups of people the church will encounter. The first group is called the Community. It is made up of anyone from the community at large. The second group is the Crowd. This group is everybody who shows up on Sunday morning.

The third group is the Congregation. These are people who have made some basic commitments to become members of the church. They have been baptized, they contribute to the church through tithes and offerings, and they attend regularly.

The fourth group is called the Committed. This group has made a personal decision to grow in their relationship with God. This group is engaging in the spiritual disciplines of fasting, study of the word, prayer, and worship.

The last group described by Rick Warren is the Core. This group is made up of committed people who are willing to serve. They are a small group who find purpose in serving the church and others.

Jesus is calling this disciple higher. He is trying to get him to go deeper. He is drawing him in closer. Jesus is calling him from observation to participation. He is calling him to be a player not a spectator. Jesus is calling him to a greater level of commitment. At every level regardless of the group where we find ourselves Jesus is always calling us higher.

He is calling the community to hear the gospel message. He is calling the crowd to hear and to believe and join the church. He is calling the congregation to go beyond membership to grow in our faith and commitment. He is calling the committed to step up and serve others. He is calling the core to share their faith, disciple others, and represent God in the earth.

So Jesus urges us to come up a little higher but we have some dead situations that are keeping us down. We have some dead relationships that constantly hinder us from doing the will of God. We have some dead habits that strangle us and keep us from following Christ. We have some dead circumstances that steal our joy and our life. We have some dead friends who haven't accepted the light of Christ. We have some dead commitments that sap our energy and our attention to God.

God is always calling us higher because there is nothing more important than doing the will of God. As we do God's will, souls are saved and lives are changed. The big picture is this: the Gospel of Jesus Christ brings life and we have that life within us. The big picture is the entire world is dying.

Every person we see is dying and will die twice if they don't have Jesus. We have the words of eternal life. We have the message that saves people from death.

It would be better for us to allow Jesus to lead us to people who need salvation than for us to keep salvation to ourselves while we stand over those who are dead. Going to save our families, friends, and neighbors from eternal destruction is most important.

3. Commit for the long haul.

61And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house." 62But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

I grew up in Birmingham so I'm a city boy. The only time I ever saw a farm was when our class went on a field trip or when I saw one as I passed by on the highway. I know nothing about plowing except what I read in books.

But I do know this.

It doesn't matter if a person is walking, plowing with an ox, riding a tractor, or driving a car; if they don't watch where they are going, they will go astray.

This disciple or follower of Jesus expressed his interest in following but there were some things that had his attention. He needed to go bid farewell to those at his house. He wasn't focused on the work of God. If he isn't focused then he can't plow in a straight line.

If he is looking back at his regrets he can't steer.

How many times have we felt bad about doing something at church? Maybe we had regrets about attending meetings or rehearsals. Maybe we regretted giving because we felt like people wasted our time and our resources. We showed up but we weren't happy. We served but we wanted to leave.

If he is looking at the distractions of the world, he can't steer.

How many times have we been distracted by lesser worldly things? Think about how we fail to serve the Lord because we found something more entertaining to do. Maybe we didn't run after the world but our gaze was on the world. We were constantly looking at what the world had to offer.

If he is looking at the desires he has to give up, he can't steer.

How many times did our desires get in the way of serving the Lord? We longed for a good drink and decided God could wait. We wanted pleasure and got off track and killed our witness. We coveted position, power, influence, and notoriety so we missed the will of God seeking after the things of God.

If he is looking at the cost of his own service, he can't steer.

How many times did we look at our own ledger sheet and decide God was in debt to us? Somehow God owed us for the last time we volunteered. He owed us for the last time we gave some money. God owes some of us. We won't admit it but we come to church each Sunday to collect. We've sacrificed this week and we were "good" so now God owes us a blessing.

Jesus told his disciples "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Jesus told the rich young ruler "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." Jesus shows us that we can't truly follow him if we fail to enlarge our circle of love to include the unlovely. Jesus is calling us to follow him even when we don't know the way to where he is leading us.

He is urging us to follow him out of our dead situations and into abundant life. Jesus wants us to follow him fully committed without looking back. Jesus wants us to follow him even when we don't understand. Jesus wants us to follow him even when we don't know the way. Jesus wants us to follow him by faith even when we don't know how we're gonna make it.

Jesus wants us to follow him besides the still waters. Jesus wants to lead us to green pastures. Jesus wants us to walk into the valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil. Jesus wants us to trust him even when he leads us to the place he has prepared us in the presence of our enemies. Jesus wants to lead us to the place in God where our cups run over!

How many of you want need your cup to run over? How many of you have been dry and thirsty while you were waiting on the Lord?

Jesus wants your cup to run over with joy. Jesus wants your cup to run over with peace. Jesus wants to lead you to the place where your cup runs over with forgiveness. Jesus wants to lead you to blessings that run over.

Conclusion:

We have to take the attitude of Paul when he wrote the following in Philippians 3:7-11

7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.