

# Following Jesus – Square One

## Luke 9:57-9:62

Each of you has been given 4 slips of paper. On each slip of paper is a word. The words are: Family, Friends, Home, and Health.

I want you to take the slip of paper that has the word on it that you could live without, hold it up in the air, and then tear it in half.

O.K. Now you have 3 slips of paper. Now take the one of those three that if you did not have it you could still survive. Tear it up.

Now you have 2 slips of paper. Which one of those could you live without? You could still get by even if it was gone? Tear it up.

Now you have 1 slip of paper. You have already had to give up 3 things. Could you ever give up that last thing in your life?

Now I realize you would not want to lose all of these things, but if you did, would there be anything left in your life worth living for?

Today I want to begin a study on being a disciple of Christ. As the title states, we need to begin at “square-one”.

Turn with me to **Luke 9:57-62** as we learn that the disciple’s motto should be “*First Things First*”.

Luke records for us in this passage an account of THREE (3) MEN whom Jesus met as He traveled along with His disciples. Two of these men stated that they wished to follow Jesus; to become His disciples. The other was one whom Jesus CALLED to follow Him.

What immediately strikes me is the way in which Jesus handles these would be disciples (and I think that this is Luke’s reason for recording the details of these meetings). MOST men with a cause are busy trying to recruit as MANY as they can. Most preachers are busy trying to get as many members for their church as they possibly can (and most have good intentions). I like seeing new members myself!

It’s natural. It’s what we expect to see. But Jesus is radically different in His approach. He seems to spend a great deal of His time trying to DISSUADE men from following after Him - or at least that’s what it looks like.

I heard some wise advice from an aging preacher. The old man said, “*Son, always endeavour to keep your church as SMALL as you can!*” That’s a strange statement isn’t it?! And that was coming from a man who himself had pastored quite a large congregation. But what he meant was, preach the truth of God’s salvation, and the demands of following Jesus, SO CLEARLY that ONLY those who have counted the cost and are ready to give up ALL for Christ will join themselves to you.

Friends, it’s my desire to see as many as possible come to Christ - I pray to see them come in their hundreds and even thousands - BUT I DON’T JUST WANT TO GET A CROWD . . . that doesn’t interest me at all! I want to see men and

women, young people, boys and girls turning to Christ with whole hearts; becoming TRUE sold out disciples of the Master. Hallelujah!

And so, it's interesting to read of Jesus' way of dealing with those who expressed a desire to follow Him; He seems to be trying to DISCOURAGE them. BUT NOT REALLY. In actual fact Jesus' desire is that people WILL follow Him - but He wants them to think it through first . . . to count the cost involved . . . because life for a disciple of Jesus is not necessarily easy. In fact, Jesus often spoke about how difficult it would be. Jesus was not just looking for a crowd to follow him around and bask in his popularity. He was looking for disciples who would be with him, and love him, and follow him no matter what. Because Jesus was on his way to the cross. There, after being betrayed and abandoned he would give his life to save a lost world. Jesus doesn't pull any punches. He spells it out clearly. He tells us in clear, shocking terms, what is required of his followers. And even though he does not make it appealing, inside He is longing for them to accept it - He's rooting for them – he is appealing to them. But the cost is the cost . . . it's non-negotiable . . . and they MUST be prepared for it.

Would you look with me today at these three men whom Jesus confronted with His demands, and consider with me “THE COST OF FOLLOWING JESUS”.

We read about the first man in VERSES 57-58. And from Jesus' conversation with him we learn that:

### **1. A DISCIPLE OF JESUS HAS NO EARTHLY SECURITY.** [Luke 9:57-58]

It's quite a bold statement this man makes, isn't it?! “**Lord, I will follow you WHEREVER you go!**” Could you say that to Jesus and mean it? Think about the places where Jesus went. He was born in a stable. His family fled for their lives to a foreign country. He grew up in an obscure village. He walked everywhere he went from town to town. The religious leaders of his day hated him. He was mobbed by crowds who were always wanting something from him. He hung out with seedy characters like prostitutes and the demon possessed, and publicans and sinners. When Jesus stepped out of His throne in glory to come to the earth and live and die for us, He left behind all that He had. He exchanged wealth for poverty - out of the ivory palaces into a rude cattle shed. He exchanged rulership for servanthood.

Jesus replies that to follow Him “**WHEREVER He's going**” will not be an easy road. He's not one of these “high-flying” Rabbis who jets from village to village, staying in the best hotels, and collecting nice offerings from the crowds that come to hear them. No sir.

He says, “**Foxes have holes, and birds have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay His head**”. What an irony . . . the King of glory - heir to the throne of the Universe - doesn't even have a place to call “home”. He has no earthly security. He was loaned accommodation by those who loved Him. He borrowed a coin to tell a story. He borrowed a donkey to ride into Jerusalem. Why, He was even buried in a borrowed tomb! (It was just as well since He didn't need it for too long!) HE had NOTHING. The only possessions Jesus had when

he was arrested and murdered on the cross were the clothes he was wearing. And the soldiers took those and gambled for them at the foot of the cross.

And those who follow Him must be prepared for the same road. NO EARTHLY SECURITY. Now notice this, I HAVEN'T said "NO SECURITY". Oh, there is security in following Jesus all right - but it's NOT any earthly security. It's not the security of possessions, or money, or homes, or such things. It is the security of God's faithfulness, and a life beyond this one that NOTHING can take away! Even though a disciple of Jesus may have nothing to his name in this life, yet he is more secure than the richest, most powerful of men.

**The follower of Jesus has NO EARTHLY SECURITY. So COUNT THE COST!**

If you're going to follow Jesus - and walk His road - it may well cost you everything! But remember the words of Jesus elsewhere, He said: **"WHOEVER LOSES HIS LIFE FOR MY SAKE SHALL FIND IT!"**

Then we read of a second man in VERSES 59-60. And from Jesus' conversation with this one we learn that:

**2. THE DISCIPLE OF JESUS HAS NO EARTHLY TIES.** [Luke 9:59-60.]

Here we have a conversation that has shocked many people; it shocked me when I first read it! Jesus CALLS this man to be His disciple, but he begs leave to go and bury his father first. Doesn't this seem like a reasonable request?! You feel sympathy for the man, don't you, as you read it. BUT JESUS REPLIES: **"Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God."** WOW!

Friends, the point Jesus makes here, and let no-one mistake it, is that if you're going to follow Jesus Christ then the claims of His Kingdom come before ANYTHING and ANYONE else. Jesus said elsewhere that, **"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me"**. NOW you get the picture of the kind of devotion that He is calling for! He's not calling for us to dishonour parents, or shirk our responsibility to family, BUT IF WE ARE PRESSED INTO A CHOICE BETWEEN THE TWO, HE COMES FIRST! And indeed, some have had to lose family to follow Christ.

The follower of Jesus has no ultimate earthly ties! So, Jesus says: **"LEAVE IT BEHIND!"**

The man's asking for permission to bury [his] father, however, did not necessarily mean that his father was already dead. The phrase was a common Near Eastern figure of speech that referred to a son's responsibility to help his father in the family business until the father died and the inheritance was distributed. Obviously such a commitment could involve a long period of time, thirty or forty years or more if the father was relatively young.

The expression is still used in parts of the Middle East today. A few years ago a missionary asked a rich young Turkish man to go with him on a trip to Europe, during which time the missionary hoped to disciple the man. When the young man replied that he must bury his father, the missionary offered his sympathy

and expressed surprise that the father had died. The man explained, however, that his father was alive and healthy and that the expression “bury my father” simply meant staying at home and fulfilling his family responsibilities until his father died and he received his share of the inheritance.

This guy in our story wanted to be sure to be around for the reading of the will. He said, “I trust you Jesus, but I want to hedge my bets with my inheritance.”

Friends, the follower of Jesus has no earthly ties. Jesus says, “**LEAVE IT BEHIND . . . Follow Me!**”

I hear young people saying, “I’ll follow Jesus later on. I’ve other more important things to attend to right now. My career, my education, my girlfriend, my boyfriend. I’ve got to provide a nest egg for my family first; wouldn’t God want me to be responsible like that?!” Friend, if God is calling you to follow Him - to commit your life to Christ, or to take up ministry for Him, or whatever it may be, **HIS CALL COMES FIRST!** No excuse must be allowed to hinder you. Jesus is calling for no hesitations! No delay. Don’t put it off until later. There is nothing more important and immediately urgent than following Jesus.

**The follower of Jesus has no earthly ties. We must LEAVE IT BEHIND.**

Then finally, we come to the third man in VERSES 61-62. And from Jesus’ conversation with this one we learn that:

**3. THE DISCIPLE OF JESUS HAS NO EARTHLY DISTRACTIONS.** [Luke 9:61-62.]

Again, doesn’t this seem like a reasonable request? Would you deny a soldier going to war one last chance to bid his loved ones farewell?! But again, Jesus clearly spells out the cost of following Him. “Sir, you’ve already declared you are ready to follow me - **YOU’VE PICKED UP THE PLOW** - if you put it down now because of your hankering after your family back home, you’re not fit for the Kingdom of God!” What is Jesus saying? “**DON’T LOOK BACK!**”

When Peter, James and John followed Jesus, they literally “**DROPPED**” their fishing nets to go after Him. And right when it looked like business was picking up too! (Jesus had just got them a bumper catch!) They went back for nothing. The Master had called.

Some have looked back when God called them forward. Let me list some of them for you. **LOT’S WIFE**. Remember what happened to her? **JUDAS ISCARIOT**, remember what happened to him? **DEMAS** whom Paul said turned back because he loved the world. Is any of them remembered for any **GOOD** thing? They were not worthy of the Kingdom.

If you’re going to follow Jesus, there must be no going back. Another reason why we count the cost **FIRST!**

Another way Jesus put it was like this: “**Which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish’**”.

Commenting on those words, JOHN STOTT wrote this:

“The Christian landscape is strewn with the wreckage of derelict, half-built towers - the ruins of those who began to build and were unable to finish. For thousands of people still ignore Christ’s warning and undertake to follow Him without first pausing to reflect on the cost of doing so. The result is the great scandal of Christendom today, so-called ‘nominal Christianity’. In countries to which Christian civilization has spread, large numbers of people have covered themselves with a decent, but thin, veneer of Christianity. They have allowed themselves to become somewhat involved; enough to be respectable but not enough to be uncomfortable. Their religion is a great, soft cushion. It protects them from the hard unpleasantness of life, while changing its place and shape to suit their conveniences. No wonder the cynics speak of hypocrites in the church and dismiss religion as escapism.”

**The Disciple of Jesus allows NO EARTHLY DISTRACTIONS. So DON'T LOOK BACK.**

CONCLUSION:

Jesus’ words are strong, aren’t they?! Here is what it will cost you to follow after Jesus. In short, it will cost you EVERYTHING. He calls for us to commit ourselves completely to Him, and hold nothing back. And THAT is the picture of the authentic Christian.

The follower of Jesus has NOT EARTHLY SECURITY; NO EARTHLY TIES; and NO EARTHLY DISTRACTIONS.

Jesus said to the first man: “COUNT THE COST”. He said to the second man: “LEAVE IT BEHIND”. And He said to the third man: “DON’T LOOK BACK”.

What’s He saying to YOU today?!

Well, you’ve heard the COST of following Jesus. You might well say, “Who then would ever consider following Him?”

Well, perhaps to answer that we should briefly consider the COST OF NOT FOLLOWING HIM! It will cost you:

- ETERNAL LIFE
- NO GUIDANCE (or meaning) IN THIS LIFE.
- NO OPPORTUNITY TO GLORIFY GOD.

Remember the slips of paper from the beginning of our time together this morning? I want you now to hold up your last piece of paper. As you hold it up, if you can say, “Yes, I could make it because there is something left in my life”, then I want you to tear it in half.

I can only speak for myself, but if I lost everything, I would still have Jesus. And that is enough. How about you?