

# THE CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

“Don’t Negotiate With Me”

Luke 9:51-62

August 26, 2018

**Summary:** This passage is pivotal in Luke’s gospel. The time for Jesus to be “taken up”—to heaven via the cross—is drawing near, so he sets his face resolutely to go to Jerusalem. On the way he faces rejection by the Samaritans, and James and John suggest they call down fire from heaven to destroy them, just as Elijah did. But Jesus rebukes them. Judgment will fall, but not on the Samaritans; it will fall on Jesus. The disciples do not yet understand the nature of his mission.

Neither do the three would-be disciples that meet Jesus along the road. Each seems willing and eager to follow Christ, yet each one makes a qualifying statement. Jesus counters each with a statement of his own, highlighting what true discipleship actually entails. His path is hard and his pace is urgent. You are either all in or you are not in at all. The call is to absolute surrender. The Messiah doesn’t negotiate more favorable terms.

These are strong words that we need to reckon with, especially living in a time and place where it is so easy and comfortable to be Christians. Have we tried to negotiate our commitment, to qualify our discipleship?

**Security** is a common concern on which we would like to receive assurances. The first man says he will follow Jesus wherever he goes. But as Matthew reports the story, this man addresses Jesus as, “Teacher,” indicating that he only has normal rabbinical practices in mind. He will follow Jesus all day, and then live at Jesus’ house at night, just as all other students do with their rabbis. But Jesus isn’t just a rabbi; he’s also an itinerant prophet—often chased out of town, on the run, and threatened by the powers-that-be. Will you follow Jesus not into a well-respected, conventional piety but into insecurity?

**Loyalty** is another way in which we compromise our commitment, especially when it comes to family. The second man is called by Jesus to follow him, but he has an ailing father, so first he must care for him. This is actually an integral part of Jewish piety. There was no higher duty than to care for aging parents and give them a proper burial. When they died, the rabbinical literature said you were free from all other expectations of the Law. But Jesus tersely says, “Let the dead bury their own dead. You go and preach the kingdom.” He is not memorializing the past but revolutionizing the future. He is not maintaining conventional religion or advocating for typical family loyalties—he and his gospel must come first. In Luke 14:26 Jesus says that anyone who doesn’t *hate* his family and his own life cannot be his disciple.

**Priority**, having a single priority, is the lesson taught to the third man. This person says he will follow, “but first let me say goodbye to my parents.” There can be no “but first…” with Jesus. If you’re saying the rest of your life belongs to Jesus but the next day, the next hour, the next 10 minutes are yours—well, Jesus is not your Lord. “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

There’s an urgency and immediacy to the call to discipleship. Yes, “come unto Me” for rest. Yes, “follow me” into a true and noble purpose. Yes “be with me” for intimacy with God, for joy and blessing and abundant life. *But don’t negotiate with me.*

## Discussion Guide:

1. Read Luke 9:51-62 from a standard translation like the NIV or ESV and also from *The Message*.
2. It seems in this story that nobody “gets” Jesus. The Samaritans don’t understand that Jesus is their Messiah too. James and John don’t understand the nature of Jesus’ mission. And the three would-be disciples don’t understand the absolute commitment that following him entails.
  - In what ways do you think Christians of our time and place don’t get Jesus?
  - In what ways might not you get him?
3. How do you think the rebuke of James and John in Samaria is instructive for us? How does it apply to our life and times?
4. Discuss the ways in which you’re challenged by the brief interchange between Jesus and each of the would-be disciples.
  - Is security an idol in your life? Has it dampened your discipleship? How?
  - Is loyalty to other things, maybe your family or job, created compromises in your discipleship? How?
  - Do you have many priorities instead of a One Priority? Is there anything about your discipleship that says, “I will follow you, but first...”? What tends to usurp first place in your life?
5. What is one way in which you are being called to a deeper level of discipleship right now? How is the Lord speaking to you and how can we support you in following him?
6. What might it look like for us to follow Jesus wholeheartedly together?