

“Don’t Negotiate With Me”

Luke 9:23-27; 57-62

August 26, 2018

Summary: As we continue through our “Call to Discipleship” series, we come to one of the most essential discipleship passages in the New Testament. In Luke 9, Jesus is talking with the disciples and He asks them who the crowds say that He is. They give Him some answers and eventually Jesus asks them who *they* think that He is. Peter answers: “God’s Messiah” (Luke 9:20). Jesus warns them not to tell anyone and then He lays out His mission here on earth:

“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.” (Luke 9:22)

Right after this, Jesus lays out what it means to be one of His *disciples*. Not just a “Christian”, but a disciple. To be a disciple means to first deny yourself. Self-Denial is more than just putting others’ wants before yours. To deny yourself means to take on a whole new identity. An identity that is defined by *taking up your cross daily*. We are dead to our old selves and alive in Jesus. We must persevere and be reminded of this fact daily. To be a disciple, we must also lose our lives rather than trying to save ourselves. We don’t lose our lives for nothing. We lose our lives to *and* for Jesus. One of the reasons this is so hard is because we are so concerned with gaining the whole world. We must have a *loyalty* to Jesus and not be ashamed of Him. Our focus can’t be on ourselves or what we find comfortable but on what Jesus has for us.

How do we know if we’re actually living the life of a disciple? How do we know if we’re denying ourselves, taking up our crosses, losing our lives, and being loyal to Christ? A little later in this chapter, Luke records three quick interactions with three different individuals (Luke 9:57-62). These interactions show us how we know if we’re following Christ: It gets reflected in our decisions we make with our lives.

The first person claims that they will follow Jesus wherever He goes. Jesus says to him: “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (9:58). Jesus is reminding this person that to follow Him means that life won’t be easy. That there will be *hardships* and that they should count the costs.

The second person says that they will follow Jesus but they need to go and bury their father first. Jesus’ response sounds harsh at a first glance: “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God” (9:60). One quick note here: The man never actually says that his father is dead. The illustration here is that this man didn’t have a sense of *urgency* when it came to following Christ. He wanted to wait until something else was over in his life before he actually made a full commitment.

The last person wants to follow Jesus but first wants to go back and say goodbye to their family. Here’s how He responds: “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God” (9:62). Quick translation: You can’t put your hand on a plow to work and then plow a straight line while constantly looking back over your shoulder at the past. There’s a way that Jesus wants you to go and you can’t look back – you must look forward.

All too often we try to fit Jesus and our faith into our lives. We like to hear that He invites us to *Come to Him* and once we come then we can *Follow Him*. We really like that He encourages us to *Be with Him*. But once we accept those invitations, we also have to reconcile with the fact that we don’t get to *Negotiate with Him*.

Discussion Questions:

1. Make sure you re-read Luke 9:23-27 and Luke 9:57-62.
2. In Luke 9:23, Jesus talks about how we need to deny ourselves in order to be His disciples. Often times, Self-Denial can end up only being about putting others' needs before our own (definitely a good thing). But that is something that even non-believers can do. If you think of Self-Denial as an actual denial of a self-created identity in order to take on a new identity with Jesus, how does that change this passage? How does it change your life?
3. In the same verse, we're told to take up our crosses daily. When you read cross, think beyond a necklace or a tattoo. A cross was a Roman death-device. Jesus tells them to live as if they've been given the death sentence *daily*. What are some things that you need to daily die to in order to live into your new identity with Jesus?
4. Verse 25 is such an important question for us: What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? In what ways are you more concerned about gaining the whole world than you are about following Jesus? Let's just pretend that you actually achieve the status of "gaining the whole world" either for your kids or at your job or according to your family. What does that leave you with if you don't have Christ?
5. Let's direct our attention to the three interactions Jesus has with the three different people in Luke 9:57-62. Jesus reminds the first person that there will be hardships in life if we follow Him and things might not always be secure. How important is security in your life or in the life of your family? How could this dampen your discipleship?
6. The second person doesn't have a sense of urgency when it comes to following Jesus. They're more concerned about eventually being able to take care of something else *and then* following. Why do we need a sense of urgency in our lives when it comes to following Jesus and discipleship? Jesus tells the person to let the (spiritually) dead to bury their own dead. But this person was to go and proclaim the Kingdom of God. What are the "dead" things we focus on that prevent us from proclaiming the Kingdom?
7. Jesus reveals to us in the last interaction that we cannot put our hand on the plow to work for the Kingdom and plow a straight line while looking back over our shoulder. What are things in your past that are keeping you from fully committing to the work of discipleship? They could be "the good old days" or the things you think you're going to miss out on. They could even be past sins that you think aren't able to be forgiven.