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LEADER'S GUIDE

FOLLOW ME • COMMITMENT



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WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?

This begins a 9-part series in the gospel of Luke. Luke chapters 9-19 record Jesus' final trip to Jerusalem. This series will examine some of Jesus' key teachings on the journey to Jerusalem. This first study deals with Jesus call to discipleship and the commitment that accompanies that call.

We want to hear from you! Please send your feedback on this study to cru.comm@uscm.org.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

LUKE 9:57-62

Introduction

In Luke 9:51 we read these words, "As the time approached for Jesus to be taken up into heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem." This is a theme marker in Luke's gospel. From this passage through chapter 19, we have recorded Jesus' final trip to Jerusalem, and last call for the nation to repent, respond to His teaching, and receive him as the Messiah. The window of opportunity is closing, and when Jesus enters Jerusalem in 19:28, it will slam shut, as Jesus takes His place at the cross. This first study begins appropriately with Jesus' call to "follow me."

Luke 9:57-58

Like many of Jesus' sayings, the phrase "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has no place to lay his head," must be decoded. What Jesus is saying is that anyone who would be His disciple must be willing to make sacrifices. This is foundational to all commitments of love. For example, before becoming a parent one should be fully aware that the decision necessarily involves sacrifice.

Yet in a deep relationship, sacrifice does not often seem like sacrifice, because it is done out of love. While it is true that parents must make sacrifices for their children, such sacrifice often holds a certain joy. So it is with Christ. There are sacrifices that we are called to make in following Jesus, but as long as our hearts are fixed on Him, there is a certain degree of joy in making these sacrifices.

To go a step further, true love not only is willing to sacrifice, but desires to do so. When you love someone passionately, you look for ways to demonstrate that love. Often sacrifice presents itself as a unique opportunity to express unseen love.

Luke 9:59,60

The aspect of commitment that Jesus is emphasizing in this passage is priority. The man asks if he can "first" bury his father. The key word is "first," and Jesus uses it as a springboard to talk about this second component of discipleship.

For the man to fail to return home for his father's funeral, in many ways would have caused scandal within the family. People would have accused and projected all kinds of ill motives upon this man. This becomes a critical component of what it means to follow Jesus. We must place God's feelings about us, and His approval,

above the approval of others—including those closest to us. Jesus desires to have preeminence in our hearts and will tolerate no rivals. Jesus also emphasizes the priority of proclaiming the kingdom of God for His followers. In Mark 1:17 Jesus said, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men,” making it clear that discipleship is, in many ways, synonymous with being a proclaimer of the Gospel.

There are many other implications of making Jesus a priority in our hearts and lives. The study centers on the need to daily prioritize our time with the Lord (in prayer, ministry and fellowship) above other activities, that so quickly crowd out our time.

Luke 9:61,62

The last aspect of commitment is perseverance. Disciples are to keep following and never look back. The phrase “turning back” can either allude to turning back to our old habits and patterns before we were Christians, or to the world and all that it offers. The Scripture is filled with many examples of men and women who started out with a hunger to follow God, but over time turned back from that commitment. In Revelation Jesus rebukes the church in Ephesus for having lost their first love, and growing cold in their love and commitment to God. Jesus exhorts them to return to their “first love.” Disciples are distinguished, not so much by how they begin the Christian life, but by how they finish.

Marriage

The following are some common phrases often spoken in wedding vows: “in sickness and in health,” “to honor and cherish,” “forsaking all others,” “till death do you part.” What do these vows emphasize? “In sickness and in health” suggests a willingness to sacrifice. “To honor, cherish” and to “forsake all others” speaks of priority in our affections. “Till death do you part” expresses a commitment to persevere in love. Love is measured by its willingness to sacrifice, by its priorities, and by its duration, or perseverance.

Seen in this light, it is apparent that Jesus is calling for a commitment from His followers that is tantamount to a marriage commitment. Basically he is saying, “Will you marry me?” At first glance some of the things that Jesus requires from “would-be” followers seem overly steep and perhaps even harsh, but when we see this in a context of commitment, the requirements (or vows) make perfect sense. Jesus uses these questions as a vehicle to clarify the nature of our relationship and commitment to Him.

This study is accompanied by an article. Take the time to read it over before the study. Hand it out to the group at the end of the study and have them read it this week.

WHAT IF THERE'S A
PROBLEM?

None apparent.

WHAT'S YOUR POINT?

The point of the study is to better understand what our commitment to Christ entails, and what is involved in following Him. Seeing the commitment more clearly, the point of application is for the group, in a sense, to renew their vows. Or for those who never understood what was involved in following Christ, to express their desire to follow Jesus unreservedly.

MEMORY VERSE

Luke 9:62 "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

WHAT ARE THE ANSWERS?

1. Jesus is emphasizing a willingness to sacrifice.
2. It means to live for His will and for the establishment of His kingdom on earth.
3. Allow the group to share. The issue of passion is meant to underscore the truth that, within the context of a deep love relationship, there is often a certain degree of joy in making sacrifices.
4. The man says that he must "first" bury his father. Jesus focuses on the issue of priority. Following Jesus must come first.
5. For the man to fail to return home for his father's funeral would have caused scandal within his family. People would have accused and projected all kinds of ill motives upon this man.
6. The priority must be following Jesus and proclaiming the kingdom.
7. In Mark 1:17 Jesus says "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." There is a clear parallel between the two.
8. Allow the group to record their answers. Certainly things like study will necessarily take larger amounts of time. The important idea is for people to see what they do prioritize with their time.
9. This question is designed to get people to evaluate their lists, and to share some ways they have tried to prioritize Jesus in their daily lives.
10. Perseverance. Love is measured by its endurance.
11. Often old patterns and habits of sin, as well as worldliness.
12. They are almost identical. Jesus is asking for a commitment tantamount to a marriage commitment.
13. Give the group time to read and pray before signing the bottom, and encourage them to keep it in their Bibles and to remember it.