

## **'Follow Me'**

We've been looking at the topic of "counting the cost of following Jesus," from the gospel of Luke 9:57-62. Following Jesus Christ in obedience to his word in scripture will bring challenges. We have a natural fallen tendency to want things our own way, the easy way, i.e., something that doesn't take me out of my comfort zone. Also, unfortunately, there are those who believe that if they are not against Jesus that's the same as being for Jesus. But scripture teaches something much different than that. To follow Jesus takes total commitment and can only happen by the grace of God given to us in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-10). In my previous two articles we looked at two priorities that must be considered when we think of following Jesus; following Jesus must take priority over worldly comforts; following Jesus must take priority over earthly wealth. Going back to our passage, today I want to look at the next priority. Following Jesus must take:

—Priority over our family

Look with me now in verses 61-62: "Yet another said, 'I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those back at home.' Jesus said to him, 'No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'" Just as in our last point, we may initially find Jesus' words troubling to us. Why would it not be okay to say farewell to our family before following Jesus? It's important that we not miss the point that Jesus is making here. God is the one who gives us our families. Paul says that if Christians don't care for their family they're worse than unbelievers (1 Timothy 5:8). The point that Jesus is clearly making is about priority. The illustration of marriage can be helpful here. When we get married, although we love our parents, our own spouse must take a certain priority if our marriage is to be healthy. This doesn't mean that we no longer care for our parents although now, we have a different relationship with them than we once did. In an analogous way, to be a Christian is to be a spouse to our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ (Isaiah 61:10). What the word of God in scripture says will always take appropriate priority over family ties.

We see this same thing in Luke 14:26. "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." Are you allowing your spouse, children, parents, or siblings to take priority over the teaching of scripture? Rightly understood, this passage points us to the truth that, if Jesus is always our priority, our family will be loved better than if we allow them to be a priority over following him! Everything in life is made better when Jesus is our Lord and Master.

You may be reading this article and thinking, "I believe that I'm a follower of Jesus but I don't agree with the kind of commitment that you're speaking of." Remember, this is Jesus, himself, who's clearly calling for total, sacrificial commitment to him. Generally speaking there are three important truths that we must embrace to be a genuine follower of Jesus. The first is:

—knowledge: This means that we have a true Biblical knowledge of who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish for his people. Some may say that he was a good moral teacher. But many will not acknowledge that Jesus, took on human flesh at a point in time in history and yet he is also the Son of God, the second person of the eternal Trinity. The next step to being a Jesus follower is:

—assent: Along with biblical knowledge, this second element of a genuine saving faith is this; we believe that what the Bible says is true. The Bible teaches, and we believe, that the answer for our sinful condition is the perfect and finished work of Jesus Christ. A third and indispensable element of saving faith is:

—Personal trust: A genuine saving faith is a free gift from God and it changes us from the inside-out. Although we will never be perfect in this life, God is at work by his word and Spirit to make us more like our Savior, Jesus Christ. Increasingly, his desires become our desires and we're intent on dying daily to our sin and living to righteousness, by his grace. To be a follower of Jesus requires that he is the priority in our lives.

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