

COUNT THE COST

Did you hear about the scout leader at an airport, asking if anyone had seen his troop, since he was the leader he needed to be with them. Hmm. "If no one is following you, then you're not a leader, you're just out for a stroll." Could that have been the case for Jesus?

Luke 9:57-62 provides insight. True followers of Jesus leave every other thing, person, or excuse, to make Jesus their possession, priority, and purpose. It's been said that "the object of our hope is future, and the experience of our hope is present." This gives powerful meaning to life, liberates from selfishness, fear and greed. It empowers love and risk-taking sacrifice. Now. For Jesus.

TURNING POINT - Luke writes that as they were going along the road, someone said to Jesus, "*I will follow You wherever You go.*" Recall that Luke 9:51 points to a great pivot in Luke's narrative of Jesus' ministry. From then on He determined to set His face like a flint toward Jerusalem. And for the next ten chapters he traces Jesus' progress toward His mission of redemption.

Jesus first called His followers back in chapter 5: Peter, James John, and the rest of the twelve disciples. Chapter 9 puts special attention on those who followed Jesus because of His teaching and healing. Jesus said to all, "*If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.*" These followers would be fellow carriers of a cross.

FOLLOWERS - Jesus said His disciples were to be cross-bearers, laying down their own lives to identify with Jesus Christ. John spoke of "*those who do not follow with us,*" so a disciple is more than a groupie or casual follower. Disciple means learner, trainee. It refers to the company of those making a commitment to Jesus as their master, rabbi, and entering His training.

This passage is almost like a job interview with three people. The first question is, will you follow Jesus there? Meaning, wherever, anywhere. Not casual part-time accompanying, but significant full-time commitment. It means denying self. Being trained by Jesus as lord and master.

WHEREVER - The person who said "*I will follow You wherever*" may have meant well. It's what people say who are emotionally attached. But Jesus knew he had never the counted the cost of following Him with his whole heart, mind, and will, to follow Him to Jerusalem and death.

How? Because His reply is "*Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.*" Jesus was on the road to Jerusalem, an itinerant preacher with no abode. Man on a mission. Even wild animals have homes, but not the Son of Man. He is God come in the flesh, and has nowhere even to lay his Head, nothing to call His own.

EVERYTHING - Jesus' powerful word picture drives home the point: what it really means to follow Jesus anywhere is that you leave everything to go anywhere for Him. What a contrast. For so many people, home is their very identity. Their home means more than almost any other thing in their life. But a follower of Jesus must be ready to endure hardship, to share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, not entangled in civilian pursuits (2Timothy 2:3).

"Jesus would have no man enlisted under false pretenses," observes JC Ryle. "There is a battle to be fought, a race to be run, work to be done, and many hard things to be endured. We will have deadly enemies: the world, the flesh, the devil. There will be hate, slander, persecution. Jesus would not discourage us, but He would have us to know the truth."

ANYTHING - If something is of great value, is it not worth great sacrifice? What good is easily gained reward? Following Jesus requires your whole being, loving Him with all your heart, mind, will. It costs your life, in order to gain new eternal life found only in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"If we are not ready to take part in the afflictions of Christ, we must never expect to share in His glory," notes Ryle. To be a follower of Jesus isn't a 9-5 occasion, leaving your house for an office and then back to a comfortable abode. Following Jesus is 24/7. It's fulltime, leaving everything. And Jesus Himself is your sole passion. Is this enough for you?

YOU? - Do you leave everything else in order to follow Jesus? That's how serious it is. Are people serious as they sing the hymn "Where He leads me I will follow"? God's leading is clear in Scripture, but do you do it? We seem to want God to affirm where we want to go, rather than stepping out in faith to do what God says in the Bible. How are you following Jesus? ☐