

## COUNT YOUR COST

Three different people gave Jesus three different versions of what it meant for them to follow Him. If it was a job interview, none of them would get it. It's all in Luke 9:57-62. The first person says, "*I will follow You wherever You go.*" Jesus clarified that this meant leaving all security behind.

The second person said he would follow Jesus, after he buried his father (not yet dead). Jesus said the kingdom of God had to be his priority, just as He was going to Jerusalem for God's will.

**FOLLOW NOW** - Will you follow Him anywhere? Will you follow Him first? A third person had a different answer, "*I will follow You, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.*" He could see it was too much to wait for a death. So sincerely, he asks for a few minutes to say goodbye to his family, then he would follow for the rest of his life. Reasonable?

Jesus knew it was just another excuse. There are many "good reasons" to wait to obey Jesus. Talk to someone in sales. They know all the excuses. That's why they press for a decision now. If you turn away, you most likely won't come back. It's human nature.

**HAND TO PLOW** - Jesus replies with another word picture: "*No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.*" You don't have to be a farmkid to understand. Riding a bike or driving a car, if you crane your neck to look around, you will go off course. When you mow the lawn, if you merely follow each pass, you'll get crooked. Same with plowing, you must focus on a goalpost far ahead. If you look behind, you'll get out of alignment.

But there's more to this. In 1Kings 19, Elisha plowed with 12 yoke of oxen. Impressive! Elijah chose him to replace him as prophet, and allowed him to say goodbye to his family. Because it was a test, which Elisha passed. No going back. He sacrificed the oxen, and followed Elijah.

**KINGDOM FIRST** - "When you put your hand to the plow of the kingdom of God, your vision can only be forward, to the future, never mind the past," says RC Sproul. "All those who would have God, who would press on to His kingdom, must have their eyes fixed on His kingdom, His future." How many churches choke off their future because people can't keep their eyes off the past?

"We've always done it this way" to honor our traditions. Their legacy will only be their past, as the church becomes a museum or monument to history instead of a facility for the future. If you keep doing what you've always done, you'll keep getting the same results (or lack thereof). Let's be forward thinkers, growing God's family with the overflowing good news about Jesus.

**THE GOOD FIGHT** - 1Timothy 4 says, "*Be a good servant of Christ, trained in the words of faith that you have followed. Train yourself for godliness, as it holds promise for the present life and the life to come. To this end we toil and strive because we have our hope set on the living God.*"

1Timothy 6 says, "*Flee all these worldly things, pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called. Do not set your hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who richly provides for us to be rich in good works, generous, storing up treasure to take hold of that which is truly life.*"

**GO FORWARD** - "Those who pine after what they left behind, remembering comforts of home and hearth," says RK Hughes, "who dream about how life might have been if they hadn't stopped on the road with Jesus, who keep looking in the rearview mirror, will not do well on Jesus' road."

Is it risky to follow Jesus? The world says so. But the Bible says only by following Jesus is there eternal reward. Count the cost. Give it all up for Jesus' sake, and never look back. Keep pressing on to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Make Jesus your possession, your priority, your purpose.

**PRESS ON** - Because the Lord always keeps all His promises! Give thanks for the indwelling Holy Spirit who empowers you to obey God's commands, so that you can follow Jesus anywhere and everywhere, leaving everything and taking Jesus only as your possession. You can follow Jesus first and foremost, leaving every other person but Jesus only as your priority. You can follow Jesus now, leaving every excuse, with Jesus only as your purpose, to glorify His name.

God promises to lead you. Pray to be obedient. In any situation, believers in Christ must not react in fear, but respond in faith. God's eternal written-down truth is your guide, with His presence and power within you, and His purpose to fulfill. For Him and His kingdom, press on and on! ☐