



Obstacles to be Disciple of Jesus Christ

Luke 9:57-62, *Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go." ⁵⁸ And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." ⁵⁹ Then He said to another, "Follow Me."*

But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."

⁶⁰ *Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God."*

⁶¹ *And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house."*

⁶² *But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."*

The high cost of following Jesus.

A very familiar word in the gospels, Jesus many times called people to follow Him.

He called Matthew to follow Him.

He called the rich young ruler to follow Him.

He called Philip to follow Him.

He called Peter to follow Him.

He called all the twelve to follow Him at some point.

He called many others to follow Him.

He used the same word, *akoloutheō*, and He used it in the present imperative, which implied an ongoing command.

"Following" implies continuity. It implies something beyond the moment. In the present tense, that implication becomes explicit. Keep on following Me.

You might even say, "From now on in your life, follow Me."

That really is not typical of the modern style of calling people to discipleship or evangelism. Modern evangelism would lead us to believe that becoming a Christian is a matter of a moment, not a lifetime.

It is a matter of an accepting of Christ.

It is a matter of an emotional experience to which you were led by fiery preaching or heart-rending stories or music.

All they must do is grab that moment, say that prayer. If they do not know what it should be, we will give them a formula to pray. That's all it takes to become a Christian!

Jesus did not do that!

In the New Testament to a place where they were supposed to pray a prayer.

Never did He do that and never did the apostles do that. None of them ever moved toward some crisis event in which supposedly the sinner was redeemed from sin and death and hell.

When Jesus invited someone to receive His forgiveness and salvation, He asked that person for the rest of his life!

He did not want a moment.

He did not want the emotion of a moment.

He wanted the carefully thought out, understood, commitment of a lifetime.

Repentance from sin,
confession of Jesus as Lord,
obedience from the heart to the Word and
the Spirit was for life.

Jesus made things so difficult for many would-be disciples.

John 6:66, *From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.*

The standard was just too high.

What was required was too demanding.

The word "follow" appears in each one.

Two times would-be disciples come up and declare that they will follow and the middle one, Jesus asks one to follow.

Luke 9:23, *Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.*

When we call people to salvation, we are calling them to self-denial.

The word used here for "deny" is a word that means to refuse to associate with.

Jesus is saying, "If you want to come after Me, you have to come to the point where you refuse to associate any longer with the person that you are."

Once you have gone through self-denial, or self-hate, or self-loathing because you no longer want to associate with the sinner you are, and you are that desperate. At that point when Jesus says to you, "I am asking for a whole life commitment," you are in the position to make the response because you have just abandoned yourself completely.

That is the first half. Now you are ready to embrace the lordship of Christ with unswerving loyalty and unhindered devotion.

We need to be calling sinners to follow Jesus as a way of life.

True Christianity is not seasonal.

It is not even Sunday.

It is a way of life.

It is following Jesus all the time in joyous self-denial.

It is that willingness to deny yourself, take up your cross, that is deny yourself to the degree it might cost you your life, and follow Me.

In Luke's flow we are outside Galilee now, we are moving outside Galilee. The Galilean ministry is over.

Jesus on the way now to Jerusalem, less than year before His crucifixion.

As He moves toward Jerusalem, He goes to various places. But the primary goal is the training of the twelve, to prepare them for the ministry that awaits them after He is gone.

Luke 9:46-50, He gave them a lesson on humility.

Luke 9:51-56, He gave them a lesson on mercy.

Luke 9:57-62, He gives them a lesson on discipleship.

This is all part of how He's preparing them and us for this responsibility.

Matthew tells us that when this incident happened, Jesus had been doing many powerful miracles. So, whenever that happened, there was a swelling of the crowd.

We can assume this is a huge crowd of people. They followed because of His power over demons, His power over disease, His power over death, and His power over nature.

They had ample evidence that He was the Messiah fulfilling the Old Testament promise, that He was the Saviour, the Son of God.

They had ample evidence for that in what He said and what He did. Yet the crowd was a spectrum all the way from those who were there to find a way to kill Him, to those who were already affirming that He was the Son of God and believing in Him.

In the middle is what we would call the disciples, the *mathētēs*, the students, the learners at all levels of commitment.

John 6 many of His disciples went away and left Him and walked no more with Him. It simply means they were there as learners. But these three had come to the point where they moved across the spectrum close to the right end and they were convinced that Jesus was the spokesman for God. They were convinced that there was no one like Him. They obviously were convinced of His miracle powers.

The reputation of Jesus was never even brought into question, nor were any of His miracles questioned even by the people who hated Him most. They knew this was a man from God. They were convinced perhaps that He was even the Son of God, the Messiah.

They get all the way up to that point and they affirm they are ready to follow. The better prospects for the kingdom of God. Yet when Jesus is through with them, they turn and go away.

Here are three of those most interesting side of that spectrum, to real salvation.

1. Comfort.

V 57, Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go."

Matthew helps us with someone, a scribe. Not just someone, but a certain scribe, said to Jesus, "I will follow You wherever You go."

This is a moment of emotion.

He is very eager. He has been seeing all the miracles. He is attracted to Jesus. He reaches the highest level of devotion that he knows, and he says, "I will follow You wherever you go."

I am done with what my past has been. I am going to leave my career as a scribe.

Scribes were very esteemed people in Jewish life. Scribes were the experts of the law. They were the lawyers, the religious lawyers who interpreted the law the way lawyers interpret the law of the land today. They interpreted the law of the rabbis and the law of Scripture. They were qualified and authorized by Jewish authorities, highly educated and loyal to the Jewish system.

Scribes were generally hostile to Jesus. They joined with the Pharisees, the chief priests to seek Jesus' death.

The scribe was saying something that was very culturally familiar. Rabbis travelled in those days. They walked and they had little flocks of students who followed them. It was very common in the ancient world, not just in Israel but in the Greek world as well, for an esteemed teacher to have a little crowd of disciples who followed him around while he walked them through life and taught them.

Here is a scribe, who by some standard might himself be a rabbi and a teacher, saying, "From now on I want to join Your group, You are my Rabbi."

For Matthew says he said to Him before he said I will follow You wherever You go, he said to Him, **didaskalos**, or teacher, or rabbi. He was literally saying I want to join the group. You are the teacher!

He was then offering himself as a willing pupil of the miracle worker from Nazareth.

What better offer could Jesus have than to pick off a scribe?

He could have that scribe give testimony to how he had turned from the legalism of his past to the grace that was found in Jesus Christ. What a wonderful testimony that would be.

He could headline his meetings, "Hear converted scribe give testimony," you know.

"I will follow You wherever You go," implies some permanence.

It implies more than a momentary decision.

It implies more than a moment of emotion.

There may be emotion, but I am laying this out, I will go where You go. Jesus was surely the greatest teacher he had ever heard, most captivating personality he had ever met.

He knew that Jesus stood for the destruction of the narrow legalism that the scribes stood for. But Jesus was still compelling to him, overwhelming. He thought he was giving Him the fullest commitment when he said, "I will follow You wherever You go."

But Jesus had seen this before. Jesus knew what was in this man.

John 2:23, *Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did.*

Jesus refuses always to cash in on a moment of emotion. He refuses to do that. He refuses to do it here.

He knows human nature.

He knows its emotional instability.

He knows its self-centeredness.

The scribe saw the crowds, he saw the miracles. He heard the teaching. He wanted to be associated with Jesus because there was no one like Him.

This offer was very complete on the part of the scribe, and yet on the part of Jesus it was not complete enough.

If anybody came today and said, "I want to follow Jesus wherever He leads," the average evangelical Christian is going to say, "Pray this prayer, sign this card, start into follow-up."

Jesus does not do that. He says the most amazing thing to him. You want to follow Me?

V 58, And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

Jesus knew this man's mind because He is omniscient as God. He knew this man had a desire for personal comfort.

So, Jesus went right to the issue.

Foxes were everywhere in Israel in those days and in more ancient days. You remember Samson when he tied all their tails together and sent them through a field burning. Foxes common to the people and they had their burrows, and they had their places to go and rest and eat.

Birds were certainly everywhere. At some seasons there are more birds, in the land of Israel than any place on the planet. At migrating season half a billion birds migrate from Europe down into Africa and they all migrate through Israel. That's a strange phenomenon.

Not so strange when you read the book of Revelation at the end time after the battle of Armageddon. God's going to need all those birds to eat the carrion that is left from the judgment that comes at the return of Christ.

Everybody knew birds had nests.

Everybody knew foxes have holes.

That is just basic stuff.

As common as that is and normal for animals, I do not even have that. The Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head. At least eighty times Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of Man.

It is a messianic title taken from **Daniel 7:13**, but it also emphasizes the fact of His humanness. In His humiliation as the Son of Man.

Jesus says, *"I have nowhere to lay My head. All I can promise you, My friend, is that if you follow Me it might mean you are homeless. Do not expect comfort. Don't expect ease."*

Why does He make an issue out of this?

Because it was an issue with the man in his heart.

Self-denial!

"If any man come after Me let him deny himself."

What does it come down to?

For some people it comes down to what is in it for me?

That is the wrong way to proclaim the gospel. It is not about self-satisfaction, but self-denial.

It is not about what do I get when I get Jesus.

It is about what am I willing to give up!

The emotion of the moment for this man may not have betrayed his true attitude to the rest who were standing there, but Jesus saw his heart, so He knew exactly what he was thinking.

And He said, "I just want to let you know that I am ever going to find a place to lay My head."

Connecting with the prior passage.

Luke 9:51, He was going down to Jerusalem and sent messengers on ahead of Him and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans.

Jesus sent them into the village of the Samaritans to make arrangements so that He could sleep. They did not receive Him. The Samaritans would not even let Him stay in their village.

They would not let Him sleep there. James and John were so mad they asked Him if He wanted them to call down fire from heaven and burn them all up.

Gadara did not want Him even though He had cast the demons out of the maniac that terrorized the whole area, cast the demons out of that man and they went into the pigs and went off the cliff and the whole countryside ran Him out.

Nazareth did not want Him; they tried to throw Him off a cliff in His own hometown.

Capernaum did not want Him even after all the works He had done there.

Jerusalem was not going to want Him either.

They were going to scream for His blood and demand the Romans nail Him to a cross.

Jesus is saying that If you are expecting comfort out of this because you think we are going into the kingdom, and you will have ease then you got it wrong.

Matthew 10:16-22, *“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless^l as doves. ¹⁷ But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. ¹⁸ You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹ But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; ²⁰ for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.*

²¹ “Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. ²² And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.

Jesus said, "I think you need to know that if you follow Me there is a crown at the end, but there's a cross on the way. It is the way of persecution. It's the way of suffering."

This scribe was stony ground. The seed went into the stony ground and it grew up for a little while but when tribulation and pressure came, the sun burned it, it scorched, and it never had any fruit and it died.

He wanted to add Jesus to his life.

He wanted the excitement of following Jesus.

But he wanted a life without the sacrifices.

Jesus wants to see him at a point where he does not hold any of that because if that is still a barrier, then the devotion to Jesus is not complete. It is not saving faith.

2. Possession.

V 59, *Then He said to another, “Follow Me.”*

But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”

You might think that his father's body is lying at the house. That is not the case. If it is then it is reasonable to go bury your father and the Jews had thirty days of mourning.

Take a month and go and do that if your father had just died is reasonable. According to Jewish custom, burial took place immediately after death. They did not embalm, they just wrapped bodies and put them immediately in the grave. There was a thirty-day time of mourning. It would have

been appropriate for the son to be there. It was honourable to give burial to the dead and particularly a son's responsibility to make sure that his father was cared for in death.

The only way a son could get out of caring for the funeral of his father was if he were high priest. High priest could not touch a dead body according to Leviticus 21.

According to Numbers 6 if he took a Nazarite vow, temporary Nazarite vow, and could not touch a dead body. There is no indication that he had done either, of course.

On the surface it says some good things about the man. This man, however, knows that the Lord is moving away from the area. He just said He does not have anywhere to lay His head. He is on the move. He is on the road.

He is not saying the body is laying at the house waiting to be buried. He would not be there if that were the case because they buried them immediately.

He is saying that I have lived too long to leave now without my inheritance. I will follow You, but I was just listening to the conversation You had with that guy and You said that You do not have anywhere to lay Your head, the resources are meagre.

You cannot promise us anything, no prosperity gospel here, so I think it would be better for me if I just hung around and I waited till I got what I have been waiting for all these years.

"I must bury my father" is a familiar Middle Eastern statement still used. When they use it and they say, "I must bury my father," they mean I must stay at home until he has gone so that I can bring his estate to its final point and so that I can receive my inheritance.

I will follow You someday when my father's dead and I have gotten what I need.
e is attracted to Jesus. He is amazed at His power, but he loves money.

He is like the weedy soil in the parables of the kingdom. The seed went into soil that was full of weeds and the weeds choked it out and Jesus explained that as the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches which choked the seed.

So, here is another guy with a response. He said I have waited too long not to cash in. I want what my father has and what is coming to me.

V 60, *Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God."*

Jesus said to him, it is a rebuke!

This is not honourable. If you had a decaying body sitting at the house, Jesus would not have said this. His intentions were not good.

Jesus said, "Let the spiritually dead." What He means by that is: the unconverted people. Let the people in this world who are outside the kingdom of God take care of the dead.

Leave temporal things to temporal people.

Leave the matters of the temporal kingdom to the people who live in that kingdom.

You are called to come into the kingdom of God and for the rest of your life to go and proclaim the glories of that kingdom.

Let go of the kingdom of this world!

Your priorities are messed up.

Secular matters belong to secular people.

You are telling Me you want to follow Me, you want to follow Me into the kingdom of God, then forget the secular world and do what relates to the kingdom.

What is that?

Go and proclaim the kingdom of God.

What does that mean?

Go and preach the gospel.

Because proclaiming the kingdom of God is simply telling people how they can enter the kingdom of God.

This man is committed to personal riches. He is like the rich young ruler back in Matthew 19.

The rich young ruler said, "How do I receive eternal life?"

Jesus said, "before we talk about eternal life, let's talk about the law, let's talk about the Ten Commandments."

"Oh, I've kept the Ten Commandments. I am not a sinner."

That is a problem.

"Let us talk about submission and self-denial. Take everything you have. Sell it and give all the proceeds to the poor."

He went away. That is not what he was willing to do. There was no self-denial there. He would not deny his own self-righteousness and he would not deny his own possessions.

3. Relationship.

V 61, *And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house."*

I want to follow You.

I just want to go home.
Sounds kind of reasonable.

I will just go home and have a big farewell party.
Jesus is worth following.
I will just make a short trip home, be back in a week or so and I will have collected something from everybody for the journey.

Or it may have been that in his heart was this hold with the family that he could not let go of.

Matthew 10:34-39, *"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; ³⁶ and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' ³⁷ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸ And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹ He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.*

You must be willing to cut the cord with your family.
He was going to go back to a family who would never understand this, who would prey on him, who would ply him not to do this and dissuade him.

Luke 14:25-26, *Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, ²⁶ "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.*

You are back to that whole thing of self-hate. It does not mean that you loathe the people in your family, or you despise them with venom.

It simply means that your love for the kingdom of God is so great that you are really from the spiritual viewpoint indifferent to the compulsions and the pull and the interests of your family.

Jesus responds!

V 62, *But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."*

Jesus quotes a proverb that can be traced back to a writer named Hesiod in 800 B.C.

You cannot follow Me looking backwards.

You cannot have a divided heart.

You cannot be Mr. Facing Both Ways!

There are people who come all the way up to believing, all the way up and could be pushed to pray the prayer, make the decision, accept Christ, do whatever the moment called to do, but if you confronted them with the fact that the self-denial is so complete that it asks you to be willing to give up all your comfort, all your possessions if that's what the Lord asks, and all your relationships.

The one who is truly being prompted by the Spirit of God and brought into the kingdom is going to say, "Jesus Christ is so infinitely valuable to me that I don't care what the price is, I will gladly sell all for the pearl."

There was no way that he was fit for the kingdom of God because he was holding on to the kingdoms of this world.

The issue here is salvation, people.

The issue is coming into the kingdom.

If you have ever wondered what the issue here was, some people think it is sort of second-level discipleship.

It is about coming into the kingdom.

Jesus is simply saying to these people, "If you are holding back anything, you can't come in. Salvation is for those who have come to complete self-denial."

The Lord may not take away all your comfort.

He may not take away all your possessions.

He may not take away all your relationships.

But you are not negotiating. You are simply saying the infinite value of the gospel of Jesus Christ is so great that if He asks, I will give it all up. I will give it all up.