

Barriers to True Discipleship

Lu 9:57-62

57 And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain *man* said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. 58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head. 59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. 61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. 62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Introduction:

1. You probably have never heard of Stephanie Stephenson, and I doubt you will ever hear about her again. Stephanie was a freshman music major at Southwest Missouri State University. Her teacher encouraged her to audition for the Broadway production of Les Miserables, to give her some acting experience. She traveled to Branson, Missouri, where the auditions were being held, and tried out with one hundred other women.

A few weeks later, Stephanie was shocked to receive a telephone call from the director in New York, asking her to come for a second audition. The applicants had been narrowed down to five women, and she was one of the five.

Stephanie had always dreamed of performing on Broadway. She talked it over with her parents, who were deeply committed Christians, as was she. They agreed that she could make the trip.

Another few weeks passed, and Stephanie was even more stunned to receive word that she had landed a role in *Les Miserables*. Without stage experience, and with the promise that she would later join the Broadway cast, Stephanie was sent to the touring production troupe for a year on the road, to sharpen her skills and gain exposure.

When parts were assigned for the first performance, she was given the role of a prostitute wearing a tawdry costume. Her angst was apparent; she struggled and made every excuse imaginable to justify playing the part. Finally, she sought the director and asked if she could be given a different part, but instead of finding a sympathetic ear, she was rebuffed and told, "It's just acting, and if you can't separate your personal life from the role, you'll never make it in this business."

Stephanie then appealed to the producer, but was given virtually the same answer: "Get over it . . . it's just a part . . . it's not really you . . . don't throw this opportunity away."

Stephanie ceased to plead, left the troupe, and walked away from her dream of a future on Broadway. After the young actress was gone, the associate director and executive producer of *Les Miserable* talked to the Associated Press about her decision to leave, making this comment: "She's gorgeous and she's talented and she could have played the daylights out of the role, probably to great acclaim on Broadway. But I respect what she did. She is a brave young girl to forgo an amazing career."

Knowing the cost of following Christ and yet willing to make the sacrifice, Stephanie Stephenson turned her back on the stage—relinquishing a promising career, the smell of grease paint, the glare of footlights, the excitement of curtain calls, the thrill of applause - and that's why you've never heard of her . . . but God has.

2. Dear Christian - Jesus wants to be the Guide of your life. He wants you to give everything to Him. He wants you to follow Him. He wants you to put your future in His hands.
3. In our passage this morning we see three men and their responses to what Jesus was asking.
4. Let's look at these three men and consider the barriers to following Jesus

I. BARRIER OF PERSONAL COMFORT

57 And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain *man* said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. 58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.

- Matthew identified this man as a scribe - no doubt he had witnessed the miracles recorded in Matt 8:5-18
- Jesus and His disciples were on their way to Jerusalem where Jesus would be arrested and crucified.
- As they walked along this man walked up and said, "I want to follow you." He was sincere. He wanted to be a part of what Jesus was doing.
- Jesus had often invited others to follow Him but He had not said that to this man
- Do you have a desire to follow Jesus? Do you know what it means to follow Jesus?

A. *Follow Jesus Wherever*

57b... Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest

1. I think of what Ruth said to Naomi - Ruth 1:16

16 And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, *or* to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God:

2. This man was saying to Jesus, “I will go where You go, where You lodge I will lodge, Your people will be my people, and Your God will be my God.”
3. A believer can’t really say to the Lord, “I want to follow you,” until he or she is ready to say, “I will follow you wherever.”
4. Unfortunately some believers are like the person described in this poem.....

I’ll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,
Real service is what I desire.

I’ll say what you want me to say, dear Lord,
But please don’t ask me to sing in the choir.

I’ll say what you want me to say, dear Lord,
I like to see things come to pass,
But don’t ask me to teach girls and boys, dear Lord,
I’d rather just stay in my class.

I’ll do what you want me to do, dear Lord,
I long for the Kingdom to thrive.
I’ll give you my nickels and dimes, dear Lord,
But please, don’t ask me to tithe.

5. To follow Jesus is to put no restrictions on your following
6. Would you go anywhere Jesus asked you to go?

B. Follow Jesus Whatever

58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.

1. It sounds like Jesus was pouring cold water on this enthusiastic follower
 - a) *But what Jesus was doing was reminding this man of the costs of*

being a follower of the Lord.

b) Jesus was saying that serving God can require sacrifice

2. To serve the Lord means that we will serve Him wherever and whatever
3. This man was putting no restrictions on His following Jesus
4. Following Jesus may mean leaving family and friends, having to sell and leave your house, leaving a job or giving up a lucrative occupation or vocation.
5. Following Jesus means that you will follow Him wherever and whatever - no matter the cost.

Barrier of Personal Comfort ...

II. BARRIER OF PERSONAL RICHES

59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

- The first man put no restrictions on following Jesus but it was different with this second man
- He would follow Jesus under his own terms and in his own time
- He wanted to delay following Jesus till he buried his father
- It was every son's duty to make sure that his father was properly buried. Only the high priest and those who had taken a Nazarite vow were excused from their father's funeral since they were forbidden to go near a dead person

A. The Personal Call Jesus Shared - "follow me"

1. This man received a personal call from Jesus Himself to follow Him
2. Through God's Word, Jesus says to every believer, "Follow me"
3. The personal call of discipleship is not just for the pastor, Christian leaders, missionaries, SS teachers etc.

4. Jesus expects each believer to follow Him

B. The Prompt Commitment Jesus Sought

59b ... But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 60
Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach
the kingdom of God.

1. If his father died, and this man was following Jesus then he might miss out on his share of the inheritance
2. He was not willing to leave all and follow Jesus
3. It seemed that Jesus poured cold water on the first man when He spoke of the cost of discipleship
4. Here it seems that Jesus is being hard hearted.
 - a) *It sounds like Jesus said, "Let someone else bury your father, you need to go out and preach."*
 - b) *How cold and insensitive could Jesus be? This man is hurting because his father died and Jesus told him to forget his father's funeral.*
5. Now wait a minute
 - a) *This man was not saying that his father was dead and needed to be buried*
 - b) *This man was giving an excuse for delay and saying, "I will follow you someday after my father dies and I bury him."*
 - c) *Dr. George Smith was in the Middle East once and he wanted to hire an Arab sheik to be his guide. He went to the tent door and there sat the sheik and his elderly father. Dr. Smith asked the sheik to be his guide and the sheik said, "I need to stay here and bury my father."*
 - d) *Barbara Bowen in her book, "Strange Scriptures that Perplex the Western Mind," explained the statement saying that it was a common excuse in Palestine. She said that even today if you ask an*

*Arab to do something and he doesn't want to do it he might say,
"I'll do it after I bury my father."*

6. This man was saying, "Jesus, I'll follow you but not right now."
 - a) *I wonder how many young people have said, "I'll follow the Lord once I get out of college and get married and settle down."*
 - b) *I wonder how many people have said, "I know that I need to be saved, but not right now."*
7. When Jesus says, "Follow me!" He means right now.
8. Our response should be like the apostles who left their nets and boats and father and followed Jesus right then.

Barrier of Personal Comfort

Barrier of Personal Riches ...

III. BARRIER OF PERSONAL RELATIONS

61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. 62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

- I wonder if this guy was listening as Jesus spoke to the previous man
- "I will follow you, but first I must go home and say good-bye to everyone."

A. A Divided Heart

1. There was nothing wrong in saying good-bye to his family but Jesus sensed a divided heart in this man.
2. There was part of this man who wanted to follow Jesus and part of him wanted to hang on to the things of his life.
3. When it comes to following Jesus some believers are willing to give Jesus some things but not everything.
 - a) *James called these people "double-minded"*

Jas 4:8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*

- b) *“Double-minded” speaks of vacillating between two options*
 - c) *This person wants the best of both worlds.*
 - d) *He wants one foot in the world and one foot in the church*
4. Jesus was not saying that this man could never say good-bye to his family, but Jesus insisted that he give God 100%
 5. Jesus wants a devoted heart, not a divided heart.

B. A Distracted Heart

62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

1. Here is a man who is plowing and instead of keeping his eye on the furrow he is plowing he looks back at something that attracts his attention and he is distracted from his plowing.
2. He is only half at work and half-work will only be the result.
3. A divided heart always leads to a distracted heart
4. There will be times when a person begins to take the work of God seriously but if his heart is divided it won't be long before the other affections of his heart will pull that person down and away.
5. The young man lived on a farm in southwest Missouri. One day his dad told him to go cultivate the beans. That was the last thing he wanted to do. He wanted to sit in his room and listen to his stereo. To say that cultivating beans was not on his list of priorities would be to make a profound understatement. He went, but he went very reluctantly. He was so disgusted with his lot that he turned the tractor radio to full blast and quickly got into the beat more than into the job. When he got to the end of the field he looked back and noticed that he had plowed up eight rows of beans. His dad was not happy. Half-heartedness doesn't work well on the farm or in the Kingdom of God.

IV. THE CONSCIENTIOUS FOLLOWERS

A. *The Calling of James and John - Matt 4:18*

18 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. 20 And they straightway left *their* nets, and followed him. 21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. 22 And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

B. *The Calling of Matthew - Mt 9:9*

9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

Conclusion:

1. Many do not follow Christ because they put themselves first
 - a) Notice vs 59 the man said, *“Suffer me first...”*
 - b) The man in vs 61 said, *“Let me first...”*
 - c) No one does well in serving the Lord when he says *“me first”* to the Lord
 - d) See how hypocritical it is for one to say *“Lord”* and in the same sentence *“me first”*

61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.
2. For years Judson W. Van DeVenter studied art. He said, “My whole life was wrapped up in its pursuit and the furthest thing from my

mind was active Christian service. My dream was to become an outstanding and famous artist.” He went to art school and studied under a famous German art teacher.

But during a revival meeting in the church he attended God began to work on his heart. Van DeVenter began to take the things of God seriously and he was even licensed as a lay-preacher. God was working in his heart and calling him to full-time Christian service. He struggled with his desire to become an artist and his desire to serve the Lord. Finally he gave God everything and he surrendered to what God wanted. He wrote a poem later on....

All to Jesus I surrender, All to him I freely give
I will ever love and trust Him, In His presence daily live.

All to Jesus I surrender, Humbly at His feet I bow,
Worldly pleasures all forsaken, Take me, Jesus, take me now.

All to Jesus I surrender, Make me, Savior, wholly Thine,
Let me feel the Holy Spirit, Truly know that Thou art mine.

All to Jesus I surrender, Lord, I give myself to Thee,
Fill me with Thy love and power, Let thy blessing fall in me.