

The Great Cost of Discipleship



LUKE 9:57-62 TEXT, EXPOSITION AND PRACTICAL HELPS

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THE SON OF MAN'S GREAT JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM: HIS MISSION AND PUBLIC CHALLENGE, [Luke 9:51-13:21](#)

The Great Cost of Discipleship, [Luke 9:57-62](#)

[\(Luke 9:57-62\)](#) **Introduction:** some people desire to follow Christ; therefore, they attach themselves to Him and join the church. Yet they come ever so short and miss eternal life. **Why?** Because they never knew the price of discipleship. They were to pay a great price, but they knew nothing about it or else were unwilling to pay the price. **True discipleship costs everything a person is and has.**

1. **One must count the cost (v.57-58).**
2. **One must follow immediately (v.59-60).**
3. **One must not look back (v.61-62).**

1. [\(Luke 9:57-58\)](#) **Discipleship: one must count the cost.**

[Luke 9:57-58 \(NASB\)](#)

⁵⁷ As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, "I will follow You wherever You go."

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

A man offered to become a follower of Jesus, and he made an unusual promise: he would follow Jesus wherever He led. **Why?** For the same reasons so many are attracted to the Lord.

- a. He enjoyed the presence of the Lord and His followers.
- b. He was motivated by the Lord's wisdom and teaching.
- c. He appreciated the good the Lord did.

Jesus' reply was to the point. The man had to count the cost, for Jesus offered no luxury and no material comfort—only self-denial. The man had to deny himself and sacrifice all he was and had. Note several facts. (See below [Deeper Study # 1—Matthew 8:19-20](#) see page # 4 for more discussion.)

[Luke 9:58 \(NASB\)](#)

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

1. Jesus Himself was the prime example. He denied Himself completely. He sacrificed and gave all, both Himself and all He had. He did not even have a place to lay His head. The animals of the world did; the birds had their nests and the foxes had their holes, but Jesus had no place. He gave all to meet the needs of a dying and desperate world.

2. Jesus told the man to count the cost. A profession was not enough. Being *willing to follow* was not enough. The man must deny himself completely, sacrificing and giving all he was and had to meet the needs of a lost and desperate world (see below [Deeper Study # 2—Luke 9:23](#) see page # 7 for more discussion).

3. Jesus called Himself the Son of Man (see below [Deeper Study # 3—Luke 9:58](#) see page # 9 for more discussion). This pictures exactly who He was. The man was to follow Jesus, accepting Him as the Son of Man. He was to accept Jesus as the Ideal Servant of man, the Ideal Man who loved and cared and ministered and felt for all, and who did it perfectly.

Thought 1. Some persons are willing and determined to go to the ends of the earth. However Jesus said that He—the Son of Man, His pattern of life—must be accepted.

Many are committed, but their commitments are self-commitments, not Christ-centered commitments.

We must realize that self-commitments can arise from

- (1) strong wills,
- (2) strong determinations, and
- (3) strong discipline.

And the person can follow through in a great way. But self-commitment is not enough for Christ. There has to be a total commitment to the Son of Man, abandoning all of self and all of the world.

[Luke 9:23 \(NASB\)](#)

²³ And He was saying to *them* all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

[1 Peter 2:21 \(NASB\)](#)

²¹ For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

[Philippians 2:5-8 \(NASB\)](#)

⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.

⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

[2 Corinthians 4:11 \(NASB\)](#)

¹¹ For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

2 Corinthians 8:9 (NASB)

⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.

DEEPER STUDY # 1

([Matthew 8:19-20](#)) **Self-Denial— Discipleship**: the scholar was attracted to Jesus. Note that this man was a disciple, a follower of Jesus ([Matthew 8:21](#)). The scholar believed Jesus to be the most superior teacher he had ever seen. He himself was a teacher by profession, and he was enormously attracted to the teaching ability of Jesus.

1. The scholar yearned to follow Jesus. The depth of his desire was most unusual for there was constant conflict between Jesus and the scholar's professional peers.
 - a. Jesus opposed the legalistic traditions of the Scribes and other religionists, strongly opposed them. He said so in no uncertain terms, condemning them with such language that only God Himself would dare use (**cp. [Luke 11:37-54](#)**).
 - b. The Scribes opposed Jesus with deep hostility, even to the point of plotting to kill Him ([Luke 11:52-54](#); [John 7:1](#)).
2. The scholar proclaimed his willingness to go anyplace. **Note his words**: he said he *was willing* to go anyplace. This too is most unusual, for he worked in a quiet atmosphere where he could copy and teach the law. Being around Jesus, who was surrounded by multitudes of people including children, was anything but quiet.
3. Jesus demanded more: being willing to follow Jesus was not enough. Being willing to go to the ends of the earth was not enough.

Jesus said **three things** were essential for the man to become a disciple.

- a. The man had to accept Jesus as the Son of Man.
- b. The man had to know personal poverty.
- c. The man had to abandon all: for Christ and His mission—*all he was and had*.

Luke 9:23-24 (NASB)

²³ And He was saying to *them* all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

²⁴ For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.”

Luke 14:26-27 (NASB)

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.

²⁷ Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”

Romans 8:13 (NASB)

¹³ For if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Galatians 5:24 (NASB)

²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Thought 1. Some scholars, the intelligencia of the world—the teacher, the wealthy, the famous, the powerful—desire to follow Jesus; but they stumble at the demands that require *more*.

1) Some stumble over confessing Jesus to be *the Son of Man*. Every belief and doctrine that points to His deity is questioned and doubted or denied. They have difficulty doing what Jesus told this Scribe to do: follow Him as *the Son of Man*, as God's very own Son, begotten of Him ([John 3:16](#)). They suggest problems with the virgin birth, Incarnation, Godly power, miraculous works, death, resurrection, ascension, exaltation, and the spiritual and intercessory ministry of Jesus Christ. They are attracted to Him as the greatest of all teachers, but they are just unwilling to follow Him as *the Lord*, as God Himself incarnate in human flesh.

2) Some stumble over personal poverty. Giving and working ever so diligently in order to give more is foreign to them. Giving to the point that they would have to trust Christ for the necessities of life is unknown (cp. [Matthew 6:24-34](#)). They have allowed the world to influence them. They seek the material security and comfort of this world. They save, lay up, and insure. They ignore the fact that this world's wealth fluctuates up and down and is subject to collapse ever so quickly because of the unexpected. They excuse their hoarding with the interpretation that a person must be *willing* to give all he has, not really give it. They feel that it is the willingness to give that Jesus is really after. A person does not necessarily have to give it all. However this argument fails to see a critical point.

What Christ says to the scholar, He says to all:

"Being willing is not enough. You must give all. *Being willing is following and doing*. I have no luxuries, not even a place to lay my head. I have given all. You must give all if you wish to

follow me." (Cp. [Matthew 19:16-22](#).) Few of us are willing to pay this kind of price to follow Christ. Are you? Am I? Are we willing to give *all we are and have*?

3) Some stumble over total abandonment of themselves and their possessions.

Thought 2. Some are even willing and determined to go to the ends of the earth, but no matter, Jesus says.....

- a. we must accept Him as the Son of Man.
- b. we must adopt His pattern of life—give *all we are and have*.

Thought 3. The words of Jesus are a warning to us.

- 1) We must accept Him as "**the Son of Man**" in order to follow His pattern of life.
- 2) We must experience personal poverty and go beyond just the willingness to give all.
- 3) We must abandon all.

Thought 4. The words of the Scripture warn us.

1 Corinthians 1:20 (NASB)

²⁰ Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

1 Corinthians 1:26 (NASB)

²⁶ For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble.

Thought 5. Many are committed, but their commitments are *self-commitments* not Christ commitments. We must realize that self-commitments involve great willingness, determination, and discipline—so much that a person often follows through in a great way. But self-commitment is not enough for Christ. There has to be a total commitment *to the Son of Man*, abandoning all of self and all of the world for Him and His cause.

Thought 6. Some go across the street, across town, across the country, and some across the ocean to minister to the world; but commitment to the Son of Man and His pattern of life is demanded.

Thought 7. Note that the extremities to which the Son of God subjected Himself are pointed out in this passage. He did not even have a place to lay His head.

2 Corinthians 8:9 (NASB)

⁹ **For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.**

Thought 8. The pattern of Jesus' life teaches us the vanity and emptiness of material possessions and worldly wealth ([1 John 2:15-16](#); cp. [Romans 12:1-2](#)).

Thought 9. We should count the cost before making a commitment ([Luke 14:28-30](#)) We should make the right choice.

DEEPER STUDY # 2

(Luke 9:23) Cross— Discipleship: people in Jesus' day knew what it meant to "**take up**" a cross. They saw scores of criminals bearing the cross to the place where they were to be executed, and they witnessed scores of crucifixions, some even by the side of the roads that led in and out of the cities.

The cross does not mean merely bearing one's particular hardship in life, such as poor health, abuse, unemployment, invalid parents, an unsaved spouse, a wayward child. The cross is always an instrument of death, not just an object to carry or bear. The Christian is to die mentally and actively. He is to deny himself daily. He is to let the mind of Christ, the mind of humbling himself to the point of death, be in him and fill his thoughts every day ([Phil. 2:5-8](#); [2 Cor. 10:3-5](#)). He is to put his will, his desires, his wants, his ambitions to death. In their stead, he is to follow Jesus and to do His will all day long. Note this is not negative, passive behavior. It takes positive, active behavior to **will**, to **deny self**, to **take up one's cross**, to **follow Christ**. A person has to act, work, get to it, be diligent, consistent, and enduring in order to die to self.

There are several ways the believer dies to self. [Romans 6:11-13](#) spells out the ways as clearly as they can be.

Romans 6:11-13 (NASB) (cp. [Romans 6:2-10](#)).

¹¹ **Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.**

¹² **Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,**

¹³ **and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.**

1. The believer reckons or counts himself crucified with Christ.

Romans 6:11 (NASB)

¹¹ Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 6:6 (NASB)

⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;

Galatians 2:20 (NASB)

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Galatians 5:24 (NASB)

²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

2. The believer reckons or counts himself dead to sin, but alive to God.

Romans 6:11 (NASB)

¹¹ Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

1 Peter 4:2 (NASB)

² so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

3. The believer does not let sin reign in his body.

Romans 6:12 (NASB)

¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,

Colossians 3:5 (NASB)

⁵ Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

4. The believer does not yield his bodily members as instruments of sin.

Romans 6:13a (NASB)

¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness;

Romans 8:13 (NASB)

¹³ for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

5. The believer yields himself to God—as much as those who are alive from the dead are yielded to God.

Romans 6:13b (NASB)

¹³ **but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead,**

Romans 12:1 (NASB)

¹ **Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship.***

Romans 13:14 (NASB)

¹⁴ **But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts.**

6. The believer yields his bodily members as instruments of righteousness.

Romans 6:13c (NASB)

¹³ **and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God.**

Galatians 5:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ **But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.**

It should be noted that one's hardship or burden can bring a person to the place where the Lord can deal with him. It is then that the hardship becomes the cross and denial of self that Jesus is talking about. With an act of self-denial, the Christian can then reckon himself alive to God (**Romans 6:13**). He can then follow Jesus. This is an act which can be described as committing all that one is and has to Christ. It is an act that needs to be repeated every day (**cp. Matthew 10:38**).

DEEPER STUDY # 3

(Luke 9:58) Son of Man: Jesus was not only what an ordinary man is, a son of man; but Jesus was what every man ought to be, the Son of Man Himself. As such, He has become the *Ideal Man*, the *Representative Man*, the *Perfect Man*, the *Pattern*, the *Embodiment* of everything a man ought to be. Jesus Christ is the *perfect picture* of a man. Everything God wants a man to be is seen perfectly in Jesus Christ (**cp. John 1:14; Col. 2:9-10; Hebrews 1:3**). The title also means the *Ideal Servant* of man. It stresses His sympathy for the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives, the blind, the bruised, the outcasts, the bereaved (**cp. Luke 4:18**). Jesus is the pattern, the model, the perfect example of concern and caring. He served just like every man ought to serve others.

Jesus called Himself "**the Son of Man**" about eighty times. It was His favorite term. The title *Son of Man* is probably based upon the Son of Man of [Daniel 7:13-14](#). There is a picture of Jesus as the heavenly Son of Man contrasted with Adam as the earthly Man in [1 Cor. 15:45-47](#). Each served as a Representative Man in God's plan for world history.

2. (Luke 9:59-60) Discipleship— Decision— Call: one must follow Jesus immediately.

Luke 9:58-60 (NASB)

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

⁵⁹ **And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father."**

⁶⁰ **But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God."**

Note three things.

1. It was Jesus who invited the man to follow Him. There was something very special within the man that caught Jesus' eye, and Jesus was moved to call him. In fact, the *specialness* within the man was of such quality that Jesus stayed after the man even after the man hesitated. The man was of too much value to let go, so Jesus pleaded and argued and even commanded, "**Go thou and preach.**"

Thought 1. Note two important points.

- 1) Every person is of extreme value to Jesus. Therefore, the Spirit stays after a man as long as the man allows Him, despite man's selfishness.
 - 2) Every person who is called by Christ to "**preach**" must take heed and respond immediately. The Lord's call is to be the primary thrust of a person's life.
2. The man had divided attention. The call of God came to this man, yet he hesitated (see below [Deeper Study # 4—Matthew 8:21](#) see page # 14 for more discussion).

Note two facts.

- a. The man's hesitation was legitimate. Caring for parents is essential. His father was either already dead or on the verge of death. He was legitimately needed at home.
- b. The man's problem was *divided attention*. When he felt God's call, he looked at his situation and did not yield immediately. What happened so often happens. His circumstances and problems overwhelmed him, so he wanted to wait and handle them. As soon as the problems were handled, he would leave and follow Jesus.

Luke 14:26-27 (NASB)

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.

²⁷ Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

Mark 10:28-30 (NASB)

²⁸ Peter began to say to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You."

²⁹ Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake,

³⁰ but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.

2 Timothy 2:2-4 (NASB)

² The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

³ Suffer hardship with *me*, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

⁴ No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

2 Timothy 2:24-26 (NASB)

²⁴ The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged,

²⁵ with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,

²⁶ and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

2 Timothy 4:5 (NASB)

⁵ But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

3. Jesus demanded that the man act now and not wait. Jesus saw through the man's partial commitment. He saw through the man's lack of trust in God. Jesus expects us to take care of our parents ([1 Tim. 5:3-8](#)), but He demands first loyalty and immediate response.

1 Timothy 5:3-8 (NASB)

³ Honor widows who are widows indeed;

⁴ but if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God.

⁵ Now she who is a widow indeed and who has been left alone, has

fixed her hope on God and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day.

⁶ But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives.

⁷ Prescribe these things as well, so that they may be above reproach.

⁸ But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

He demands two things in particular.

- a. A sense of urgency. Imagine! Jesus refused to give the man time to bury the dead. Why? Because the need is so great, and men are dying every hour without Christ. Nothing can be done for the dead (his father), but the living can be reached and snatched out of the grip of death and saved unto eternal life. If we hesitate, for whatever reason, some will die and be doomed that we might have reached. The point is forceful: the hour is urgent.

Mark 1:17-18 (NASB)

¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men."

¹⁸ Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

John 4:34 (NASB)

³⁴ Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.

John 9:4 (NASB)

⁴ We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work.

Romans 13:11-12 (NASB)

¹¹ *Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.*

¹² The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

1 Corinthians 7:29 (NASB)

²⁹ But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none;

Ephesians 5:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

Colossians 4:5 (NASB)

⁵ Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.

2 Timothy 1:6 (NASB)

⁶ For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

2 Peter 1:13 (NASB)

¹³ I consider it right, as long as I am in this *earthly* dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder,

Revelation 3:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.

Psalms 90:12 (NASB)

¹² So teach us to number our days, That we may present to You a heart of wisdom.

Ecclesiastes 12:1 (NASB)

¹ Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, "I have no delight in them"

- b. Go and preach the Kingdom of God. Note that Christ tells His messengers what to preach, yet how little the real message of God's kingdom is preached (see below [Deeper Study # 5—Matthew 19:23-24](#) see page # 15 for more discussion).

Acts 4:20 (NASB)

²⁰ for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.

Acts 18:5 (NASB)

⁵ But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul *began* devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

1 Corinthians 9:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.

2 Timothy 4:2 (NASB)

² preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

Jeremiah 20:9 (NASB)

⁹ But if I say, "I will not remember Him Or speak anymore in His name," Then [his word] in my heart it becomes like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; And I am weary of holding *it* in, And I cannot endure *it*.

Amos 3:8 (NASB)

⁸ A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can but prophesy?

DEEPER STUDY # 4

([Matthew 8:21-22](#)) Discipleship— Self-Denial: the average disciple was attracted to Jesus. The call of God came to this man, yet he hesitated.

Note three facts.

1. His hesitation was legitimate. Caring for parents is essential. His father was either already dead or on the verge of death. He was legitimately needed.

2. His problem was divided attention. When he felt God's call, he looked at his situation and did not yield immediately. What happened is what so often happens. The man's circumstances and problems overwhelmed him. He wanted to wait and to handle them. Then as soon as the problems were handled, he would go and follow Jesus.

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple" ([Luke 14:26-27](#)).

"Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time" ([Mark 10:28-30](#)).

"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" ([2 Tim. 2:2-4](#); cp. [2 Tim. 2:24-26](#)).

"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" ([2 Tim. 4:5](#)).

3. Jesus demanded more. He saw through the man's partial commitment. He saw his lack of trust in God. Christ expects us to care for our parents ([1 Tim. 5:3-8](#)); but He demands an immediate response, an immediate loyalty, that we put Him first and follow Him with a sense of urgency.

"Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" ([John 4:34](#)).

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand" ([Romans 13:11-12](#)).

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short" ([1 Cor. 7:29](#)).

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" ([Ephes. 5:16](#)).

"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time" ([Col. 4:5](#)).

"Stir up the gift of God which is in thee" ([2 Tim. 1:6](#)).

Thought 1. Some reject and subdue the call, using their parents as the excuse. These are warned and the words to them are serious: they are "not worthy of me," Christ says ([Matthew 10:37-39](#)).

Thought 2. All excuses are inadequate. God knows what He is doing when he calls a person. What He wants is trust, total trust. Think about it: there is no better time to call a person than when he faces some unusual trial or circumstance. What better time for a person to demonstrate and to be taught complete trust?

Thought 3. Note two critical matters.

1) A called person can use anything as an excuse to delay God's call. That is the point of recording this disciple's experience. His excuse was the most legitimate excuse possible: to care for his family. All other excuses carry less weight.

2) A called person is to let the world take care of worldly matters ([2 Tim. 2:4](#)). He is to follow Christ immediately with a great sense of urgency.

DEEPER STUDY # 5

Matthew 19:23-24 (NASB)

²³ **And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.**

²⁴ **"Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."**

([Matthew 19:23-24](#)) Kingdom of Heaven: the Kingdom of Heaven evidently means the same thing as the Kingdom of God, eternal life, and salvation. The Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God are interchanged when Jesus says, **"a rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" ([Matthew 19:23](#))** or **"Kingdom of God" ([Matthew 19:24](#))**. Eternal life ([Matthew 19:26](#)) and salvation ([Matthew 19:25](#)) belong to the very same concept. Eternity and salvation, the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven, is the very subject being discussed in [Matthew 19:16-30](#). Having eternal

life, being saved or entering into the Kingdom of God or of Heaven is more difficult for a rich man than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.

The Kingdom of Heaven and of God is revealed in **four different stages** throughout history.

1. There is the spiritual kingdom that is at hand; it is present right now ([Matthew 4:17](#); [Matthew 12:28](#)).
- a. The present kingdom refers to God's rule and reign and authority in the lives of believers.

Ephesians 1:18-23 (NASB)

¹⁸ *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,
¹⁹ and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might
²⁰ which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*,
²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.
²² And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,
²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Philippians 2:5-11 (NASB)

⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.
⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
⁹ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,
¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Colossians 1:13 (NASB)

¹³ For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,

- b. The present kingdom is offered to the world and to men in the person of Jesus Christ.
- c. The present kingdom must be received as a little child.

Mark 10:14-15 (NASB)

¹⁴ But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, "Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

¹⁵ "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*."

- d. The present kingdom is experienced only by the new birth.

John 3:3 (NASB)

³ Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- e. The present kingdom is entered now and must be received now.

Matthew 21:31 (NASB)

³¹ "Which of the two did the will of his father?" They *said, "The first." Jesus *said to them, "Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you.

Mark 10:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*."

- f. The present kingdom is a spiritual, life-changing blessing.

Romans 14:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

- g. The present kingdom is to be the first thing sought by believers.

Matthew 6:33 (NASB)

³³ But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

2. There is the professing kingdom that is also in this present age. It refers to modern day Christianity in every generation. It pictures what the Kingdom of Heaven or professing Christianity is like, and what professing Christianity will be like between Christ's first coming and His return. This imperfect state is what is called "**the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**" ([Matthew 13:1-52](#), esp. [Matthew 13:11](#)).

Matthew 13:24-25 (NASB)

²⁴ Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

²⁵ "But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away.

3. There is the millennial kingdom that is future. It is the actual rule of Christ or the government of Christ that is to come to this earth for a thousand years.

a. The millennial kingdom is the kingdom predicted by Daniel.

Daniel 2:44 (NASB)

⁴⁴ In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and *that* kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.

Daniel 7:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.'

Daniel 7:22 (NASB)

²² until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.

Daniel 7:27 (NASB)

²⁷ Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of *all* the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom *will be* an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.'

b. The millennial kingdom is the kingdom promised to David.

2 Samuel 7:12 (NASB)

¹² "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom.

2 Samuel 7:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever."

Psalm 89:3-4 (NASB)

³ "I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant,

⁴ I will establish your seed forever And build up your throne to all generations." Selah.

Zechariah 12:8 (NASB)

⁸ In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David *will be* like God, like the angel of the LORD before them.

c. The millennial kingdom is the kingdom pictured by John.

Revelation 20:4-6 (NASB)

⁴ Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I *saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.

⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

4. There is the perfect kingdom of the new heaven and earth that is future.

a. The eternal kingdom is the rule and reign of God in a perfect universe for all eternity.

John 14:1-3 (NASB)

¹ "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.

² "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

³ "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also.

1 Corinthians 15:24 (NASB)

²⁴ then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

2 Peter 3:10-13 (NASB)

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!

¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

Revelation 21:1 (NASB)

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea.

- b. The eternal kingdom is the perfect state of being for the believer in the future.

1 Corinthians 15:50 (NASB)

⁵⁰ Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Revelation 21:4-5 (NASB)

⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He *said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

- c. The eternal kingdom is an actual place into which believers are to enter sometime in the future.

Matthew 8:11 (NASB)

¹¹ I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline *at the table* with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

- d. The eternal kingdom is a gift of God that will be given in the future.

Luke 12:32 (NASB)

³² **Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.**

3. (Luke 9:61-62) Decision— Discipleship: one must not look back.

Luke 9:61-62 (NASB)

⁶¹ **Another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home."**

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

Note three things.

1. This man offered himself to Jesus. He was *willing* to follow Jesus. Something about the Lord touched his heart or else the Lord's teaching and ministry appealed to him. He saw the enormous benefit to men and to society as Christ ministered to the needs of men. In either case, he made a decision to follow Jesus. He was *willing*.

2. The man had a *double allegiance*. **Note the words "but" and "first."** The man had thought through his decision and concluded that he was willing to follow Christ, *but* something else needed to be handled *first*: a family affair, a business affair, an employment affair, a financial affair—some other concern was put first (as is the case with so many).

Something else could have been concerning the man. He may have wanted his family's counsel and advice, to see how they felt about his decision. Perhaps he felt their approval was needed. Then again, he could have been putting his love for family before his love for Christ. Perhaps he was attached to his family more than he was attached to Christ. Family should be our *first* attachment *after* our attachment to Christ. Christ is to be first in our lives.

Matthew 6:33 (NASB)

³³ **"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."**

Matthew 12:30 (NASB)

³⁰ **"He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters."**

Matthew 25:34-36 (NASB)

³⁴ **"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.**

³⁵ **For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty,**

and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in;

³⁶ naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me."

[Luke 10:36-37 \(NASB\)](#)

³⁶ "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' *hands*?"

³⁷ And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."

[Luke 14:33 \(NASB\)](#)

³³ "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions."

[Luke 16:13 \(NASB\)](#)

¹³ "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

[John 21:15-17 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁵ "So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs."

¹⁶ He said to him again a second time, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?" He *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep."

¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep."

[Philippians 3:8 \(NASB\)](#)

⁸ "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ."

[1 Peter 5:2 \(NASB\)](#)

² "Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness."

[Deuteronomy 10:12 \(NASB\)](#)

¹² "Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul."

[Joshua 24:14 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁴ "Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD."

1 Samuel 15:22 (NASB)

²² Samuel said, “Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *And* to heed than the fat of rams.”

1 Kings 18:21 (NASB)

²¹ “Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long *will* you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people did not answer him a word.”

1 Chronicles 28:9 (NASB)

⁹ “As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever.”

Psalms 2:11 (NASB)

¹¹ Worship [serve] the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling.

Jeremiah 7:2 (NASB)

² “Stand in the gate of the LORD’S house and proclaim there this word and say, ‘Hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah, who enter by these gates to worship the LORD!’”

Ezekiel 3:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ “Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me.”

3. Jesus' judgment was descriptively stated—stated in such a way that once heard or read it would be difficult to forget: “**No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.**” The man got the point, and he probably never forgot it. It more than likely pricked his conscience and disturbed him often as the saying flashed across his mind. He had willed to follow Christ, but he “**had looked back**”; therefore, he was not fit for the Kingdom of God.

The idea is this. A man who begins to plough and then looks back.....

- a. **ploughs a crooked row.** No row (person) is ever straight, not like it should be. (Each row or person receives only partial teaching.)
- b. **ploughs an inconsistent field.** The field under his care is never matured; it never receives consistent work.
- c. **ploughs in a spirit lacking total commitment.** He may turn away at any time, leaving a job unfinished.
- d. **ploughs but allows distractions and disruptions** which affect the crops (the plants are not cared for).

Matthew 7:21 (NASB)

²¹ “Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter.*”

Matthew 7:26-27 (NASB)

²⁶ “Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

²⁷ “The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.”

Matthew 19:21-23 (NASB)

²¹ Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be complete, go *and* sell your possessions and give to *the* poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

²² But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.

²³ And Jesus said to His disciples, “Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Luke 12:47 (NASB)

⁴⁷ “And that slave who knew his master’s will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes.”

John 6:63-70 (NASB)

⁶³ “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

⁶⁴ But there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.

⁶⁵ And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.”

⁶⁶ As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.

⁶⁷ So Jesus said to the twelve, “You do not want to go away also, do you?”

⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.

⁶⁹ We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.

⁷⁰ Jesus answered them, “Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?”

Romans 14:12 (NASB)

¹² So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

Galatians 1:6-7 (NASB)

⁶ “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

⁷ which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.”

Galatians 4:9 (NASB)

⁹ But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?

Hebrews 10:38 (NASB)

³⁸ BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.

Hebrews 12:3 (NASB)

³ For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

James 1:8 (NASB)

⁸ *Being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

James 4:8 (NASB)

⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

James 4:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

2 Peter 2:20 (NASB)

²⁰ For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

2 Peter 3:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness.

1 John 2:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

Revelation 2:4-5 (NASB)

⁴ But I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.

⁵ Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.

Jeremiah 48:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ “Cursed be the one who does the LORD'S work negligently, And cursed be the one who restrains his sword from blood.”