

**Matthew 8:19-22; Luke 9:57-62**

*NIV Harmony 127-28; Loyal 78-79; Compassionate 128-30*

**Introduction**

1. The fable of the Chicken and the Pig is used to illustrate the different levels of commitment.
2. A pig and a chicken were walking down the road. The chicken said: "Pig, I think that we should open a restaurant!" The pig replied: "Maybe. What would we serve at our restaurant?" The chicken responded. "How about ham and eggs?" The pig thought for a moment and said: "No thanks. I'd be fully committed, but you'd only be partially involved."
3. Luke recorded the call of Jesus to three men to be fully committed to follow Him as disciples.
  - a. Matthew recorded only the first two of these encounters with nearly identical words as those in Luke.
  - b. We will read Luke's fuller account and supplement with Matthew's insights.
4. In context, remember that Jesus was fully committed to His mission of going to the cross to win the victory over sin, death, and hell.
  - a. "As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem" (Lk 9:51)
  - b. So, it is not surprising that He demanded full commitment from those who followed Him as disciples.
5. **Read Luke 9:57-62.**

**A. The First Man (57-58)**

1. Luke began, "As they were walking along the road..." (57).
  - a. Jesus and His disciples were on their way to Jerusalem together for the last time.
  - b. Jesus was fully committed to go to the cross to complete His earthly mission and inaugurate the Kingdom of God on earth.
2. Matthew added a detail omitted by Luke when he stated that this first man was "a teacher of the law" (Gk., *grammateus*). (Mt 8:19)
3. This teacher of the law made his statement unbidden by Jesus. Perhaps his heart was responding to the teaching and ministry of Jesus.
4. He was attracted to Jesus and His ministry but hadn't fully counted the cost of following Jesus.
5. Jesus knew this man was not ready to give up everything in his life to follow and said, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." (58)
  - a. Jesus would not let anything hold Him back from His commitment to go to Jerusalem and the cross. He demanded this same level of commitment from those who would follow Him.
  - b. So important was their priority in ministry that Jesus and His disciples had no time for the cares of this world.
  - c. Remember that Jesus had willingly given up the glory of heaven to come to earth.
  - d. Material things were not a priority. Proclaiming the good news in both word and deed was the top priority for Jesus and His disciples.
6. Charles Erdman notes, "The first of the three men with whom Jesus spoke was being swept along by his emotions, by the sight of the crowd which was following the Master, and by the thought that it would be a great privilege to be in such company. He had not for a moment realized that it might involve sacrifice and pain to become a disciple of the Master....the Master realized the thoughtlessness and rashness which were prompting this professed follower,...but among his followers there is no place for rashness. He would have us count the cost" (Charles Erdman, *Gospel of Luke*, 104-105).
7. Warren Wiersbe concludes about this first man, "The first man was a scribe (Matt. 8:19) who volunteered to go until he heard the cost: He had to deny himself. Apparently he was accustomed to a comfortable home" (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Compassionate*, 128).
8. Remember Jesus' command to His disciples: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." (Mk 8:34b).

## B. The Second Man (59-60)

1. Luke stated that Jesus said to a second man, “Follow me.” (59a)
  - a. This man was called directly by the Lord Himself into relationship.
  - b. According to Mt 8:21, this man was already a “disciple,” (Gk., *matheton*), but Jesus called him to make the full commitment to follow wholeheartedly and without reservation.
2. Matthew did not record the call of Jesus to this man but recorded the same response from him as did Luke: ““Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”” (59b)
3. Jesus responded, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”
  - a. This response from Jesus at first blush may seem rather harsh.
  - b. Erdman writes, “It is evident that Jesus had looked into the heart of this man and saw that he was making a selfish excuse out of a sacred duty. If his reply was sincere, it none the less merited a reproof, for a more sacred duty than caring for the dead was laid upon him by the invitation of the living Christ. No tie, however tender, can be regarded as a sufficient excuse for refusing to become a follower of Christ....Prompt obedience was absolutely necessary....he could begin to proclaim the gospel of salvation and of life” (Erdman, 105).
  - c. While there is no direct hint of this possibility in the text, G Campbell Morgan adds a possible insight that this man’s “...father was not dead, but he was expressing devotion to his father; saying that he could not possibly go away as long as his father was alive. That is what this man said to Jesus. He meant, I want to come, I would like to come, but I have home ties and responsibilities that hold me. I cannot come while my father is living. I will have to stay until he has passed over, and then I will make the great adventure” (G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 133).
  - d. Craig Blomberg insightfully points out, “This saying contains a play on the word dead. ‘Let the [spiritually] dead bury their own [physically] dead.’ In this pun the spiritually dead are those who do not follow Jesus” (Craig Blomberg, *Luke* in NAC, 301).
4. In January 1992, I took a weeklong New Testament intensive course in the Book of Galatians with Dr. Jack MacGorman at SWBTS. At the beginning of our first class, he announced that his father had just passed away that day. He went on to say that his father was a minister and was now with the Lord. He knew that his father would want him to stay and equip us as ministers rather than leave immediately. So, he stayed for three days teaching us before leaving in time to be with his family at his father’s funeral. Friends, that was an example of being fully committed that I will never forget. He went to be with his family, but he made his ministry of teaching for the Lord his first priority.
5. Wiersbe concludes about this man, “The second man was called by Jesus (what an honor!), but he was rejected because he would not take up the cross and die to self. He was worried about somebody else’s funeral when he should have been planning his own! Jesus is not suggesting here that we dishonor our parents, but only that we not permit our love for family to weaken our love for the Lord. We should love Christ so much that our love for family would look like hatred in comparison (Luke 14:26)” (Wiersbe, 128).
6. Jesus later in Luke’s gospel gave a similar hard saying about the sacrifice required in following Him wholeheartedly: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.” (Lk 14:26).

## C. The Third Man (61-62)

1. Matthew did not record this third encounter. Only Luke provides us with this third example.
2. Like the teacher of the law, this man made his declaration to Jesus unbidden. He wanted to serve the Lord but wanted to delay his service until a more convenient time.
3. He made his affirmation to follow Jesus with a caveat: “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.”
4. Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”
  - a. Looking back refers to losing our kingdom focus by looking back to the material things and relationships left behind in order to follow God wholeheartedly.
  - b. When I was growing up, we planted a garden each year. We set the rows using an old hand plow. Dad taught me to pick something at the end of the row to focus on when plowing the row. That way the row would be straight. Don’t take your eye off of the goal or your row will be crooked.

- c. This is a skill that I still apply when mowing the first round of my lawn. Keep your eyes ahead on the goal and you will mow a straight line.
  - d. We must keep our eyes on the goal of the kingdom, proclaiming the gospel in word and deed every day so that we remain focused and productive in following Jesus. He never leads us astray.
5. In following Jesus there can be no “but first.” If we are following Jesus, He always comes first. Our eyes must always be on Jesus who calls us forward in service with Him.
  6. Erdman notes, “In the case of the third possible disciple, there was no carelessness; he had counted the cost; it was not his intention to make any excuse; he was sincere and definite in his intention, but he wished to delay....Such hesitation indicates that one has not appreciated the glory and privilege in the call of Christ or that he still weighs against it the sacrifices it involves. He is self-condemned. There is no place for indecision among those who are to be heirs of the Kingdom of God” (Erdman, 105-106).
  7. Wiersbe concludes concerning this third man, “The third man also volunteered, but he could not follow Christ because he was looking back instead of ahead. There is nothing wrong with a loving farewell (1 Kings 19:19-21) {When Elijah called Elisha as his disciple, Elisha asked to go back and say farewell to his family. Elijah allowed him to do so, but Jesus called His disciples to radical, wholehearted commitment in following Him.}, but if it gets in the way of obedience, it becomes sin. Jesus saw that this man’s heart was not wholly with Him, but that he would be plowing and looking back (see Gen. 19:17, 26; Phil. 3:13-14)” (Wiersbe, 128. Braces {} mine).
  8. Wiersbe summarizes concerning these three men, “Three men could have become disciples, but they would not meet the conditions that Jesus laid down....They lacked power, love, and discipline, and they grieved His heart. If we today lack these spiritual essentials, we can never truly be His disciples, but they are available to us from the Lord, ‘For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline’ (2 Tim. 1:7 NIV)” (Wiersbe, 128).
  9. Craig Blomberg notes, “...discipleship requires a radical shift in priorities. Jesus must be ‘first.’ He will not accept second place to anyone or anything. Even a good thing...cannot usurp the place of the best thing, which is to love Jesus with all one’s heart, strength, and mind” (Blomberg, 302).
  10. Finally, Morgan insightfully notes, “Observe carefully that everything that our Lord demanded here, He was Himself already doing. In the demands He made upon these three men, we have an interpretation of his face set to Jerusalem...Take the first verse of this paragraph {9:51}, and take the last {9:62}. Put them together. ‘He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.’ ‘No man...looking back, is fit for the Kingdom.’ He was not looking back. He never looked back. He set His face to go until He came to hostility, to doom, to death; and through all to the trail that makes the Kingdom sure” (Morgan, 133-34. Braces {} mine.).

#### **D. Reflections**

1. Have we fully counted the cost of truly following Jesus wholeheartedly?
2. Do the material or relational concerns of life hinder your ministry? What worldly needs and concerns do you need to give up to fully follow Jesus?
3. We can always find an excuse not to follow Jesus in what He calls us to do with Him.
4. As we follow Christ, are we a joy to Him or do we break His heart with our flawed priorities?
5. We must make following Jesus the top priority in our lives. Christ First!