

## Introduction

As a young golfer who wanted to become a professional golfer, I quickly learned that mastering the fundamentals was vitally important to improving my game, and to maintaining my game. Jack Nicklaus, who is regarded as the greatest golfer of all time, because he has won more major tournaments than any other golfer, put it this way. Golf is 90% set-up. The set-up was about fundamentals. The set-up included grip, posture, ball position, and alignment.

I spoke with my oldest son this week. He is currently having a rough time with his Driver. In golf, if you miss the fairways, you have to play defensively, and it is very difficult to score. In addition to poor lies, poor angles, difficulty in controlling the distance and spin of shots, there are often penalty strokes for hitting it in a water hazard or out of bounds. On the other hand, a good drive puts a golfer in position to hit the green, and have an opportunity to make a birdie.

What advice did I give my son? I told him to check his set up. I reviewed some of the important points to check in his set-up with a Driver. The set-up is different with different clubs, and so I reviewed some of those differences and what he needed to look at. Fundamentals are extremely important in golf and every other sport. They are also important in every area of our life.

There are fundamentals in our Christian walk. We must spend time in God's word. We must spend time in prayer. We must spend time in worship. We must spend time fellowshiping with others. We must exercise our gifts and serve. In the Navigators, they used to have a Disciple's Wheel. The Wheel was a very simple way of keeping the fundamentals before us at all times. We need reminders in our life. I try to give regular reminders of the fundamentals in my messages. It is my opinion that we can never stop emphasizing the fundamentals. We may teach on some deeper things, but we must never stop teaching and practicing the fundamentals.

There are fundamentals in relationships. In the upcoming Men's Conference, we will be looking at some fundamentals of healthy relationships. In my session, I will be talking about good communication. Without good communication, we will not succeed in a marriage, family, church, or business. It is a fundamental. Perry Floyd will be talking about conflict resolution. We will offend one another; that is a given. In order to walk together, we must learn how to resolve our differences. We must learn how to quickly forgive others, and we must learn to humble ourselves and ask for forgiveness. The conference will deal with fundamentals of healthy relationships. I encourage all the men to set aside August 1-2 and sign up for the Men's Conference.

Vince Lombardi, who is regarded as one of the greatest football coaches ever, continually focused on fundamentals. At the beginning of training camp every year, he would stand in front of his team and say, "Gentlemen, this is a football." He believed that you win football championships with good fundamentals. They worked hard on blocking, tackling, and the other fundamentals of football.

Our message today is about good fundamentals. We will be covering Luke 9:46-62. There are three paragraphs and it may look like they do not relate to one another, but they do. They are all fundamentals of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. First, Luke shares with us about the proper posture of a disciple. Second, he shares about the proper purpose of a disciple. Third, he shares about the proper priority of a disciple. Disciples need the right posture, purpose and priority in their lives.

Are these the only fundamentals for disciples? No, **there are some other key fundamentals for being a disciple.** For example, Jesus said that we are to love one another, as He loved us, and that by this all men would know that we are His disciples, if we have love for one another. **Love is a fundamental for disciples.** It is our most important fundamental, but it is not the only fundamental.

(John 13:34-35) "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. {35} "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Another fundamental for disciples is to abide in God's word. Jesus said in John 8 that if we continue or abide in His word, we are truly disciples of His. He said that we will know the truth, and the truth shall make us free. **Abiding in God's word is a fundamental.** We have to read it, study it, meditate on it, and apply it in our lives. We have to know the truth. It is a fundamental of being a disciple.

(John 8:31-32) "So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; {32} and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

But, we are focusing on our text today, and in this passage we are given three fundamentals of being a disciple. We are to have the right posture, the right purpose, and the right priority. Let's read our text for today.

(Luke 9:46-48) "An argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest. {47} But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side, {48} and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great."

(Luke 9:49-56) "John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us." {50} But Jesus said to him, "Do not hinder him; for he who is not against you is for you." {51} When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem; {52} and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him. {53} But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem. {54} When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" {55} But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; {56} for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." And they went on to another village.

(Luke 9:57-62) "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." {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." {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."

### Three Fundamentals for a Disciple

1. A Disciple must have the right Posture. (Luke 9:46-48)
2. A Disciple must have the right Purpose. (Luke 9:49-56)
3. A Disciple must have the right Priority. (Luke 9:57-62)

#### 1. A Disciple must have the right Posture. (Luke 9:46-48)

The passage begins with the disciples arguing about which of them was the greatest. This group of fishermen were competitive. They probably kept track of who caught the most fish, the biggest fish, etc. They were driven to be first. As a former professional athlete, I understand competitive drive. When I played games with my children, Karen would encourage me to let them win. I couldn't do that. They had to earn a win. It was a struggle to not play hard, and to intentionally play poorly to let someone else win. I understand this group of men and their desire to be the greatest.

(Luke 9:46) "An argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest."

Luke records that Jesus knew what they were thinking in their heart. He knew what the argument was about. He knew the root cause of it, pride. He also knew the solution, humility. He took a child and placed him at His side. This was a picture they would not forget. They needed to become like a child.

(Luke 9:47) "But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side, {48} and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great."

We find in Matthew's account that He told them to be converted and become like children, or they would not enter the kingdom of heaven. Then, He said that whoever "humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

(Matt 18:2-5) "And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, {3} and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. {4} "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. {5} "And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me;"

What is it about children that we must learn? They are humble and teachable. They are like knowledge sponges; they soak up everything. They don't think that they know everything. They ask lots of questions. They are tender-hearted.

Children also depend on their parents for food, clothing, protection, knowledge, counsel, and everything. As they get older, they get independent, and they no longer depend on their parents for all these things. They can make their own decisions. In our relationship with God, we can fall into the same trap. Instead of being self dependent, God wants us to trust in him for all things, which requires childlike humility.

Jesus goes on to say that the least among them will be great. The main point of this is that as a disciple, a follower of Christ, we must have a humble posture. We are to posture ourselves as children. We are to posture ourselves as servants.

On my vacation, I read four books. In one of the books, called Simple Thoughts on Leadership, Lance Pittuck speaks about servant leaders.

“Jesus must be the church’s primary leadership model. We have to keep coming back to Him to learn, and to evaluate the ideas we have about leadership. Some of you are becoming leaders, but others of you are leaders of leaders and responsible for selecting new leaders. If folks are not willing to serve in the simplest of ways, they are not qualified to lead in the church. One of the best ways to test potential leader’s motivation for leadership is to ask them to humbly serve. If they are not willing to set up chairs or make copies for you – beware. If they are not willing to do something that nobody but God will see – beware. Always let them serve first, before you allow them to lead. Leadership is simply another form of service.”<sup>1</sup>

Let’s look at the church’s primary example. **Jesus is our primary example.** Paul writes to the Philippians about Jesus’ posture. He tells them to have the same attitude that was in Christ Jesus, who existed in the form of God, but did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped. He emptied Himself and became a bond-servant. Furthermore, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death. Jesus’ posture was that of a humble servant.

(Phil 2:5-8) “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.”

Mark makes note of this in his gospel. He said that “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” That is the posture that you and I must have as His disciples. We should not expect to be served. Instead, we should look for opportunities to serve and to give our life away.

(Mark 10:45) “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

In our prayer time in the morning, Karen and I present ourselves to God as His servants. We report to duty. We ask Him to show us what He would like for us to do that day. If there are any special people that we are to minister to, we ask Him to let us know. Jesus said that whoever takes up his own life will lose it, but whoever loses it for His sake shall find it. We try to lose our life for His sake every day. We present ourselves as living, holy sacrifices each morning.

There is a real balance between serving and leading. Sometimes, we have work projects planned, and I want to be there working alongside of our men. At the same time, in addition to messages to prepare, I have a full-time secular job. It is a difficult balance to lead. It was also difficult for the leaders in the early church. In Acts 6, a complaint arose from the Greek widows. They were being overlooked by the apostles. The fact is that the church had grown to about forty or fifty thousand by this time, and the twelve apostles were still serving food to the widows. They came to a place in their

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<sup>1</sup>Simple Thoughts on Leadership, by Lance Pittluck, page seven.

ministry where they could not possibly do everything, and they needed to prioritize their work. The congregation found seven men of character, who were full of the Holy Spirit, and the apostles laid hands on them, and they were put in charge of taking care of the widows. The apostles said that they would devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. It is a different kind of serving.

I like the fact that they were servants. They had been serving in every area. They were not above serving the widows or doing anything else. They were servant leaders and were a great example to the early church.

Let's take a quick look at a couple of other examples. In John 13, we have the account of Jesus washing the disciples feet. Usually, the task of washing the feet of the guests was the youngest servant or the lowest person in the pecking order. Jesus became the least among them and served them by washing their feet.

(John 13:3-5) “*Jesus*, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, {4} got up from supper, and \*laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. {5} Then He \*poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded..”

When He had finished washing their feet, He asked them if they knew what He had done for them. Then, He tells them that He gave them an example to follow. Then, He reminds them again of the posture that we need to have as His disciples. We are to be His bondslaves and He is sending us out to do the same thing that He has done for us. We are to wash the feet of others. We are to become the least, rather than striving to be the greatest. And, if we do this, we will be blessed.

(John 13:12-17) “So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined *at the table* again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? {13} "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for *so* I am. {14} "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. {15} "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. {16} "Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor *is* one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. {17} "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

There are many ways that we can become the least rather than the greatest. There are many ways that we can humble ourselves. When we are having a conflict with someone, the humble thing to do is to give a gentle answer. A gentle, meek, or humble answer turns away wrath. Instead of reacting and going with the flow, we have to humble ourselves and give a gentle answer.

(Pro 15:1) “A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.”

Another thing we can do is take the initiative to ask others for forgiveness. Maybe they started the conflict, and had responsibility, but we should humble ourselves and apologize for our actions and our contributions. We should not point fingers or rationalize. Simply apologize and ask forgiveness. I have had to do this a lot, and especially the past few months. That is what the Lord expects from His disciples. This is also what is expected of leaders. They should be the first to humble themselves. We are to be people who are quick to ask for forgiveness, and quick to give forgiveness.

One of the things that the Lord has impressed upon me for our body is to learn to be a grateful people. We are to learn to give thanks in everything. I have impressed on our leadership how we must begin our prayer times with thanksgiving and praise. It is not just one or two sentences, but it is a time of thanksgiving and praise. I want our prayer meetings to model what we should be doing in our private prayer times. We enter His gates with thanksgiving.

(Psalm 100:4) "Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name."

At the Regional Vineyard Conference a few weeks ago, which was really good, one of the sessions was on thankfulness. They had all the pastors there spend five to ten minutes giving thanks to God for various things. It was a confirmation of what the Lord had been impressing upon me for our congregation. I want to be a grateful person. We want to continually thank the Lord in all things, and we also want to continually thank other people for things that they do.

Every morning, after thanking the Lord for the food, I make a point of thanking Karen for fixing breakfast. I want to be characterized as a thankful person. Thankful people are humble people that are appreciative for anything and everything. That is the posture that God calls us to have.

In our body, we have a lot of people who are exemplary in service. I do not want to make a long list of names, and accidentally leave off some that need to be on that list. So many of you are truly servants, and I am grateful for that. But, two people that I do want to mention are James Wylie and Lee Griego. They are tremendous servants of the Lord. If something needs to be done, they are very quick to step up to the plate and take care of it. They are an example for me to follow and for our church to follow. They have the right posture.

## **2. A Disciple must have the right Purpose. (Luke 9:49-56)**

The second fundamental that a disciple should have is the right purpose. After Jesus says that the least among them shall be great, John answers and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us." This is a continuation of the conversation, but John switches rooms. He goes a different direction than the previous conversation about who is the greatest.

(Luke 9:49) "John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us."

Jesus answers John, and tells him not to hinder him. He that is not against you is for you. Many times churches are worried about what other churches are doing or not doing. They are not my concern. My responsibility is to be faithful with what God has called me to do. Whether they follow with us or not is not my concern. I pray blessings on other ministries, even if they do not have the same doctrinal beliefs and practices as us.

(Luke 9:50) "But Jesus said to him, "Do not hinder him; for he who is not against you is for you."

Then, Luke jumps ahead in this passage to right before Jesus' ascension. I believe that he does this because there is one thought that he is wanting to make in this paragraph. The thought is that a disciple must be living with the right purpose. As the days of Jesus' ascension were approaching, Jesus had sent messengers ahead of him to make arrangements. They did not receive Jesus because He was traveling towards Jerusalem. There was a lot of prejudice between the Jews and the Samaritans, and they had no dealings with one another. James and John asked the Lord if He wanted them to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them. What a question! It is a pretty relevant question in the world today. There is more persecution of Christians than at any time in history. In the Moslem world, if you do not confess Allah, they will put you to death. As you will see, that is not what Jesus came to do, and that is not our purpose either.

(Luke 9:51-54) "When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem; {52} and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him. {53} But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem. {54} When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

Notice Jesus' reply to James and John. He turns and rebukes them. He quickly put water on that fire. He did not give it a second thought. He tells them that they do not know what kind of spirit they are of. It was obviously not the Holy Spirit that was giving them these thoughts and impressions. Then, Jesus tells them His purpose. He says, "the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

(Luke 9:55-56) "But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; {56} for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." And they went on to another village."

Later on in Luke, Jesus reiterates this to them. He said, "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." **Jesus' purpose was to seek and to save.**

(Luke 19:10) "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

In John 10:10, we find that the thief has come to steal, kill and destroy, but Jesus came that we might have life, and have it abundantly. The thief would call down fire and consume people that don't agree with us, or who do not receive us. Jesus came to give life to us, not to destroy.

(John 10:10) "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

In John 3:17, Jesus says that the Father did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. The disciples were wanting to judge those who did not receive them, and to call down fire. That is not what Jesus came to do. Jesus' purpose for coming to the earth was to seek and to save. He came that the world might be saved through Him.

(John 3:17) "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."

Our purpose must also be to seek and to save that which is lost. Our purpose is not to judge others. Our purpose is not to pray destruction or to curse people. Our purpose is to share the good news of Jesus Christ with them, that they might be saved.

When people come to our church, we invite them to an orientation meeting. In that meeting, we share with them our vision and our mission. The vision is who we are. We are a people who love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. There is no higher calling than this. We also want to be a people who love one another. We are a people who love God, and who love one another.

Our mission is to reach out in love to those who do not know Christ. **Our mission is to go and make disciples of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded us. That is our mission. We are to preach the gospel, and then we are to make disciples of those who receive Christ.

(Matt 28:19-20) “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, {20} teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Personally, I like the way Paul puts it in Colossians. He says, “we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. We are to proclaim Christ. We are to share the gospel with people, but we are not to stop there. We must admonish and teach people with all wisdom, so that we can present them as complete or mature in Christ. That is our purpose.

(Col 1:28-29) “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. {29} For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.”

Luke gave two distractions. One distraction was that people were not following them. The second distraction was that people did not receive them. In either case, the disciples were not to take their eye off of the ball. They were to keep focused on the job at hand, which is to preach the gospel and to make disciples.

I believe that **there are many distractions that face Christians and keep us from focusing on our mission**. In Acts 1, the disciples had another distraction. They were concerned about eschatology, which is the study of the last times. Since Jesus had been resurrected from the dead, they wanted to know if He was now going to restore the kingdom to Israel. It sounds like a fair question. People today are very interested in end-times prophecies. But, notice how Jesus answers them. He says, “it is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

(Acts 1:6-8) “So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” {7} He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; {8} but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”



The disciples were being distracted from Jesus had commanded them to do. They were being distracted by end-time questions. That is just one distraction that keeps people from living a life of purpose.

Another distraction can be an inward focus. Some churches get so wrapped up in their own programs, buildings, and ministries, that they forget that there is a lost world out there that needs some people to share the good news with them. Pastors are generally consumed with caring for the flock, and feeding the flock. That is a good thing. That is what they are charged with doing. But, a church cannot just care for the flock. The church has been given a purpose. The purpose is to seek and to save that which is lost. It is to preach the gospel, and to make disciples of those who receive Christ. It is to bring people to maturity, and it begins with outreach. A church that is too inwardly focused is being distracted from what God wants us to do.

There is a balance. There are some seeker services today that are focused on bringing people in, but they do not make disciples. The messages on Sundays are very watered-down. They entertain, but they do not bring people to maturity. There must be a balance of making disciples and reaching out.

As a church, I have been doing a series of articles on evangelism this year. I have more articles to write. The purpose is to help us as a church to become an outwardly focused church. I believe we get pretty good teaching, and we are helping people to grow in their faith, but we are currently weak in our outreach. I do not want us being distracted, but to fulfill God's purpose for our church.

Listen to what Paul says in Philippians 1. "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." **We want to be a church that is standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.** Lord, may we be those disciples who live our lives with purpose, Your purpose. Amen.

(Phil 1:27) "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."

### **3. A Disciple must have the right Priority. (Luke 9:57-62)**

A disciple needs to have the right posture. God has called us to be humble. A disciple needs to be focused on the right purpose. We have been called to seek and to save, not to judge and call down fire. The third fundamental that is covered in this text is a disciple must have the right priority. We have three different examples given in this final paragraph. All three people said they would follow Jesus, but all three had some conditions on their willingness to follow Jesus. Jesus makes it very clear, following our Lord Jesus must be the highest priority in our life.

In the first example someone along the road tells Jesus, "I will follow You wherever You go." That sounds great, but Jesus looks at the heart. We saw earlier in verse 47 that when the disciples were arguing over who was the greatest, Jesus knew what they were thinking in their heart. Again, Jesus knew what this person was thinking in his heart. The text does not give any indication that this man had conditions attached to his willingness to follow, but Jesus knew what was in his heart.

(Luke 9:57-62) "As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, "I will follow You wherever You go."

(Luke 9:47a) "But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart..."

Therefore, Jesus replies to the man, "the foxes have hole and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." Jesus had just sent some of His disciples to find a place for them to stay with the Samaritans. They had not received Him, and He did not have a place to stay. **Following God means that you may not always have all the comforts.** Following God is not necessarily an abundant life as the world looks at it.

(Luke 9:58) "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 few weeks ago, I was going through Paul's letter to the Corinthians in my quiet times. I read in about five different places in the Bible. That way, I am able to read through the entire Bible every year. I study the passages that the Lord has given for our body, and these are usually different than what I am reading in my devotional times. Anyway, when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he was hungry, thirsty, poorly clothed, roughly treated, and homeless. Somehow, that does not fit into our prosperity doctrine today. I do not think Paul was in sin. Paul was sold out to the Lord, and living uprightly. But, following Christ, may not bring you all the worldly riches that you want. Becoming a follower of Christ does not guarantee you wealth. It is not a roadmap to prosperity, at least in this life.

(1 Cor 4:11-12) "To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; {12} and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure;"

There is a balance. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:33 that if we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, all these things will be added to us. **God will take care of our needs.** You can count on Him to do that, but He does not promise you great riches. **Christ is more concerned about His character being formed in You than your personal comfort.**

(Matt 6:33) "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

My own conviction is that God wants to bless His people. He has already blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. I believe that the more we follow His ways, the more we avail ourselves to His blessings. But His blessings may not all be materially, and they may not be in this earthly life. And, according to Psalm 67, **God wants to bless His people so that all the ends of the earth may know Him.** God is interested in His kingdom increasing, not our personal kingdoms increasing. When God blesses us, we have an opportunity to sow more into His kingdom. When we do that, we store up blessings in heaven.

(Psalm 67:6-7) "The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us. {7} God blesses us, That all the ends of the earth may fear Him."

The second man to tell Jesus that he wants to follow Him says that he wants to first go bury his father. Again, it sounds good and reasonable. We should all honor our mothers and fathers. Both the Old and the New Testaments tells us to honor our parents. So, this does not look like a wrong request. And, Jesus' answer seems a little harsh. He says, "allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God."

(Luke 9:59-60) "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."

(Ex 20:12) "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you."

Let's take a minute to gain understanding of what was really going on. In the Middle East, there was a common saying about burying your father. What this man was saying was that he wanted to go and stay with his father until he died, and then collect his share of the inheritance. After he had collected his inheritance, he would then come follow Jesus. The man's father was not dead yet. If the man's father had been dead, the man would have been there with his family at that time. There was a thirty-day mourning period for the dead, and the man would have been home at that time.

The first man wanted the security and comfort of a home. The second man wanted to make sure he got his fair share of the family inheritance. If these men came to most churches and said they wanted to follow Jesus, we would go find a green visitor card, sign them up for an orientation meeting, and give them a membership interview form. But Jesus does not do any of that. Jesus makes it very clear to them that following Him must be the highest priority in their life.

He tells the second man to let the dead bury the dead. In other words, let those who are spiritually dead, pursue earthly possessions. We are pursuing a heavenly inheritance, not an earthly inheritance. It was not harsh at all. Jesus must be the highest priority in our life. We cannot be trying to ride the fence. **We cannot have one foot in the world, and one foot in the church.**

John tells us not to love the world or the things in the world. He says if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For this man to follow God, he would have to love God more than the things of the world. You cannot love both. God has to be our priority.

(1 John 2:15) "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Jesus told the rich young ruler to go sell his possessions, give to the poor, and then come follow Him. Jesus was dealing with an idol in that young man's heart. Jesus told him how to get rid of the idol. The rich young man went away sorrowful, because he wanted to keep his riches and also follow Jesus. Jesus did not give him that choice. When we follow God, He becomes the priority in our lives.

(Matt 19:20-22) "The young man \*said to Him, "All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?" {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."

The third man who offers to follow Jesus also has a reasonable request. He wants to first say good-bye to those at home. Jesus tells him that no one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. From Jesus' answer, it appears as if the man was involved in the family business. He may have wanted to get things in order before beginning to follow Jesus.

(Luke 9:61-62) "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."

Scholars tell us that Jesus' response was based on a well-known proverb that can be traced back to a writer named Hesiod in 800 B.C. The proverb stated that "you can't plow a furrow looking backwards." What Jesus was telling the man was that he could not plow a straight furrow looking backwards. **We cannot follow Christ looking backwards.** You can't follow Me with a divided heart. You have to be willing to leave your mother and father and follow Me. Your relationship and devotion to Me must be the priority of your life.

In Luke 14:26-27, Jesus says, "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. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." Jesus taught us to honor our father and mother. However, He also taught us that **we must hold our relationship with Him above every other relationship.** Our love and obedience to God, if compared to our love of our family, would make our love for our family seem like hate. Jesus is not telling us to hate our families; He is telling us that our devotion to Him must be a much higher priority.

(Luke 14:26-27) "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."

In that passage Jesus finished by saying that whoever does not carry His own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. This is what Jesus said a few verses earlier in this passage. Donald covered it a few weeks ago. If we are going to follow Christ, we must deny ourselves, take up our crosses daily, and follow the Lord. The Christian life is about self-denial. The Christian life is about losing our lives for His kingdom. We cannot follow Christ with a divided heart. He must be the priority in our lives.

(Luke 9:23) "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."

## Conclusion

"Father God, we want to be a church full of disciples that are following You with our whole hearts. We want to be a church with the right POSTURE. We want to be a humble church that is full of servants. We want to be a church with the right PURPOSE. We want to be used greatly to preach the gospel and then to teach people Your ways. We want to present every man complete in You. And finally, we want to be a church with the right PRIORITY. We want to be sold out to You. We want to seek first Your kingdom and Your righteousness. Help us to be that people. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.



**Introduction** (Luke 9:46-62)

There are some other key fundamentals for being a disciple.

- \_\_\_\_\_ is a fundamental. (John 13:34-35)
- Abiding in God's \_\_\_\_\_ is a fundamental. (John 8:31-32)

**1. A Disciple must have the right \_\_\_\_\_.** (Luke 9:46-48, Matt 18:2-5)

- Jesus is our primary \_\_\_\_\_. (Phil 2:5-8, Mark 10:45, John 13:3-17, Pro 15:1, Ps 100:4)

**2. A Disciple must have the right \_\_\_\_\_.** (Luke 9:49-56)

- Jesus' purpose was to seek and to \_\_\_\_\_ that which was lost. (Luke 9:56, 19:10, John 10:10, John 3:17)
- Our mission is to go and make \_\_\_\_\_ of all the nations. (Matt 28:19-20, Col 1:28-29)
- There are many \_\_\_\_\_ that face Christians and keep us from focusing on our mission. (Acts 1:6-8)
- We want to be a church that is standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the \_\_\_\_\_. (Phil 1:27)

**3. A Disciple must have the right \_\_\_\_\_.** (Luke, Ex 20:12, Eph 6:1-2, Luke 14:26-27)

- Following God means that you may not always have all the \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Cor 4:11-12)
- God will take care of our \_\_\_\_\_. Christ is more concerned about His \_\_\_\_\_ being formed in You than your personal comfort. (Matt 6:33)
- God wants to \_\_\_\_\_ His people so that all the ends of the earth may know Him. (Ps 67:6-7)
- We cannot have one foot in the \_\_\_\_\_, and one foot in the \_\_\_\_\_. (1 John 2:15, Matt 19:20-22)
- We cannot follow Christ looking \_\_\_\_\_.
- We must hold our \_\_\_\_\_ with God above every other \_\_\_\_\_. (Luke 14:26-27)

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