

The Would-Be Disciples

Matthew 8:18-22

In a day when the present church is plagued with “casual Christianity” and “easy-believism,” it’s crucial to know what it means to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Casual Christians are those who want to be numbered among the sheep, but could care less about following the Shepherd; they want the forgiveness of Christ brings but never intend to carry their own cross. Jesus came to set the terms of following Him. He taught that there is only one way to be a Christian and that is to be His disciple. At the heart of true Christian discipleship is self-denial. And according to Jesus ***if you only live for yourself, you’re not following Jesus.*** Matthew 8:18ff. introduces us to two “would-be” disciples. Here we learn three things that keep people from following the Lord fully:

- 1. *When people are not ready to _____ their _____***

Verse 18 tells of one zealous and excited scribe who came to Jesus. This is surprising because scribes are often described as being hostile to Jesus (Matt. 5:20; 6:2,5,16; 15:1). He came saying, “*Teacher I will follow You wherever You go.*” To whom Jesus replied, “*Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.*” This person was wanted to follow Jesus for the comfort, the excitement, the thrill and promotion that he could get. He never really counted the cost of following Jesus. He never truly understood that the basic principle of discipleship is self-denial, suffering and sacrifice for the sake of Christ (Matt. 9:27; Luke 14:25-33). In His state of humiliation, Jesus said, “*the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.*”
- 2. *When people are not committed to _____ their _____ with Jesus***

Verses 21 and 22 introduces another would-be follower who was not willing to commit himself to an unswerving loyalty to Jesus. Faith must not only count the cost and pay the price; faith must recognize the priority of the Lord Jesus and of His kingdom. This person reasonably said, “*Lord, permit me to go first and bury my father.*” When Jesus says to him, “*Follow Me and let the dead bury their own dead*” He was emphasizing that there is nothing in this life (even the death of a father) that takes priority over Him (cf. Luke 14:26,27; Matt. 10:34-37). Jesus is calling for the highest possible commitment and devotion to God first since no one can serve two masters (Matt. 6:24).
- 3. *When people are not willing to _____ on the _____ set by Jesus***

Luke 9 mentions a third person who came to Jesus that day saying in verse 61, “*Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.*” Here is a man who has his own agenda and was trying to negotiate the terms of his discipleship. Jesus said to him (v. 62), “*No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.*” The Bible warns about looking back (Gen. 19:17,26). Even Paul learned not to look back (Phil. 3:13-14).

Are you a true disciple? Have you learned to sacrifice your comforts to follow Jesus and serve Jesus? Is your loyalty to Him surpassing all other relationships? Are you walking in full obedience to Him, following Him in His terms and not yours? True Christianity is marked by following Jesus and being His disciple.