

Small Group & Personal Bible Study Lesson

Pastor Dennis Hadley

Memory Verse: Mark 8:35

“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.”

Daily Reading Plan:

- Day 1: Mark 8:34-38
- Day 2: John 12:23-26
- Day 3: Luke 9:57-62
- Day 4: Matthew 10:37-39
- Day 5: 1 Peter 2:21-25

Lesson: Barriers to following Christ

1. From Luke 9:57-62, what were the obstacles to following Christ? Do you think these two men had valid reasons for wanting to delay action in following Jesus?

It seems difficult to let go of family. Sometimes letting go of what we interpret as responsibility stops us from responding in obedience to God's call in our life. Sometimes, letting go of what we feel is ours will keep us from following Jesus.

2. Read the two stories of two men, both called by God and the reactions to that call. The first is the story of the Rich Young Ruler found in Luke 18:18-27. The second is the story of Elisha found in 1 Kings 19:15-21

Compare these contrasting stories from the Bible. What is the difference between their two responses?

The Rich Young Ruler wanted to follow God but what he felt was his (wealth) was too great to give up for God. He had a distorted view of where his provision had come from and therefore was unwilling to let go. Elisha on the other hand knew God had called him and in order to demonstrate his willingness to lose his life he literally got rid of his old life, destroying the plow and celebrating by cooking the ox and sharing it so that his old life was no more and there was no turning back.

3. Which response (Rich Young Ruler or Elisha) best describes your willingness to follow Jesus?

Let everyone share. Of course we all want to be like Elisha and none of us consider ourselves like the Rich Young Ruler, yet daily we are given a choice to lose this life for Christ and we make excuses why God would not want us to give up... for Him. We therefore hold on tight to what we have and choose not to step out in obedient faith. The fear of loss and the fear of change can hold you back from following Jesus as His disciple. It is one thing to believe in Jesus. It is something entirely different to follow Him and make Him Lord of your life.

4. What is thing you are finding it hardest to let go of in order to completely follow Jesus with your life?

Let people share. For me, letting go of my children and now grandchildren to follow God is the most difficult thing for me to do. And yet, thinking somehow I can better care for them or provide for them than God can is arrogant, even stupid. Certainly God does not ask us to all leave our families but we have to be willing to give them up for Him. Even our family cannot be above or in competition for our love for God.

When Sherry was called to ministry in Ethiopia I had to face a crisis of belief in trusting God would protect and provide for her even when we are apart. She leaves for Addis Ababa in just a few days. I know that God will be with her and use her and I cannot hold on and still follow Jesus. The beautiful thing is that God takes obedience and submission and He blesses it. I am convinced that Sherry and I will enjoy life even more abundantly than we have in the past. When we turned our children over to God out of desperation, He always brought peace and protection. And He guided our children and increased our love for one another.

If you are holding onto anything, my words to you are this, let go! Let God take over and follow Him, love Him, trust Him, obey Him. Make Him the Lord of your life. Not your spouse, not your kids, not your job, not your home, not your money or savings or stocks; but Jesus alone.

5. Read 1 Peter 2:21. What does this verse teach us about following Jesus?

The disciple's journey takes us on a road of suffering. Jesus left what He had in heaven, "everything" and became a nothing; taking on the role of a humble servant, a mocked and beaten man who was nailed to a cross. None of which He deserved or was forced to do. But willingly He did it. Now We are called to willingly follow regardless of where the journey takes us.