

The Gospel According to Luke

“Discipleship for Dummies”

Chapter 9:46-62

Introduction

The very first dummies-book was *DOS for Dummies*, published back in 1991. The name was something that had been overheard by the publisher. He was in a store, when a frustrated consumer, holding a computer book, said “This book on DOS is impossibly complicated. Don’t you have something more comprehensible, ***like a DOS for Dummies?***” It was the beginning of the highly successful series of guides, each bearing the slogan “a reference for the rest of us.”

Our text in the Gospel of Luke reads like a dummies-guide; it could be called *Discipleship for Dummies*. Don’t be offended by the word ‘dummies.’ It describes the average person, who needs a few simple guidelines in order to better understand the subject matter.

We are average Christians, and we need a few simple guidelines in order to better understand what it means to follow Jesus as His disciple. The Lord gives you six guidelines, in two categories: In your *manner* as a disciple, and in what *matters* to you as a disciple.

We’ll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Be A Disciple And Let Jesus Redirect Your Public Manner, and #2 Be A Disciple And Let Jesus Direct Your Private Matters.

#1 Be A Disciple And Let Jesus Redirect Your Public Manner (v46-56)

The first three episodes, that evoke three responses from Jesus, have in common certain mistakes the disciples made regarding their **public manner**. Jesus could have said, each time, **You do not know what manner of spirit you are**. The Lord needed to redirect their

public manner, to bring it into line with what is appropriate for a disciple.

What should be your public manner? A disciple should have a *caring* manner... A disciple should have a *cooperative* manner... And a disciple should have a *compassionate* manner. Let's look at them one-by-one.

You should have a caring manner:

Luke 9:46 Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest.

One commentator labeled this 'an appalling argument.' It is best understood if you'll remember that the Jews were constantly thinking about their Messiah establishing the kingdom of God on earth. No matter how many times Jesus told them He was about to be crucified, they had their hopes set on the kingdom. Since they were the closest, chosen followers, obviously they would occupy Jesus' cabinet positions.

But who would be the greatest among them? Probably a jealousy had simmered, because Peter, John, and James had been with Jesus on the mountain, while the other nine had remained below, and there they had miserably failed when confronted by a demon possessed boy.

Whatever the reason or reasons for their dispute, it was the wrong manner for a disciple.

Luke 9:47 And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him,

Luke 9:48 and said to them, "Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great."

Jesus spoke to the heart of their dispute. Greatness is never achieved by an appointment to a position over others. Greatness, in God's kingdom, is achieved when you humble yourself to be among others in a manner that is unassuming and not intimidating.

Jesus pointed to a child; or probably held one on His lap. Notice, He didn't tell the disciples to be *like* the child; He told them to **receive this little child**. As leaders, who wanted to be **great**, they should care for others the way a parent cares for children.

Parents – *good parents* – are a great model for ministry. They establish a secure household; they provide for the needs of their children, without complaining; they see to it that their children are nourished physically, and nurtured emotionally and spiritually; they would literally lay down their lives for their kids. You get the idea!

The apostle Paul spoke of himself as a spiritual father. Don't take the metaphor too far, and start calling leaders 'father.' *That's almost the opposite of what Jesus was teaching!*

If you **receive** others like that, then you **receive** Jesus, and His Father. In other words, you are acting in the same manner as Jesus and His Father. After all, didn't Jesus humble Himself, to be among us in an unassuming manner? Don't we look to the Father to secure us, provide for us, and see to it we are nourished and nurtured?

Next, you should have a cooperative manner:

Luke 9:49 Now John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us."

In their travels, the disciples had come across a freelance exorcist. They **forbade him**, because he belonged to another denomination! Well, not quite; but it's the same idea.

Luke 9:50 But Jesus said to him, "**Do not forbid him, for he who is not against us is on our side.**"

Christians are on the same **side**... *But you'd never know it!* There are some basic truths that all Christians hold as fundamental. Then there is plenty of room for disagreement on non-essential issues.

1. Things like the inspiration of Scripture... Salvation by grace alone through faith alone... The trinity... The deity of Jesus Christ... The virgin birth of Jesus... The physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus...

- The resurrection of believers to eternal life, and unbelievers to eternal damnation... His coming again... These are essentials.
2. Things like Church government... Speaking in tongues... Style of music... Order of service... These, and multitudes of others, are non-essentials.

A disciple should seek the common ground, to cooperate in what is essential.

Next, you should have a compassionate manner:

Luke 9:51 Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem,
Luke 9:52 and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him.
Luke 9:53 But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem.

When the Northern Kingdom of Israel was overrun by the Assyrian Empire, it was renamed Samaria. Jews held captive intermarried with their captors. Their offspring were the Samaritans. A great ethnic prejudice existed between the Samaritans and those Jews who considered themselves a pure and undefiled people.

So, when Jesus and His Jewish disciples wanted to travel through Samaritan territory, they were not welcomed.

Luke 9:54 And 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, just as Elijah did?"

Don't you just relate to these guys? *I know that I do!*

Elijah did command fire to come down from heaven; but it was upon the false prophets of Baal, the leaders of an idolatrous cult. It wasn't simply because Elijah was passing through; it wasn't because he was being inconvenienced. Thus it was a misapplication of Scripture.

People say that you can 'prove' or 'defend' anything from Scripture. *That's not true...* But how can we remain true to the Word and apply it properly?

Luke 9:55 But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.

Luke 9:56 For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save *them*." And they went to another village.

Compassion was at the heart of Jesus' reply. He could accept the inconvenience because He looked beyond their *behavior* to their need to *believe*. Their behavior was precisely why Jesus came into the world! They needed to be *saved*, not *destroyed*. Knowing the character of God helps you apply the content of Scripture. It keeps you on track.

Three quick chapters on your public manner. This ends section one of *Discipleship for Dummies*.

#2 Be A Disciple And Let Jesus Direct Your Private Matters (v57-62)

The next three episodes, that again evoke three responses from Jesus, involve the private affairs of certain followers. You might identify three types of disciples: The *casual* disciple, the *conflicted* disciple, and the *conditional* disciple.

You can't be casual as a disciple:

Luke 9:57 Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, *that* someone said to Him, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go."

Luke 9:58 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His* head."

Here was Jesus, on the way to Jerusalem; in the excitement, one of His followers said he'd go along. We can conclude, however, from Jesus' response, that the man did not understand the level of commitment that was required for a disciple. There would be no going back home for him if he were to follow the Lord. Or, at the very least, he would need to live like a stranger and a pilgrim as he continued to journey heavenward.

Jesus wasn't saying that you can't own a home, or that you have to travel around, sleeping in public parks. *But you might!* You don't

pick and choose when or where or how you are going to serve the Lord. He chooses for you. You cannot be a casual disciple – only following Jesus when it is exciting or convenient.

You can't be a conflicted disciple:

Luke 9:59 Then He said to another, “Follow Me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”

Luke 9:60 Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.”

If the father had recently died, the man would not have been on the road, but would have been at the funeral. Most likely, this man's father was not yet dead. He may have been elderly, near death; even on his deathbed. His request was to wait until his father died, then he'd follow Jesus. After all, he had responsibilities toward his father, and wanted to be there for the funeral.

Jesus' response may sound insensitive, but it had a precedent. A high priest was required by the Jewish law to avoid the corpse of even a parent. Jesus was putting discipleship on a par with the Old Testament priesthood. **Every disciple needed to consider himself or herself as committed as a priest!**

Family is important, but not as important as the Gospel. We need balance here. Too many ministers have lost their families by putting the ministry ahead of family for the wrong reasons. But too many Christians still put family and other priorities ahead of serving God. Too many Christians put-off serving indefinitely. You can't be conflicted as a disciple about your priorities.

You can't be a conditional disciple:

Luke 9:61 And another also said, “Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.”

Luke 9:62 But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

This request is interesting. You're not sure if this guy followed Jesus or not. Their exchange will make more sense if you remember an episode for the Old Testament.

The prophet Elijah was in the market for a disciple. He cruised by Elisha, while Elisha was out plowing in the field. Elijah threw his mantle on Elisha – the outer coat he wore that identified him. It was an indication that he was calling Elisha to follow and be his disciple. Elisha asked permission to **bid farewell** to his family.

When he bid his family farewell, Elisha took his oxen and plowing equipment, and he burned them up. It was a symbolic gesture, saying to his family he would not be returning to ever again plow in their fields. His old life was ended; he was set on moving forward as a disciple, wherever that would lead him.

Jesus was telling this first century follower that he, too, could bid his family farewell, *but it would have to be a **final farewell***. There could be no conditions; only a total surrender to Jesus Christ.

Disciples aren't the ones who set the conditions. You can't say you will follow Jesus "if..." or "when..." or "after..." Jesus directs the private matters of His followers.

This doesn't mean that, if you follow Jesus, He is immediately going to send you to the place you least want to go, to be surrounded by the people you least like, to do the work you most hate. The Bible indicates that God wants your joy to be full, and that He wants to complete you and bring you to perfection, giving you those desires of your heart that will be most meaningful and fulfilling.

But, in order for Him to do His work, you cannot be *casual...* or *conflicted...* or *conditional*. Too many of us think God has not fulfilled His promises when, in fact, **we** have not fully committed our lives to His care and oversight. We still think we are in a co-operation with God, rather than letting Him operate.

Conclusion

The world looks upon committed Christians as if we were a bunch of dummies. Well, **you can learn a lot from a dummy!**

Discipleship is not complicated. You see how very simply it was put by Jesus. Discipleship is, however, costly. But I think you can look at

the cost as an investment in your future that will eventually bring you great reward.

The question always comes down to whether you are living for this life, or looking forward to the next. You can't do both.