



“On the Road”  
Luke 9:57-62

**Idea:** Journeying with Jesus can often lead believers to feel like strangers and exiles on earth.

**Intro:** Who do you follow? If you are on social media, more than likely you follow or are friends with people that you do not know, and a lot of them are influencers. They are paid by brands to push or “influence” a product. These companies realize how influential it can be to have their products seen in real life stories and pictures on social media. On the flip side, the consumers of social media see the stories and pictures and are swayed toward a brand or a trend. How and why does this happen?

Did you know that many if not most animals are herd creatures. What I mean by this term is not just that they travel together, but more importantly they follow the group. We have all observed this phenomenon. Allow me to offer a few examples. When you watch a flock of geese fly over, they fly in a V pattern, and wherever the V goes so goes the individual geese. On the farm, cattle move as a herd. This is true as they graze in the field, and it is true when the farmer is attempting to move the herd. If the farmer can get the herd moving in a certain direction, every one of the cows will follow along. White-tailed deer are no different. They graze through the woods as a herd. Last fall, one of the deer I harvested came in with a herd of deer. The first deer crossed over a deep ditch in front of me, so I was able to range the distance and get ready because I knew where the others would cross the ditch. I picked out the largest one and waited. Sure enough, that deer and every one of the others crossed right there.

As we observe this behavior in the animal kingdom, it should not surprise us to see it in our behavior too. Humans act similarly. This is why influencers can influence us. We have what is called a herd mentality. This is the tendency for people's behavior or beliefs to conform to those of the group to which they belong. Fashion trends are easy examples of the herd mentality. Individuals will often describe their fashion choices by saying, “I am just expressing myself.” What is interesting and humorous to me is that their individual expression almost always looks just like every other person. If you walk through the halls of our secondary schools tomorrow, you will see a lot of students expressing their individualism by looking, acting, talking, and believing just like all the other members the herd.

Listen up adults. We are no different. Our fashion choices follow the herd trends. Our beliefs and convictions are shaped by the herd. Conformity to societal mores is our natural default, and we fear standing out and against those norms because of the scrutiny that comes when doing so.

As Christians, an important question we need to ask ourselves from time to time is, “Who am I following?” It is necessary that we take stock of ourselves and determine which herd holds influence over our lives. You see, when we responded in faith to Jesus’ call to salvation, we joined a new herd. While this is true theologically, it

can be a struggle practically because of the pressure to conform to the societal patterns of the larger herd. Again, we really do not like standing out. Therefore, it is critical to remember that journeying with Jesus can often lead believers to feel like strangers and exiles on earth.

In this next pericope, we find Jesus and His disciples on the road, making their way ever so slowly toward Jerusalem. On the road, Jesus encounters three different people who have an opportunity to follow the Lord. Two of these people pledge their commitments to follow Jesus. The other is invited by the Lord. Each of them, however, wanted a guarantee of security and comfort. They did not want to break away from the societal customs and stand out. As we examine these verses, remember that this scene is set in the context of the Kingdom. Jesus has been demonstrating, teaching, and revealing the Kingdom. He has sent out the Twelve to do the same. In chapter 10, He will send out seventy-two others to take on this work. We are reminded that journeying with Jesus and engaged in His mission can often lead us to feel like strangers and exiles. For this reason, Jesus offers three exhortations to us as we are on the road with Him.

Read Luke 9:57-62.

**Inquiry:** These sound like harsh words. These three interactions exhibit for us that following Jesus does not mean merely imitating Him. Instead, they reveal it is a call to enter the very conditions of His life. Jesus paired mercy with an astonishing call to commitment because it was His loving mercy and commitment that kept Him on the road. It led Him to fully obey the Father's will even though it meant sacrificing His life.

As believers, we often talk about following Jesus. It is a common phrase in our Christian vernacular. We use it in our music. We sing, "I have decided to follow Jesus. No turning back, no turning back." I am not convinced we fully grasp the reality of what it means to follow Jesus when we sing this song. In many ways, our perspective is more like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz. We just need to follow the yellow brick road in front of us, knowing it will lead us to our desired destination. While this is true; this is not all that it means. We tend to forget or maybe even deny the reality of this road being one of hardship and pain. Instead, we want to view it as a Sunday afternoon stroll through the park on a warm, sunny day. Jesus, however, fully understood that following Him would be nothing of the sorts. Even Dorothy's journey on the yellow brick road was replete with dangers and difficulties. So, we should expect to experience many of the struggles that Jesus underwent as we walk on the road that brings the Kingdom to those dead in sin and separated from God.

Let's look at the exhortations Jesus gives to us who are journeying on the road with Him.

### **1. Expect to be inconvenienced.**

As Jesus and His disciples were traveling down the road, moving toward the suffering that awaited in Jerusalem, a scribe (Matt 8:19) pledged his commitment. This promise sounds like a good thing. Who would not welcome someone's pledge. It only makes sense when building a team to receive such a person. You would not reject someone who wants to join your team, but in verse 58, it seems that Jesus does just that. He says, *"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."*

Notice the irony in the Lord's statement. *"The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."* The Creator of the universe was homeless in His own creation. As we read this verse, humility and sacrifice are on full display. Jesus divested Himself of all the glories and privileges of heaven to enter creation homeless. Chuck Colson said of Jesus, "A borrowed manger and a borrowed tomb framed His earthly life." What we are meant to derive from this statement is the understanding that following the Lord means following Him into the life He lived.

*I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.*

– John 16:33

Now, the Bible scholars in the room are itching to point out that Jesus did have places to lay His head. He enjoyed time at Peter's home in Capernaum and the hospitality of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. They also want to mention Jesus' promise to His disciples in Mark 10 when He said, *"Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life"* (Mark 10:29-30). So, it is true that not everyone who follows Jesus and works to expand His Kingdom will be homeless because Jesus was not always homeless. However, we can and should expect to face some level of hardship. Did you notice what Jesus said in Mark 10:30? He said, *"with persecutions."* Therefore, we would do well to remember that some believers will in fact be homeless because they follow Jesus and engage in Kingdom work. Some will experience great discomfort just as Jesus did. He left the glories of heaven to Emmanuel with us. Therefore, if Jesus experienced hardship and suffering, then should we not also expect the same in our lives for the sake of the gospel?

On this road, let's expect to be inconvenienced. If your walk with Jesus has not brought you some discomfort, then something is wrong.

## **2. Live with a sense of urgency.**

The second man in the story was invited by Jesus to get on the road. He responded by asking if he could first go and bury his father. As we read this interchange, it seems the Lord might be contradicting the fifth commandment (Ex 20:12), His own teaching (Matt 15:1-9), and that of the rabbis. All these teachings call for honoring one's parents by remembering them, acting kindly toward them, and making provisions for their welfare. In reference to honoring parents in death, the rabbis had created a mass of protective measures. Burial of the dead was considered a religious duty that took precedence over all others, including the study of the Law. They wrote, "He who is confronted by a dead relative is freed from reciting the Shema, from the Eighteen Benedictions, and from all the commandments stated in the Torah" (b. Ber. 31a). Burying the dead, then, was of the utmost importance in that culture.

How are we to understand Jesus' statement? Well, we ought to recognize what is not said in verse 59. The man did not say his father was dead. If his father were dead, then the man would not have been on the road with Jesus. He would have been home with his family, planning a funeral. We are meant to believe that the man's father was elderly, and the man was asking Jesus for permission to delay following Him until his father died. This request reveals that the man had no concept of the urgency and importance of the task to which Jesus was calling him.

Jesus' statement to the man feels harsh, but He was really just saying, "Let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead, but you go proclaim the Kingdom of God." The implication is that the preaching of the Kingdom is greater and more urgent than burying the dead and grieving with one's family.

The journey on the road with Jesus is an urgent one. We hold the words of life in the gospel, but life is short. The time we get with individuals is uncertain. Sometimes we are only given a short window to impart the gospel message to someone like on a flight. Other times we are given much more time such as watching our kids grow up. Whatever the situation or relationship, nothing is certain. And so, there ought to be a high sense of urgency on our part with the gospel. Do you live with a sense of urgency, taking every opportunity to lead people to Jesus?

## **3. Focus on the call.**

Like the first man, the third man offered his allegiance to Jesus, and similar to the second man's request, this one had biblical support. In 1 Kings 19, we read the interchange between Elijah and Elisha when the great prophet called the other into discipleship. Elisha accepted the call but asked if he could first

kiss his father and mother before following (1 Kings 19:20). Elijah permitted him to go back first. Jesus, then, knowing this Old Testament story answered the man with plowing imagery saying, *“No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God”* (vs. 62).

Jesus’ point was that there would be time later for goodbyes. A disciple, though, must not condition his commitment to even the most proper of obligations. The call of the gospel must come first and remain the focus of one’s life.

It was proverbial in ancient culture that one could not look back while plowing and drive a straight furrow. Those who crave after what they left behind, who are always remembering the comforts of home and family, who dream about how life might have been if they had not stepped onto the road with Jesus, who keep looking in the rearview mirror, will not do well on Jesus’ road. The call of discipleship must be the believer’s top priority in life. It is a call to fellowship, holiness, and gospel engagement.

**Conclusion:** There are many influencers in this world. And on various levels, we are all influenced by many of them. For this reason, the herd mentality is a reality we must recognize and investigate in our own lives. Ranchers know that if they can get a few cows moving in the desired direction then the rest of the herd will follow. Unfortunately, there is not much difference when it comes to people. We like to follow the herd. So, which herd are you following? Are you moving along in the herd of the world or the herd of heaven?

Here is what I know about these two different herds. If you walk with Jesus, you will sense that the world is not your home. More and more, like Jesus, you will feel that there is no place to lay your head. And Christian, this is a good place to be. We must always remember that we are sojourners and strangers in this world. It is not our home; instead, we are just passing through and attempting to take as many people with us to heaven as we can. Let’s walk this road with Jesus expecting to be inconvenienced, living with a sense of urgency, and focusing on the call of God.

How does your life and discipleship measure up to these three exhortations? Do you welcome hardship? Is there a sense of urgency with the gospel? Is the Lord’s call your top priority?