

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this meditation and memorisation series you may learn how to build up the Christian Church. Two teachers will meditate on the meaning of a Bible verse about one characteristic of a believer in Jesus Christ and then memorise it together. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme.

In this ninth series, the Bible teaches five truths about the kingdom of God. The topic of today's meditation and memorisation is: NEVER LOOK BACK FROM SERVING IN THE KINGDOM. We will meditate a new Bible passage, memorise a new Bible verse and then review the previously memorised verses together.

(S) **POINT 1. MEDITATION OF THE NEW BIBLE VERSE**

The new Bible verse that we will meditate and memorise is Luke 9:62. We will meditate the truths in the Bible together. Let me read Luke 9:57-62. As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus said to him. Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good buy to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

The memorisation verse is: Never look back from serving in the kingdom. Luke 9:62. "No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." Luke 9:62.

The gospel of Luke teaches several important characteristics of a disciple of Jesus Christ.

(T) **The characteristic of a disciple of Jesus Christ in Luke 9:57-62.**

In Luke 6:39-42 Jesus says, "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student or disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention in the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

A characteristic of a true disciple of Jesus is that *he learns and receives character training*. A disciple must first learn to be changed by God, before God can use him to change others. He gives attention to his own weaknesses and failures, before he corrects others. The goal of a disciple is to become more and more like Jesus Christ in his character or personality and behaviour.

(S) **The characteristic of a disciple of Jesus Christ in Luke 9:23-26.**

In Luke 9:23-26 Jesus says, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels."

A characteristic of a true disciple of Jesus is that *he shows self-denial and self-sacrifice*. His only commitment is to glorify Jesus Christ every day, by preaching Christ and by accepting the rejection, shame and suffering it might bring.

(T) **The characteristic of a disciple of Jesus Christ in Luke 9:57-62.**

In Luke 9:57-62 Jesus gives three characteristics of a true Christian disciple. All three characteristics show that a true Christian disciple is *completely committed to Jesus Christ*.

One. The first aspirant disciple wanted to follow Jesus Christ without a call.

Luke 9:57-58 says: As they were walking along the road, a man said to Jesus, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." The first aspirant disciple was too eager to follow Jesus and had neglected to count the cost of discipleship. He saw the crowds following Jesus, the miracles and the enthusiasm of people and wanted to be closely associated with Jesus who was the centre of all this action. But as the gospel story develops, Judea rejected Jesus (Jn 5:18), Galilee cast him out

(Jn 6:66), Gadara begged him to leave their district (Matthew 8:34), Samaria refused to give him lodging (Lk 9:53), the people on earth would not have him and lifted him on a cross (Mt 27:23) and finally even heaven forsook him and Jesus cried out, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46). Jesus says that a Christian disciple is completely committed to him. He says that the cost of *permanent discipleship is struggle, rejection and suffering* (cf. Lk 14:25-30).

(S) Two. The second aspirant disciple wanted to follow Jesus Christ on his own terms.

Luke 9:59-60 says: Jesus said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus said to him. Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." The second aspirant disciple was not ready to follow Jesus on Jesus' terms! On the one hand he wanted to become a close follower of Jesus like the apostles. On the other hand he set a condition for following Jesus. He first wanted to go and bury his father, who had just died. Jesus wanted to impress on this particular man's mind the fact that he is the sovereign Lord and must be obeyed completely and without qualification, condition or reservation. He wanted this man to understand that in the kingdom of God, the spiritual family of God is more important than the earthly family ties. Remember that Jesus is saying this to a particular aspirant disciple and not to everyone listening. Jesus does not say that Christians must not provide for their parents (cf. Jn 19:26-27) or care for their funeral (cf. Mt 26:12). But Jesus does say that *a Christian must love Jesus more than his parents. A disciple must obey Jesus unconditionally.*

(T) Three. The third aspirant disciple wanted to follow Jesus Christ without realising the power his family, friends and worldly aspirations could have on him.

Luke 9:61-62 says: Still another man said to Jesus, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good buy to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." The third aspirant disciple probably did not know himself well enough. Jesus was able to see in his heart what he could not see himself (cf. Jn 2:25). Jesus was able to search his heart and read his mind. Jesus knew that when this aspirant disciple reached home, he would be easily persuaded to stay home and not join Jesus. Jesus says that a Christian disciple is completely committed to him. He says that *a Christian must never turn back from following Jesus. A true disciple never looks back to his old life or longs for his old life.*

(S) The characteristic of a disciple of Jesus Christ in Luke 14:26-27 and 33.

In Luke 14:26-27 and 33 Jesus gives three more characteristics of a true Christian disciple. All three these characteristics also show that a true Christian disciple is *completely committed to Jesus Christ.*

One. A disciple of Jesus Christ loves Jesus Christ more than any other relationship.

Luke 14:25-26 says: Large crowds were travelling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters - yes, even his own life - he cannot be my disciple."

A Christian disciple prefers Jesus Christ above his parents, his own family and even himself. This does not mean that a disciple should hate his parents and family, abandon them and forget them. The Bible commands Christians to care for their parents, to love their wives, to raise their children in the instruction of the Lord and to even love their neighbour as they love themselves. The word 'hate' in this context means, *to prefer less*. In Matthew 10:37 Jesus says the same but in other words. He says: "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." Jesus Christ says that if the choice is between a family member and Jesus Christ, the wish of the family member, no matter how ardent, should be rejected. The supreme loyalty of a disciple is to Jesus Christ and no other relationship may replace it. The Christian disciple chooses Jesus Christ unconditionally as his Saviour, Lord and Guide. Therefore the Christian disciple makes all other loyalties and relationships subordinate to his loyalty and devotion to Jesus Christ. A characteristic of a true disciple of Jesus is that *he loves Jesus Christ more than any other relationship.*

(T) Two. A disciple of Jesus Christ carries his cross.

In Luke 14:27 Jesus says, "And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple". What is the meaning of carrying your cross? For Jesus Christ carrying his cross meant rejection by the religious leaders and teachers and condemned by the political government. The people mocked Jesus and spat in his face. The soldiers put a crown of thorns on his head and hammered it in with sticks. They beat him fists and forced him to carry a heavy wooden cross to the place of execution. They hammered long iron nails through his hands and feet onto the cross and then pulled the cross up to let it fall with a thump into a hole, so that it would stand straight up. The cross is a symbol for rejection and suffering and possibly martyrdom.

The characteristic of a true disciple of Jesus Christ is that also he *accepts rejection and suffering* for the sake of being a committed Christian.

(S) Three. A disciple of Jesus Christ prefers Jesus Christ above all possessions and ambitions.

In Luke 14:33 Jesus says, "In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple." What does it mean 'to give up everything'? In Luke 18:18-30 Jesus asked the rich young ruler to give up all his

possessions, sell it and give it to the poor, because in his case all his possessions stood between him and following Jesus. But in Luke 19:1-10 Jesus does not ask the rich tax collector, Zacchaeus, to give all his possessions away, because in his case his possessions did not stand between him and following Jesus. Thus, Jesus asks his followers to give up whatever hinders them from following him as a disciple. Jesus challenges people to give up or let go of everything that stand between them and following Jesus Christ.

The characteristic of a true disciple of Jesus is that *he prefers Jesus Christ above all possessions and ambitions* of this world. A disciple is willing to give up anything and everything in order to follow Christ. He does not allow the love of money, success, fame and power to disqualify him from being a disciple of Christ. If the choice is between making money, success, power or fame on the one hand and following Jesus Christ on the other hand, then the attraction of materialism and worldly success should be rejected. The disciple's supreme commitment is to Jesus Christ and no other commitment may replace it.

(T) The characteristic of a disciple of Jesus Christ in Luke 24:45-48.

Luke 24:45-48 says: Then Jesus opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written; The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."

A characteristic of a true disciple of Jesus is that *he is a witness of Jesus Christ*. The disciples of Jesus Christ were not regarded as the faithful mediators of philosophical insights or the bearers of a particular religious tradition. They were simply the obedient witnesses of Jesus Christ. They were never among the wise philosophers or learned teachers of the law, but they were among *the little children* to whom God gave his revelation (Matthew 11:25-27). They were *the little flock* to which God was pleased to give the kingdom (Luke 12:32; cf. Matthew 5:10).

(S) POINT 2. MEMORISATION OF THE NEW BIBLE VERSE

The method of memorising a new Bible verse has four steps:

Step 1. Meditate and understand the Bible verse before you memorise it.

Step 2. Write the Bible verse on a card or in a notebook. Write topic at the top. The topic today is "Never look back from serving in the kingdom". Beneath that, write the Bible reference of the verse. The Bible reference today is Luke 9:62. And beneath that, write the whole verse.

Step 3. Memorise the verse in the right way. Always start with the name of the topic, the Bible reference and the first line of the verse. It is a good practice to learn the Bible reference twice, first at the beginning of the verse and then at the end of the verse.

Step 4. Review the new Bible verses every day for five weeks. And review the old Bible verses at least once every three weeks.

(T) Let us memorise the Bible verse together. Then let us take turns to say the verse alone without looking at the Bible or notebook.

(T+S) Never look back from serving in the kingdom. Luke 9:62. "No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." Luke 9:62.

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(S) POINT 3. REVIEW OF THE LAST BIBLE VERSES YOU HAVE MEMORISED

Let us review the last 5 Bible verses that we have memorised without looking at our notebooks.

Series "Christian parents", verses 4-5 and series "The kingdom of God", verses 1-3.

(T) To bring up in the Lord: Ephesians 6:4: Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4.

(S) To love through discipline: Proverbs 13:24. He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him. Proverbs 13:24.

(T) Enter into the kingdom: John 3:3,5. "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." John 3:3,5.

(S) Welcome children into the kingdom. Luke 18:16-17. Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. Luke 18:16-17.

(T) Preach the gospel of the kingdom. Matthew 24:14. “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” Matthew 24:14.

(S) **POINT 4. ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Daily review the last five memorised Bible verses once every day for 5 weeks.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and build Christ’s Church” and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to “Discipleship training on the air”.