



THE GOSPEL OF  
**Luke**

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 9:49-62**

To understand more about those who are for Jesus and those who are against Him.

## Cultural Hostility

There are myriads of differences between our contemporary world and the ancient world in which the New Testament was written. One thing that has remained is a kind of cultural pride that breeds hostility to other perceived “lesser” cultures or peoples. This can be clearly seen in the relationship between the Samaritans and the Israelites. In Luke 9:51-56, Jesus and His disciples ask for the common practice of hospitality to be shown to them as they enter into Samaria. Hospitality for travelers was an expected practice of people in the ancient world given the length of time it would take to travel and the lack of hotels or motels during that time. However, because Jesus “set his face towards Jerusalem,” a place that was seen with derision in Samaria, He and His disciples were not welcomed. Beyond that, they did not understand the Messiah’s coming passion. However, it would eventually be the passion of Jesus that would demolish “the dividing wall of hostility” (Eph. 2:14) and make possible for Israelites, Samaritans and any other Gentile to have partnership together for the common goal of proclaiming the Gospel.

## Any Enemy of My Enemy?

In verses 49 and 50, John, one of the inner-three disciples, asks Jesus a question in a roundabout manner: “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us” (Lk. 9:49). Apparently, someone who was seen as an outsider to their group was casting out demons in Jesus’ name as well, and John was not happy about this. Perhaps it was his inclusion not only in

the 12, but in the inner-three that gave him delusions of elite self-importance. Yet, Jesus corrects John in this passage: “But Jesus said to him, “Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you.”

One small and yet powerful takeaway in this passage is that the proclamation of Jesus’ kingdom is more important than the one who proclaims it. This is similar to what Paul teaches in Philippians 1:15-18: “Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and *in that I rejoice*.” Paul, modeling his approach from the Lord Himself, saw the advancement of the Gospel as the top priority, and whether it was being done for the right reasons or the wrong reasons, by people we agree with or disagree with, it is commendable. The proclamation is always more important than the proclaimer.

This speaks to the old adage, “Any enemy of my enemy is my friend.” However, this should be challenged as well. Jesus doesn’t tell John to go and commend the man and partner with him in his exorcism ministry. He simply tells him to leave him alone and let him continue. In a modern sense, this would mean that there are some groups of people who argue for the same values as Christians despite maybe not being Christians themselves. We should not prevent them from fighting for values that align with ours. However, we also should not join hands with them on the basis that they have mutual interests. There may be secular groups, for example, that fight for the rights of the unborn or provide relief to widows and orphans. We should never step in their way, for “the one who is not against you, is for you.” However, on the other hand, it doesn’t mean we should partner with secular groups either. We must always maintain the purity of our identity as the church.

## Rebuked

In verses 51 through 56, Jesus and His disciples are rejected by the Samaritans because He was on His way to Jerusalem. The disciples did not take kindly to this, and asked Jesus in verse 54: “Lord do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” Apart from this being bold and also extremely prideful, it is also an allusion to, once again, the prophet Elijah (who we just saw at the Transfiguration along with Moses in Luke 9:33). In 2 Kings 1:10 and 12, Elijah called down fire from heaven to consume a commander and 50 of his men from the army of the Samaritan king, Ahaziah. The connection between the Samaritan king and the Samaritan city is intentional, and likely what inspired James and John’s response in verse 54, and likely what also motivates Jesus’ teaching in the below passage as well. One would assume that Jesus’ would rebuke the Samaritans for their lack of hospitality, but on the contrary, He rebukes the disciples instead for thinking they had the authority to do what the former prophets did (Lk. 9:55).

## What Does It Mean To Be a Disciple?

In verses 57 through 62, we are given three more examples of the demands of following Jesus. Below is a brief outline of each of them.

### ***IT MEANS BEING AN EXILE***

Verse 57 says, “As they were going along the road, someone said to him, ‘I will follow you wherever you go.’” It seems like a radical statement of faith, but Jesus meets this remark with a sort of warning: “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Lk. 9:58). Remember the immediate context - Jesus has just been turned away from hospitality in Samaria. He quite literally had no place to lay His head! However, the deeper point of this is that to follow Jesus means essentially to be a

stranger in the world. Jesus's kingdom is not of this world (Jn. 18:36). That means those who follow Him and belong to His kingdom are merely sojourners passing through, similar to the Jewish exiles (1 Pet. 1:1-2). To be a disciples means to understand that there is no place for you in this current world, but a future world awaits you that is far more glorious than this current one.

#### ***IT MEANS BEING URGENT***

Immediately following this, Jesus tells another man to follow Him, and this man meets Jesus with an excuse to delay His request: "But he said, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father.'" Verse 60 records His response: "And Jesus said to him, 'Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.'" Jesus' response seems harsh, but understanding the meaning is helpful. The point of Jesus' statement is that nothing must come in the way of discipleship. There are no excuses weighty enough to put off following Jesus. There must be a deep sense of urgency to follow Him immediately, lest your heart become hardened (Heb. 3:15).

#### ***IT MEANS BEING SINGLE-MINDED***

Beyond the urgency required in discipleship, there must be no distractions as well. A third man said to Him, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to those at my home." There is connection to Elisha and Elijah here that is easy to miss. This request from this man is very similar to Elisha's request of Elijah before he began to follow him. After Elijah put the mantle over Elisha, Elisha's response was: "Please, let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you" (1 Kg. 19:20). This connection to Elisha in Jesus' words becomes even clearer when one considers that Elisha himself was *plowing* when Elijah chose him to follow him. Elijah permitted this, but Jesus did not. Instead, He responded: "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9:62). This is likely to show that contrary to what others had said about Jesus, He was not Elijah (Lk. 9:19). There is again, urgency in this, but there is also a demand for single-mindedness. One who is doing the work of the kingdom must never look back at distractions, but be focused on the task at hand. Disciples are not to let other parts of their lives compete with the importance of the Gospel message, but they are to die to themselves daily as they follow (Lk. 9:23).

## **What About Now?**

One takeaway, as mentioned above, is that we should celebrate anytime anyone supports or vies for kingdom principles. It is a good thing when truth is advocated for, regardless of who is advocating for it. On the other hand, we should not partner with anyone who fights for our values, but rather see our partnerships only through the lens of orthodox faith. What unifies us together is our mutual belief in the Gospel empowered by the Holy Spirit. Regardless of whether or not someone is allied with us in specific causes, if they do not share our mutual belief in the Gospel, they are not our partners. Another takeaway is the demand of urgency and single-mindedness in our pursuit of Jesus. It's too easy to become distracted or allow life to compete with the mission and purpose of every disciple, and yet we are warned here to not allow anything to come in our way. We follow Jesus with urgency, with clarity of mission and vision, knowing full well that we will likely be rejected along the way because we are not of this world.

## Study Questions

### Day One

1. Read Luke 9:49-50. What does John talk to Jesus about? What was the problem? What does Jesus tell him in response? What does this mean, and what does it *not* mean? (Hint: See above notes)

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2. Read Luke 9:51-52. What times “drew near” in verse 51? What is this a reference to? Who did Jesus send ahead of them and for what purpose?

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### Day Two

1. Read Luke 9:53-56. How did the Samaritans respond? Why did they respond that way? What did James and John say to Jesus in response? What was Jesus’ response to them?

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2. Read Luke 9:57-58. What did the first person say to Jesus? How did Jesus respond?

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### Day Three

1. Read Luke 9:59. What did Jesus say to the second man? How did he respond?

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2. Read Luke 9:60. What did Jesus say to this man’s request?

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### Day Four

1. Read Luke 9:61. What did the third man say to Jesus?

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2. Read Luke 9:62. What was Jesus’ response to him, and what was He alluding to? (Hint: See above notes)

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## Week 37 Discussion: No Distractions

One of the major takeaways of Jesus’ teaching in Luke 9:60-62 is that to follow Jesus means to have no distractions or things that take precedent over Him. Talk as a group about the kinds of distractions that usually contend with your faith, and what you need to do to address them.

1. Icebreaker: Do you believe you are single-minded in your discipleship, or do other things take precedent over your faith practices sometimes? If so, what are those things?
2. What things have prevented you from attending church this year?
3. What things have prevented you from attending a small group this year?
4. Why do you suppose following Jesus is an all or nothing proposition?
5. Does your faith demonstrate an “all or nothing” conviction? What would help you become more single-minded towards Christ?
6. How can the church help you eliminate distractions in your life?

## Takeaways:

1. Jesus and His disciples are rejected by the Samaritans on their way to Jerusalem.
2. Jesus teaches about the importance of proclamation over the proclaimer, and what it takes to follow Him.