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Three Almost Disciples (Part 1)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses the concept of following Jesus geographically, as seen in the Gospel of Luke and Matthew. He explores the idea of leaving behind settled conditions and cultural expectations in order to pursue Christ wherever he leads. While it may not necessarily involve physically traveling to different locations, following Jesus requires a willingness to live an uncomfortable life and count the cost of discipleship. Gregg encourages listeners to consider what it means to truly follow Christ and to pursue him wholeheartedly.

Transcript

In Luke chapter 9, there's a few verses at the end of this chapter, only six verses actually. But these verses are what we're scheduled to take in this session. Yeah, well, let's just say we didn't get any further behind schedule.

I hoped to get ahead of schedule yesterday because I hoped to take these verses along with the material we took yesterday. Didn't work out that way, so we're really moving along at the rate that the schedule dictates. We're just a couple sessions behind.

We've been a couple sessions behind for a while, for weeks, in fact. Ah, yes, according to the dates. Okay, Luke chapter 9, verses 57 through 62.

Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to him, Lord, I will follow you wherever you go. 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. Then he said to another, follow me.

But he said, Lord, let me first go and bury my father. Jesus said to him, let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow you, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.

But Jesus said to him, no one, having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. Now, there is a parallel to this, though not to the entire passage, only a small part of it. And that is in Matthew chapter 8, verse 19, and that goes through

22.

And that only tells us about two of these three men. Whereas Luke mentions three in a row coming to Jesus. In Matthew chapter 8, verse 18, tells us that right after, actually Matthew places it quite early in Jesus' ministry, but most would agree Matthew doesn't place it in its chronological place.

When he was escaping from Capernaum, from the crowds there, and going on to another town where he had multitudes thronging him at Peter's house, it says in verse 18, now when Jesus saw a great multitude about him, he gave command to depart to the other side. That is, he commanded his disciples to take him by ship across. Then a certain scribe came to him and said to him, teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.

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. Then another of his disciples said to him, Lord, let me first go and bury my father. But Jesus said to him, follow me and let the dead bury their own dead.

Now, this is obviously considerably briefer than what we read in Luke, and we're going to work with the Luke passage principally for that very reason. Matthew only mentions two individuals and gives them some kind of identifying detail, whereas Luke tells us of three, but gives no identifying detail. It just says one guy did this, someone.

The first person is called someone in Luke 9.57, but the same person is referred to as a scribe in Matthew 8.19. Then the second person in Luke 9.59 says, then he said to another without distinguishing who that was, follow me. But he said, Lord, let me first go bury my father. Now, the way Matthew reads that, it refers to this another as another of his disciples.

And it doesn't tell that Jesus said to him, follow me. Although I guess Jesus having said, follow me, makes him a would be a disciple or at least a person who had been maybe a tentative disciple up to this point. And Jesus said, follow me.

And his answer is given. Although in Matthew 8, it doesn't say that Jesus said, follow me to him. It just says that another of his disciples said to him, Lord, let me first go and bury my father.

And Jesus said, let the dead bury the dead. But they does not follow it up with that you go and preach the kingdom of God, which is what Luke contains. So what we have is essentially more detail in Luke.

And of course, a third individual also. But there are a couple of things in Matthew that supplement what we can see in the Luke passage. Namely, that while Luke is very indistinct about what kind of people these were, just someone said to him and he said to another and another said in verse 61 of Luke, just another, another and someone.

Whereas Matthew on the two individuals that it tells us about, tells us one of them was a scribe and another was a disciple or was one who was being called to be a disciple. Perhaps that's how we should understand it. Since Jesus said, follow me.

And when Jesus said, follow me to somebody, it was it was more than just saying, believe in me. There were many who believed in Jesus, but didn't follow him. The expression follow me is an invitation to itinerancy, to actually travel around with him.

And there were certainly people who believed in him and we would have say Christians who didn't travel around with Jesus. There were great multitudes who followed Jesus when he was in their neighborhood or came out to hear him preach on the hillsides and would stay with him a few days and then they'd go home and they didn't follow him around permanently. But they many of them at least believed in him because we know that after his resurrection, he appeared to 500 of them at one time.

Where were these gathered 500 and who were they? We're never told. Paul tells us in first Corinthians 15 that after Jesus resurrection, there were 500 people gathered in one place at one time that Jesus appeared to. And I think we're to assume that these were people who believed in him since Peter told Cornelius in Acts chapter 10 that Jesus didn't appear to everybody after his resurrection, only to a few appointed ones.

So we have to assume there were a lot more people who were believers in Jesus, even who were allowed to see him after his resurrection, then followed him around from place to place. We know that in Jerusalem alone on the day of Pentecost, there were 120 believers in the upper room. And I've heard people ask, well, if there were 500 that he appeared to, why were there only 120 in the upper room? Well, the question arises from the assumption that everyone who believed in Jesus must have traveled around geographically with him.

That just wasn't the case. The 500 that he appeared to were probably in Galilee, where he had his largest number of followers. But those in the upper room were people who lived in or near Jerusalem and were able to hang out there for 50 days after Pentecost and they didn't have to go back home somewhere else.

It would seem, at least not immediately. And so we would expect it to be so, that in Galilee where Jesus did most of his public ministry, he'd have considerably more believers than he'd have down in Judea. And the ones in the upper room would be probably consisting largely of the Judean locals and possibly whatever Galileans had attached themselves to Jesus to travel around and go wherever he went, kind of left everything to follow him.

What I'm saying is that there were probably hundreds of people that were true Christians, true believers in Jesus and correctly called disciples and who are the counterpart of the majority of people who are called Christians today and who probably

are true Christians. People who didn't travel geographically, their conversion did not take them away from their home and family and their jobs. They became believers and they were saved just like anybody else was saved who was a believer who traveled around with Jesus.

But you see, the majority of persons who believe in Jesus, I think we should assume, did not become geographical nomads. Of course, they all became strangers and pilgrims in this world because as soon as you come into the kingdom of God, you really now have a citizenship elsewhere and you're away from home as it were, your real home. Our citizenship is in heaven.

We are on the earth, but not everyone is a geographical nomad. There are, of course, and always have been, Christians who were called to that. In Jesus' day, of course, the 12 were among those, but there were larger numbers than that too.

Judging from the fact that Jesus sent out 70 of them on one occasion, that was probably at the peak of his popularity. He probably never had very many more than about 70, as near as we can tell, traveling around as his entourage. And that would have been quite a hard group to house when he would come to a new city and they'd have to stay somewhere.

70 people would not be the easiest thing in the world, which is perhaps why Jesus said, the sun man has nowhere to lay his head. They probably had to sleep out under the stars an awful lot if there were a fair number of them. And therefore, we have here, a call to follow him is more than just a call to believe in him.

Many were called to believe in him, but not all of them were expected to or even invited to follow him. You remember that the man of the tombs, after Jesus cast out the legion out of him, it says that he begged Jesus to let him follow him. He wanted to go with Jesus and Jesus said, no, you go back home, you stay home.

You go and tell your family and friends, you know, the great things God has done for you. And so the man became a domestic missionary in his own hometown. He was not permitted to travel with Jesus.

And back in the days when I was more naive about these things and didn't read the gospels as carefully as I should have, I used to think that in those days, to be a Christian meant you'd leave everything and follow Jesus around. You just couldn't be a disciple and you couldn't follow Jesus around. But that obviously couldn't be true.

It always bothered me in those days that here, this man whom Jesus cast the legion out of wanted to follow Jesus and Jesus wouldn't let him. I thought, my goodness, what a... Jesus said, anyone who comes to me, I'll in no wise cast out. Was this man being denied the right to be a Christian? Being denied the right to follow Jesus? Obviously not.

The man was a believer and an evangelist for Jesus, but he didn't travel around with Jesus. And it's also likely that Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead and his two sisters, Mary and Martha, who continually played host to the disciples when they were in the area, that they probably didn't travel around with Jesus either. In fact, we know they didn't continuously because when Lazarus fell sick, the sisters, Mary and Martha, were at home in Bethany and sent a message to Jesus by messengers because he wasn't there and they weren't with him.

It took a couple of days. They were a couple of days' journey away from him. So we know that there were many people who loved Jesus, whom he regarded to be his true followers, but who were not geographically in motion.

They had homes. They had families, and they were not called to leave them as far as we know. But there was always that special call that some would have, the extraordinary call, that which would come only to the minority of persons who were really believers.

It was a missionary calling. It was a calling to leave behind whatever the settled condition was that Christ found you in and to go out and evangelize or whatever, to be mobile. This, of course, was what the apostles were called to do.

But even after Jesus' ascension, there were others besides the apostles who did this. Most of them traveled with the apostles. We know, for instance, that Mark, who was not an apostle, traveled with Barnabas and apparently at a later date traveled with Peter because in 1 Peter 5, Peter mentions that Mark is with him in Rome, where he's writing the letter from.

We know that people like Timothy, now, though Timothy later may be regarded as an apostle, it's probable that Timothy was not an apostle himself, but he was one who was, like Paul, called away from home to travel and to be instrumental in planting churches and overseeing infant churches and administering churches and then moving on and doing the same thing somewhere else. This is the kind of thing that some people, but most were not, were called to do. And I've registered in the past my disagreement with Keith Green about this.

Not that I fault him for being wrong about this. I think a lot of Christians are wrong about this. But Keith felt that, as you probably know if you're familiar with his ministry, near the end of his life, he used to say this quite boldly and absolutely without any mitigation, without any balance, which was fairly typical of Keith to take a strong stand and not balance it until he swung a pendulum like the other way eventually.

And I don't say that as a criticism of him except to say he was a fairly young Christian even when he died. And young Christians, probably still am not. But he felt, and I only mention him by name because his influence is so great and so widespread among radical Christians.

I mean, the people who are the most radical Christians of the younger generation today usually are fans of Keith Green and for good reason. He was about the most uncompromised, most radical Christian celebrity there was. And so I mention him because of his great influence in this particular area.

He tended to believe near the end of his life, that everybody ought to go. Everyone ought to be mobile. He said specifically, if you have not received a specific call to stay where you are, then you should consider that you are called to go because Jesus said, go into all the world.

And he did not take into consideration what any good exegete would have to do is to whom did Jesus say that and how was it to be applied. When Jesus said, go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature who heard that call to. Well, even if we say it is to the whole church, which is the way I would be inclined to take it.

I would be inclined to say that is a call to the whole church. The question is then, in what way is the church supposed to carry that out? By every individual member going to every individual country? Then nobody in the church would ever have a home. There would never be a church in any location because everyone, as soon as they got saved, would go somewhere else and there would be no existing church in any city because everybody would be obligated to move as soon as they got saved but in the remaining days of their lives to hit every country in the world because the command is to go to every nation, make disciples of every nation.

So if that is to be individually applied to every Christian, then every one of us need about 250 plane tickets and there certainly won't be any home churches to send you or back you because everyone who would otherwise be your home church will be out doing the same thing you are doing. Now, that obviously isn't the way the early church understood the commission and I don't think it is the way any sensible thinking person would understand it either if they think through and if they think through it is clear that the church as a whole, as a body is to have its mobile arms it is supposed to have its outreach and it is incumbent on the Christian church to reach the entire world and every nation but not necessarily by the employment of every member in mobile outreach. There are different gifts, the Apostle Paul said, different callings and like in a body not everyone does the same thing.

If you have really good outreach guys and about 50 people back home supporting them then you can do a lot better than getting all those 50 people mobilized especially when most of them are pretty poor preachers and in many cases very poor testimonies too of what Christ can do. It seems clear that the early church understood and every church in modern times really has too for the most part if they have been evangelistic at all that some members of the churches have been supporting and praying and so forth and so it was in Jesus' own lifetime. Not everyone was to be traveling.

Jesus called certain people to follow him, to travel with him ones that he thought had promise as leaders and preachers apparently ones that he wanted to give special leadership training to and the rest he left where he found them. That was not that he didn't love them as much or that they weren't as saved as the others but he just didn't need the people he believed to travel with him. In fact we know that Jesus was supported financially and his team that traveled with him were supported financially by the persons who didn't travel with him.

Mary and Martha and Lazarus we know that their home was open they donated meals and lodging and so forth to the apostolic group. There were certain women besides who were named in the gospels who actually contributed financially to Jesus though I don't know that they traveled with them. If they did their husbands they would be called Herod's steward and Herod's steward wouldn't be able to travel around with Jesus and he would be in Herod's household.

We don't know exactly to what extent these people traveled with him of course we have to keep things in perspective too. Jesus' travels all took place within a very small geographical area so even people who are more or less stationary could probably go out and hear him in nearby villages from time to time and could be semi-followers. But the point here is that Jesus is talking in these three cases to a person away from family away from prior commitments in a way that puts the missionary calling above every other legitimate responsibility.

And there are three cases given here in Luke chapter 9 verses 57 through 62. In the first case a man voluntarily says Lord I'll follow you. Jesus doesn't invite him he just volunteers I'll follow you.

In the second case Jesus initiates and says to another guy follow me. And then in the third case once again the guy volunteers Jesus doesn't ask him but the guy volunteers to go. Now this shows that there were in addition to the people that Jesus was inviting to follow him there were people volunteering wanting to go.

I already mentioned the man of the tombs who wanted to go with Jesus and he said no. Two out of these three were not invited by Jesus to become mobile missionaries. Now this doesn't mean that he wouldn't have accepted their volunteerism if they could meet the requirements.

In each of these three cases Jesus said something that was well let's put it this way in the two cases where the men volunteered Jesus gave them sort of a discouraging response. In the case of the guy that he called and who was tending to waffle he gave encouragement. But the ones that volunteered without Jesus calling them he basically wanted to adjust their perspective give them a bit of an understanding of what they were talking about.

It's possible for someone to look at the glamour and the romance of a mobile lifestyle but of course in our own day it would be you know everyone's with Jesus who's a Christian whether they're traveling or at home. I mean Jesus is everywhere now. It couldn't have been so in those days when he was on the planet in physical form.

But there is something there's a wanderlust in some people. There's a desire to kind of move about from place to place. There's an enjoyment of travel and seeing the world and seeing foreign places by sitting still in one place too far.

There's people who are unstable who move about from place to place to get out of problems that they've gotten into in the place they're in. Of course we don't have anyone like that here but there are people like that. And some of those people when they become Christians think well you know yeah I'd like to go overseas or I'd like to travel around or they see somebody who travels around and speaks to them too.

They saw him in his band and hey they didn't have a social group any more exciting than that large entourage traveling with Jesus. And Jesus was an important guy. Many people were speculating he'd maybe be the Messiah maybe he was going to be the ruler of the country.

There's a lot of reasons to want to get close to a guy like that especially if you don't have anything else going that's better. Now I'd like to suggest that the two men who volunteered that is the first and the third example given here were men who probably probably didn't follow through probably didn't follow Jesus after all though they may have. Jesus may have been not trying to tell them no.

He may have just been saying listen it's OK if you go but listen this is how it's going to be. Have you counted the cost? Now we are not told in the case of any of the three whether they finally decided we can hope certainly the second one did since he was a disciple of Jesus we're told. But still all three of them may have gone with him in the end or may not have.

But the reason this passage is given is because Luke has gathered these three instances here probably to show us three different ways in which people have jumped the gun or misunderstood what the cost was of following Jesus in this particular manner. And you know even for those who were not called to follow him geographically from place to place yet those who are going to be committed to the Kingdom of God have to have the same kind of dedication to them that these required. It was just underscored more completely in the case of these men because they were going to leave home.

And so Jesus took the opportunity in a sense to accentuate what the difference was to be between one who was his follower and one who had commitments at home. I think we could say that one had to be told that if he was going to follow Jesus he would leave the comforts of home. 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.

You have to sleep out in the open field sometimes. Sometimes it may rain on you. Sometimes it might be uncomfortable.

Sometimes robbers may sweep down upon you. You're not going to have a building around you some of the time. You're going to be out and vulnerable.

The comforts of home will not be yours. So this man had to be woken up to the reality that to follow Jesus would conceivably take him from the comforts of home. The second guy he said let me first go and bury my father.

Now there are some people who say that the man's father was not even dead yet. In fact I think many commentators would say that. Sometimes to speak of burying your father just meant let me stay home until my father is dead and I buried him even though that might be a few years off.

The assumption would be that a son was expected to stay and help his father and his father's business. And from what I've read at death at the death of the father the son would be at liberty to change professions if he wanted but as long as his father was alive he would be expected to work with his dad in the shop or whatever it was his father did. That was sort of the cultural expectation.

The argument that his father may not have been dead yet is bolstered by the fact that the man wasn't going about the business of burying his father at that very moment. In that kind of warm climate where they didn't have modern methods of embalming or refrigeration it was important to bury a body pretty quick. Nowadays of course they drain all the blood out and replace all the blood in the veins with embalming fluid and the body doesn't rot very quickly so you can do that then.

You wait more than a day or so and that body is going to be stinking so you make a point of burying the dead as quickly as you can preferably on the same day. Now if this boy's father was dead and not yet buried then we must assume that burying his father would have been something that he'd be giving attention to at that very moment. I mean when a man dies in that society and has to be buried the same day or the next day certainly the family would be scrambling to make all the arrangements to get the relatives and gathered and so forth.

You couldn't just phone them either. You'd have to go out and send messengers or go yourself. I mean there'd be a lot of responsibilities involved if his father had died why was he standing around talking about following Jesus? Why was he even there in the crowd unless Jesus just caught him there's some reason to suggest that the guy's father wasn't even dead yet but whether he was or not is not the issue.

The boy was concerned about his responsibilities at home. The cultural expectations

were that the son would stay home and help his father until his father was dead and buried and if in fact his father was dead it would also be his responsibility to go about burying him and Jesus basically said leave that to others and the second guy was somewhat hung up on his responsibilities at home to his parents and then the third guy said I'll follow you but first let me go and bid farewell to those who are at my house. This is almost certainly an attempt to get the blessing and the approval of those at home about his leaving and Jesus indicated that he shouldn't do so in this case.

We're going to go back over and he was willing to follow Jesus but only if he had the approval of those at home. Now those are three things home can bear a strong magnetic attraction to a person and keep them from doing something that separates them from the comforts of home the responsibilities of home or the approval of family of those at home and in every case it isn't wrong in fact in most cases in fact I'd say virtually every case you should carry out your responsibilities at home although it may be necessary to redefine them because you may be thinking of your responsibilities in a cultural sense. If this man's father needed him at home the one who wanted to wait until his father was buried or if his father was dead and needed to be buried he would have him to stay home.

I don't think Jesus would call a young man away from his father if his father was going to go broke without him because Jesus criticized the Pharisees on a previous occasion for not taking financial responsibility for their parents for leaving their parents vulnerable you know the story back in Mark 7 or the parallel in Matthew 15 he criticized the Pharisees because they had a traditional loophole that says you're supposed to honor your father and your mother and he that curses his father and mother would be put to death. Now Jesus disapproved of the Phariseic traditions that allowed a man to truly neglect his parents in need therefore it would be inconsistent for Jesus to call this man away from his parents home if he was needed there I mean if they really would be put out. Sons perhaps or relatives the father might not have needed him really to stay alive his father might have been secure enough without his help but culturally he was expected to stay home and many times it's really the cultural not the real expectations not the things that God expects you to do for your parents but the things that your parents expect you to do for them or that society expects you to do for them.

Let's look at these one at a time if we could. It happened in verse 57 it happened as they journeyed on the road that someone said to him Lord I will follow you wherever you go. Now it's obvious that this is a geographical following he's talking about wherever you go I'm going to follow you and this might be a good point at which to even define what it means to follow Jesus especially in view of the fact that it's different today than it was then to follow Jesus meant to follow him wherever he went at least in the case that this man is talking about but there's other senses in which people could be said to follow Jesus and especially in our own day because Jesus is not moving from place to place he's everywhere we are we don't have to move to be with him.

How do we follow Jesus today well the word follow has many meanings in the Bible and many of them are born out even in the English word if you look at an English dictionary you'll find that the first meaning of follow is to go in pursuit of the first meaning of to follow something or someone is to go in pursuit of it that is the thing you're following the person following is going somewhere and you pursue them you follow behind them we know that the word has that meaning or at least discipleship had that meaning in at least one passage probably more than that in Matthew chapter 16 which we studied not very long ago in verse 24 Matthew 16 24 Jesus said to his disciples at Caesarea Philippi if anyone desires to come after me let him deny himself take up his cross and follow me okay now there there's a reference to following Jesus but it's also referred to as coming after him going in pursuit of him so we can see that following Jesus meant pursuing him geographically moving from place to place wherever he went and that is obviously the sense in which this man in Luke 9 57 meant it I will follow you wherever you go that however is a sense in which it is not possible for modern Christians to follow Jesus once again because he's not visibly here and even though he is here he's not more here than he is somewhere else he's not you know you don't wherever you go or whether you stay you're always with him although it could be argued you're not always in the center of his will if he's calling you to go somewhere and you don't go then in a sense you could be said not to be pursuing him you're not you're not following him but that's more a matter of following his instructions now that's another another meaning follow to follow Jesus can mean to follow his teaching to follow his instructions and his example to imitate that also is what the dictionary would call the follow to follow someone can mean to imitate them or to follow their teaching to be a disciple of there are not only followers of Jesus followers of Buddha though he's not moving around going anywhere he's rotting in a grave but there's still people who follow his teachings they would be called his followers same is true of the followers of Mohammed or any other famous person that has headed up a movement whether they're alive or dead they can still be followed by following their teachings and their example for people to imitate them and to conform themselves to the teachings and the model values and so forth of a person that is another sense in which a person can be followed another word another way that the word follow is used is in the sense of fixing the eyes on something like following it across the room your eyes can follow somebody across the room but only as you fix your eyes on them and keep your eyes on them otherwise you're not following them and there's a sense in which we follow Jesus that way too according to Hebrews chapter 12 it says in Hebrews 12 1 therefore we also since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us and let us run with endurance the race that's set before us looking unto Jesus some translations say fixing your eyes on Jesus in fact does anyone have a translation that says that I don't remember which translations say that I've seen that in some modern translations I don't know if it's the NIV or the New American does anyone have one that says in verse 2 Hebrews 12 2 what's that okay well okay the NAS also does that so the NAS and the NIV both say fixing your eyes on Jesus you're running this race and your eyes are fixed like a

runner's eyes are fixed on the goal on the tape he keeps his eyes on whatever's ahead of course we're if we're talking about straight race not a not a circuitous route you know he's looking ahead at that goal and keeps his eyes on it keeps his attention on it when he begins to get tired or when he hits the wall it's only that he's fixing his eyes on that goal that he's hoping to obtain that keeps him running the race and that's what it means here that we're keeping fixing our eyes on Jesus that's another sense in which we follow him and we're running the race after him if you look at Philippians which you did recently through the whole book Philippians chapter 3 and verse 8 Paul says but indeed I also count all things lost for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord whom I have suffered the loss for whom I've suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish that I may gain Christ and going on he says and be found in him not having my own righteousness which is from the law but that which is from faith in Christ the righteousness which is from God by faith that I may know him and the power of his resurrection the fellowship of his suffering being conformed unto his death if by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead not that I've already attained or I'm already perfected but I press on that I may lay hold on that for which Christ Jesus laid hold on me brethren I do not count myself to have apprehended but one thing this one thing I do for getting those things which are behind and reaching forward for those things which are ahead I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus now he's following Christ pressing toward the goal fixing his eyes on what he wants to reach what he wants to obtain that I may gain Christ verse 8 says and he has to do this by forgetting what's behind by counting the other things rubbish he can't follow Christ in this sense and still hang on to the past now so even though following Christ doesn't always refer to going from one place to another geographically today so it may in many cases for some people yet it always means to imitate to follow the example to follow the teachings to fix the eyes on Christ and to seek to obtain him these are all ways in which the word follow apply and of course that was true in Jesus time it's true even in the English language the word follow has all those meanings in modern usage too now this man said I'll follow you wherever you go but in verse 58 Jesus said him foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head now this isn't exactly the same thing as saying you can't come and we don't know whether the man after this went with him or not but Jesus definitely was suggesting that this man had not yet counted the cost Jesus wasn't trying to tell him something he already knew he was trying to tell him something he had not yet considered saying well you know you have a home right now in fact even the animals have homes there's a sense in which following me may call you to a lifestyle that affords fewer comforts than even the animals and the birds enjoy foxes at least have a den to get in out of the rain birds have nests to get away from their predators that are after them but I don't have any safe place I don't have any place of shelter you follow me it'll be the same for you you'll have to consider are you willing to give up the comforts of home for many of you hopefully for all of you coming to this school was one of the steps of your following the Lord in other words you came here hopefully because you were led to ideally if you came for other

reasons and you probably discovered that you shouldn't be here anyway but if you were led by the Lord to come here then coming here was part of following the Lord for you and where you go from here will be another part of following the Lord for you you know I mean your whole life is a series of taking steps of following Jesus but many of you found when you came here that it was certainly not as there's not as much privacy there wasn't you know well privacy I guess is the issue I guess I bring out the main the main difficulty of dormitory life is privacy of course the beds might not be as comfortable as what you had at home either good chance of old military bunks with old military mattresses probably they're probably you probably have somewhat better accommodations at home but yeah and perhaps I don't know some of you may have had trouble adjusting to that if you did it didn't reach my ears but I would have no doubts that some people had some problems with at least the privacy issue and possibly even with lumpy beds or whatever I don't know maybe even the food although I think we have pretty good food here the point is that if you stayed here it was because you were willing to consider that this is where you should be and what you're going to get here is something God wants you to get and it's more important than the comforts at home you could obviously be more comfortable somewhere else you could have more privacy you could have things the way you want them somewhere else but that's just the point when you follow the Lord there's no guarantees that you're going to be comfortable or that you'll have things the way you want them and that's what this man had to be told it's possible that this man seen Jesus as the future Messiah I say future Messiah of course Jesus was the Messiah but they were thinking in terms of something Jesus had not yet done as something the Messiah I was going to do, and thinking that Jesus would become the ruler and the king of the Jews, that this man thought that following him was going to be a plush thing, or at least not too far in the future there would be a turnaround of things and he'd have the palace rather than, you know, wherever he was staying in currently. But Jesus was trying to point out to him that it was going to be a road that would be something like poverty in some cases to follow him. Now I don't personally believe that a person who follows Christ is always obliged to impose artificially forms of poverty and discomfort upon themselves.

I don't think there's any virtue in choosing to be poor, unless you're choosing to be poor so that the resources you might have otherwise enjoyed could be used for things that are unselfish. That is helping the poor, supporting missions or something like that. To just choose to be poor because you think being poor is better than being rich isn't necessarily that commendable.

And the same thing about being uncomfortable. It's clear in some religions, mostly not in Christianity though, there have been the monastics, even in the church, who felt this way. They just felt like it's more commendable to sleep uncomfortable, to dress uncomfortably, to wear sackcloth under their clothes or whatever, you know, to live an uncomfortable life.

And such people, there has been that of course in the church, especially in the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages where there were a lot of monasticism and the whole idea of doing penance is probably part of that too. The idea is probably these people are struggling with unresolved guilt. They haven't quite ever grasped what the grace of God is about and haven't understood that they're forgiven even without punishing themselves further.

God didn't call you to a life where you're supposed to punish yourself. But he did call you to a life where you're supposed to submit to his will and sometimes that might be an uncomfortable one. To just choose poverty because you think that's more virtuous than being rich is to be wrongheaded because there are Christians who are rich and have their hearts right.

Not as many as poor and have their hearts right probably because Jesus said it's harder for that to be the case. But there are certainly people who are poor and have their hearts wrong. There are people who are poor and covet what others have or if they don't covet it because they prefer to be poor, they resent what others have or judge others for having it and are critical of others unnecessarily.

Being poor doesn't make one virtuous. The only thing that would be a positive plus about being poor is if you were in fact capable of living more comfortably but you're choosing a life of service to others which along with it or service to God which along with it came poverty. I mean you just couldn't do this and make all the money you could otherwise make.

If you are poor as a byproduct of your obedience to God in other words, if you're poor as a byproduct of your service to God or to your fellow man, then there's virtue in it. But the virtue is not in being poor. The virtue is in your resignation, your willingness to be poor if that's what it takes to obey God.

The virtue is in obeying God. It's a right and good and commendable thing to obey God. If obeying God keeps you comfortable because he doesn't call you to an uncomfortable life, you shouldn't feel bad about that.

But if his call calls you to a very uncomfortable situation and many third world mission situations and even domestic missions in the inner city and stuff are very often very uncomfortable situations that people have been called to, well you just have to be oblivious to the question of comfort. That's the point. Jesus no doubt had his nights where he slept in a comfortable bed.

There were people who gave him hospitality. There were times when he ate sumptuous meals. Pharisees and others invited him over for feasts.

Jesus did not have a poverty vow because a poverty vow works more with a different

religion than with Christianity. It's just religious. It's just legalism and it's just kind of self-righteousness.

But Jesus just had a vow of obedience to his father and to obey God. Sometimes probably had him sleeping in comfortable places and eating good meals. Other times had him going without food maybe for days at a time.

We know of at least one time it mentions he didn't interrupt his ministry even to sleep or to eat. That's the occasion when his relatives heard about him and sent someone out to arrest him, or not arrest him, but take him into their custody and take him home and put him in a padded cell for a little while. So we can say that no particular lifestyle, whether there is comfort in it or discomfort in it, is to be condemned.

But obeying God is necessary and certainly a person needs to count the cost that obeying God might make them uncomfortable. There will be times when certainly many people who are called to follow God are called to uncomfortable things. I think that's probably because most people by human nature choose the comfortable positions.

And if there are ministries that are comfortable, there's a lot of people applying for them. And therefore if somebody is really willing to do anything God wants, a lot of the comfortable positions are already taken by people who are not willing to do uncomfortable things. Therefore a lot of times if you do commit yourself wholly to God and say, God, I'll go anywhere you want, he may send you to an uncomfortable place.

Not because it's a better place to be, but because there's fewer people willing to take those particular places. And there's fewer people who really make that commitment that they'll go wherever God wants them to go, no matter what it costs them.