What Is the High Cost of Discipleship?
Scripture: Luke 9:59-60
Code: BQ81011

And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:59–60)

First to go and bury my father." At first glance, this seems to be a reasonable request. It was every son's duty to make sure that his father was properly cared for in death (cf. Gen. 25:9; 35:29; 49:29–50:13); only the high priest (Lev. 21:10–11) and those who had taken a Nazarite vow (Num. 6:6–7) were excused from their father's funeral, since they were forbidden to go near a dead person.

The problem with the man's excuse was that his father was not yet dead! Since the Jews did not embalm, Jewish custom dictated that burial take place immediately after death. A comparison of John 11:1, 6, and 17 reveals that Lazarus was buried the same day that he died (one day for the messenger from Mary and Martha to reach Jesus, Jesus delayed two more days, then arrived on the fourth day to find that Lazarus had been buried four days earlier). Both Ananias (Acts 5:6) and Sapphira (v.10) were buried immediately after they died.

What this man was really saying was that he wanted to delay following the Lord until his father died and he received his inheritance. He knew that Jesus was moving out of the area, and to leave now might cause him to lose out on his share of his father's estate. Unlike the Twelve (cf. Matt. 19:27; Luke 5:11, 28), he was not willing to leave everything and follow Jesus. He was an example of "the seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity" (Luke 8:14).

Jesus replied with a proverbial saying that was a rebuke of this man's wrong priorities: **"Allow the dead to bury their own dead."** That does not mean that believers are forbidden to attend funerals or care for their dead relatives' affairs. To say that the spiritually **dead** can **bury their own dead** is to say that there are issues that are priorities to the spiritually dead, but not to those who are alive in Christ. Jesus challenged this individual to leave temporal, earthly matters to worldly people and not make them his overriding priority. Secular people are preoccupied with secular matters, but he was to **go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God** no matter what doing so might cost him. But like the rich young ruler, he was more committed to personal riches than spiritual truth. It is impossible to serve both God and riches (Luke 16:13), and when forced to choose the men both chose riches.

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