

How much does Jesus mean to you?

How much someone means to us is demonstrated by a number of factors, such as our attitudes towards them, how much time we want to spend with them, how high up they are on our priority list, what we will give up to be with them. So, the question then is: How much does Jesus mean to you?

Matthew 8:18-22

When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."

Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

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 dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

He said to another man, "Follow me."

But he 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 goodbye to my family."

Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

1) Over eager religiosity

- The first person is the zealously religious person who approaches Jesus to commit himself to follow Jesus where He may go.
- This man was a teacher of the law – a highly religious man who knew the law thoroughly
 - Surely, this man would have been an asset to Jesus and His motley crew of unlearned disciples!
 - Surely, he would draw more crowds if they knew what a learned man he was!
 - Surely, he would give good and proper explanations regarding things pertaining to the law!
- Jesus wasn't impressed by who he was and his outward zeal
 - He knew that all advantages, according to the worldly perspective, would be more of a hindrance than a blessing. After all, how many times He had to rebuke the teachers of the law for their hypocrisy.
 - Matthew 23:1-4 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.
 - Their attitudes and actions were directly contrary to those of Jesus
- The teachers of the law could have been middle class to wealthy, which means that they would have lived a fairly comfortable lifestyle.
 - Jesus' challenge of Him not having a place to stay, even though even foxes have dens and birds have nests, would have queried His true commitment to Jesus
 - Would he have been willing to give up the comforts of life to follow Jesus wherever He went?
 - Jesus didn't tell him not to follow him, but merely to count the cost of comfort before making a rash decision
- How much does Jesus mean to you?
 - Are you religious, but confined to the bare minimum of religious tradition, or does the love of Jesus surpass all comforts that you may have?

2) A call and an excuse

- The next person didn't volunteer to follow Jesus, but Jesus called him to follow Him.
- Unlike the disciples who immediately left their fathers, fishing nets, and boats, and others who left their tax collection booths to follow Jesus, this person came up with an excuse.
 - Luke 9:59 But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."
 - This seemed to be a perfectly valid excuse, after all we have family responsibilities that shouldn't be neglected
 - Doesn't the Word of God tell us that if we neglect our family responsibilities then we are worse than unbelievers?
 - 1 Timothy 5:8 Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.
- So, why then was this an excuse to Jesus' call and not a legitimate explanation to why he shouldn't follow Jesus?
 - According to Jewish tradition of the time there used to be two burials. The original funeral was what the family held to commemorate the death of their loved one. The deceased person was placed in a tomb or cave for some time. Thereafter, the bones and other remains were gathered by men trained according to Jewish law to place them in a box that would be placed in a tomb as the final resting place.
 - Jesus never told the man to shirk his responsibilities of burying his father, but to leave that second burial to those who would take care of it, and he was to follow Him.
 - The man wasn't expressing his family responsibilities to get out of following Jesus, but his religious tradition
- The third man was similar to the second. He said he would follow Jesus, but wanted to first go and say goodbye to his family.
 - This man was a good family man, but put his family before Jesus.
 - As much as we ought to give priority to our families, they ought not come before God in our lives
- Do we make excuses not to follow Jesus wherever He goes under the guise of family or work responsibilities?
 - If Jesus told you to leave whatever you're doing now to follow Him to another country, would you do it, or would you make excuses why you can't do it?
 - It's a matter of submission to His Lordship over your lives

3) Fit for the kingdom

- Luke 9:62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."
 - When we enter the kingdom of God, we enter having counted the cost of following Jesus
 - Only those who resolutely look to Him and follow Him without a desire to turn back to their old lives are fit for service in the kingdom of God
 - Jesus is looking for wholehearted servants, not vacillating religious people
- He will reward us for everything that we've given up to follow Him
 - Matthew 19:28-30 Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first."