

Tough Talk

“No turning back!”

Read Luke 9:57-62; 14:28-33; Matt. 7:13-14; 1 Kings 19:19-21.

1. Is your Jesus a lamb carrying, children loving, meek and mild character, or a radical revolutionary, or something else?
2. Read Luke 9:57-62. Are you surprised at Jesus discouraging people to follow him? How different is this from much of contemporary Christianity? How would you have responded to each of these three would-be followers?
3. By informing the first man (v57-58) that the Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head, Jesus was provoking him to count the cost of following. How might this translate into our culture today? Is this an integral part of our evangelism?
4. Read Luke 14:28-33. Then talk about the merits of the following John Stott quote:

“The Christian landscape is strewn with the wreckage of derelict, half-built towers - the ruins of those who began to build and were unable to finish. For thousands of people still ignore Christ’s warning and undertake to follow Him without first pausing to reflect on the cost of doing so. The result is the great scandal of Christendom today, so-called ‘nominal Christianity’. In countries to which Christian civilization has spread, large numbers of people have covered themselves with a decent, but thin, veneer of Christianity. They have allowed themselves to become somewhat involved; enough to be respectable but not enough to be uncomfortable. Their religion is a great, soft cushion. It protects them from the hard unpleasantness of life, while changing its place and shape to suit their conveniences. No wonder the cynics speak of hypocrites in the church and dismiss religion as escapism.”

Is our Christianity respectable but not uncomfortable?

5. Do you think that Jesus was unreasonable to the second man (v59-60)? What does “dead bury the dead” mean? (Might Eph. 2:1 help us here?). What was this man’s essential “sin”?
6. “The tragedy of life is not that it ends so soon, but that we wait so long to begin it.” Thoughts?
7. The third man (v61-62) offered to follow Jesus, but needed to say farewell to his family first. Most of us would think that was a reasonable, even commendable, request. Why didn’t Jesus think so? In which way was this man’s offer to follow Jesus “conditional”? Do we see this trait in ourselves? Does the promise of “I will follow you, Lord, **BUT** . . .” sound familiar?
8. Do you agree that much of western Christianity has become so subnormal that the normal seems abnormal?

Devotional: play Matt Redman’s “Show me the way of the cross once again”