

Luke 9:46-56 – Three questions about being a disciple

Discipleship is very different to how people imagine it today in Kenya. Christianity is not what they think. So, we are going back to the source in the Bible to see what Jesus really taught. When we go back to the Bible, we find that Jesus' apostles themselves were confused. Even people in those days did not understand real discipleship. True discipleship is harder; but it is also better. It brings true joy and truly worth-while lives. What use is a title deed to all Eldoret, if it is a fake? We need the real thing!

1. Who is the greatest? (v46-48)

Jesus had spoken about rejection and death. But now the disciples thought and talked about their own greatness. Who was the greatest? They looked for glory now, without the cross. He had spoken about glory afterwards. The truth is that we are sinful, and cannot receive God's glory until we are saved by the blood of Christ, and then made holy through the Spirit by a life of testing, troubles and humble service. Then he will give us glory. We are foolish to think of another way. Jesus knew what they were thinking, but was gentle with them – he is kind and patient with our foolishness. He took a child – children are those with no status, great successes or power. He said, “serve these in my name”. When we serve for Jesus' sake (not our own sake), then we serve Jesus – and we serve God. The great name in the kingdom is that of God, not of ourselves. Forget yourself, and give yourself to him. That is true greatness. The humblest, lowest servant is the one that God is most pleased with. The greatest is Jesus, who gave himself to the cross for our forgiveness. Greatness is to serve the “nobodies”.

2. Other Christians are behind us – what should we do with them? (v49-50)

John remembered a man they had met. He had been casting out demons in Jesus' name. But he had not joined with the main group of disciples. He was serving Jesus, but was not with the disciples. John had told him to stop what he was doing. Today, we can see people who love Jesus and want to serve him – but they are very mixed up and confused. They are trying to serve, but lacking much wisdom. Jesus said, do not stand in their way. Those who love Jesus and are trying to serve him are our brothers. They are on our side. We are joined with them with the same Saviour. We should help them, not discourage them. We need to know which side we are on! Jesus was not talking about false teachers, or fake miracle workers, or those in obvious sins. Those should be rebuked and called to repentance. But those who love Jesus, we should be careful with, not to discourage them.

3. People treat us badly – why does God not judge them? (v51-56)

The time was come to go to Jerusalem for Jesus to die. The Father was now sending him to the cross to give himself for our sins. It was a terrible place – but he was determined. The quickest route was by Samaria. The Samaritans had long ago turned away from God's law and mixed it with their own ideas. They did not believe that the Messiah would go to receive his kingdom at Jerusalem. They had their own mountain and their own temple instead of God's. They rejected Jesus. James and John wanted to see them judged, right now. That is not Jesus' way. He came to die for sinners, to plead with them, to call them, and to be patient with them. One day he will come in glory to judge the world. But now, he is giving us time to repent. We should not call down judgment on our enemies, but plead for mercy. Have we ourselves received mercy? Have we repented and trusted in Christ? Or are we testing God's patience?