

Unashamed

Jesus expects His followers to forsake all else for Him.

LUKE 9:18-27



cities
the synag

to pass, that, as th
him to hear the wor
the lake of Gen-nes'-a-ret
two ships standing by
fishermen were gone out of th
washing *their* nets.

and he entered into one of th
which was Si'-mon's, and prayed him
would thrust out a little from the la
he sat down, and taught the people o
ship.

4 ¶ Now when he had left speaking

us world), and (4) those ruled (individuals who believ
pel]. The kingdom of God is already present in at le
senses (Matt. 12:28) but also still future (Matt. 6:1

5:1-3 Gennesaret was an alternate name for the se
lee, which is also called the sea of Tiberias (John
The boat Jesus chose belonged to Simon Peter
mother-in-law He had recently healed (Luke
Jesus **sat down** in the boat; this was the normal p
a teacher (see note at 4:19-21).

5:4-7 In spite of the fact that his night labors had t
less, at Jesus' command Peter responded in faith



MOVING SALE

Why might a person hesitate to identify as a follower of Jesus?

Some people prefer to follow Jesus from a distance. Like Nicodemus, they would rather come to Him in the middle of the night with no one watching. They may want to fit in with a specific group, so they keep silent. They may be worried about the ramifications of publicly declaring their faith in Jesus, wondering what family, friends, or coworkers might say. Jesus' death on the cross was a public event, and He calls His followers to live a public life for Him.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Jesus was ready to give His followers some “on-the-job training” in ministry. Since they would be the ones carrying His message to the world after He went back to the Father, they needed to be prepared. So He sent them to the surrounding villages but not without a warning (Luke 9:1-6). They needed to rely on God's power, not on the material things that might provide comfort along the way.

Jesus caught the attention of some powerful people, most notably Herod (9:7-9). While Herod knew about the power of John the Baptist's preaching—and executed John because of it—he was now intrigued with Jesus. Luke wrote that Herod wanted to meet Jesus, something that eventually happened during Jesus' trial before His crucifixion (23:6-12).

After their ministry in the villages, Jesus took His disciples away to a quiet location for rest and retreat, but the crowds followed them. Once He saw the crowd's desperate need, He began teaching them. He also used a small boy's lunch to feed a large crowd, which numbered at least five thousand men (9:10-17).

Finally finding some time alone, Jesus instructed His followers about what it truly meant to be His disciples. While Peter correctly acknowledged Him as the Son of God (9:18-22), Jesus knew they still had much to learn about suffering and becoming more like Him (9:23-27). The disciples proved this to be true. After some had seen His glory during the transfiguration (9:28-36) and the rest had witnessed His exorcism of a demon (9:37-43), they still managed to get into an argument over which of them was the greatest (9:44-48).

Twice in Luke 9, Jesus predicted His death and resurrection (9:21-22,44-45). This did not hinder Him from starting His journey toward the cross (9:51). Along the way, He encountered three would-be followers (9:57-62). Jesus made it clear that discipleship comes with a cost that His followers must be prepared to pay.

LUKE 9:18-27

18 While he was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” **19** They answered, “John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, that one of the ancient prophets has come back.” **20** “But you,” he asked them, “who do you say that I am?” Peter answered, “God’s Messiah.” **21** But he strictly warned and instructed them to tell this to no one, **22** saying, “It is necessary that the Son of Man suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and be **raised the third day**^A.” **23** Then he said to them all, “If anyone wants to follow after me, let him **deny himself**^B, take up his cross daily, and follow me. **24** For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but **whoever loses his life because of me will save it**^C. **25** For what does it benefit someone if he gains the whole world, and yet loses or forfeits himself? **26** For whoever is **ashamed of me**^D and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and that of the Father and the holy angels. **27** Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death **until they see**^E the kingdom of God.”

Passage Outline

Confess Him
(Luke 9:18-20)

Accept His Resurrection
(Luke 9:21-22)

Follow Him Unashamedly
(Luke 9:23-37)

Key Words

- A. This is the first of five times in Luke when Jesus told His disciples what awaited Him in Jerusalem (Luke 9:44; 12:50; 13:32-33; 17:25; 18:32-33).
- B. Self-denial is the only denial that is seen as positive in the New Testament.
- C. This saying is found in all four Gospels and more than once in Matthew and Luke. No other single saying of Jesus is given as much emphasis.
- D. A believer won't lose his salvation, but could suffer the loss of heavenly reward (1 Cor. 3:10-15; Eph. 2:8).
- E. The following scene is the transfiguration (vv. 28-36), so for Peter, James, and John this verse had an immediate fulfillment.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

Sometime after feeding the five thousand, Jesus and His disciples found a quiet place to regroup. After this time with the Father, Jesus turned His attention to His disciples by asking a simple question: *Who do the crowds say that I am?* His disciples had spent a lot of time with the crowds. They certainly had heard opinions about Jesus. Jesus may have found these opinions interesting, though He probably already knew what the crowds were thinking. His main focus was on the disciples—what did they think of Jesus? *Peter answered* for the group, stating that Jesus was *God's Messiah*.

How do the answers given by the disciples compare to how people view Jesus today?

Once Jesus established that His disciples knew who He was and what He had come to do, He quickly told them to keep these facts to themselves. Jesus wasn't trying to hide His true identity. He simply knew that not everyone was ready to hear and respond to the truth.

The Jewish religious leaders defined Jesus through their own filter. What filters do people use today that gives them an unclear understanding of who Jesus is?

KEY DOCTRINE: God the Son

He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion (Luke 24:44-46).

Jesus told the disciples that He would suffer, but He also wanted them to realize that suffering was not reserved only for the Messiah. As His followers, they would need to *deny* themselves.

What does it look like for a person to deny self, take up his or her cross, and follow Jesus?

BIBLE SKILL: Identify the imagery in a verse or passage used in other passages.

Paul employed the metaphor of the cross to help believers understand what it means to be a follower of Christ. Read Romans 6:6; 7:4; Galatians 2:19-20; 5:24; and 6:14. How does what Paul wrote compare to what Jesus said in Luke 9? How would you describe how Jesus' followers understood what Jesus said about taking up a cross?

Jesus highlighted the benefits of following Him. Those who insist on hanging on to their own lives will eventually lose what they hold dearest. By trying to maintain control, they actually lose control of who and what they are. In contrast, the one who surrenders his or her life—by denying self, taking up a cross, and following Jesus—will live.

Where have we seen the kingdom of God at work around us? How does that encouraged us to embrace Jesus when we could deny Him?

APPLY THE TEXT

- All people must realize who Jesus is.
- Not all will accept Jesus as the promised Messiah.
- Believers are called upon to unashamedly follow Christ with all their being.

What are some practical things you and your Bible study group can do to help people have an accurate view of Jesus' identity? Why is that important?

Do you know someone who needs to recognize the dangers of rejecting Jesus? How can you use these passages to help that person understand those dangers?

How would you rate your denying of yourself, taking up your cross, and following Jesus daily? What actions can you take to grow in these three areas?

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: Non-believers are often confused about Jesus.

Read Luke 9:18-19, contemplating how people see Jesus today.

Jesus turned His attention to His disciples by asking a simple question: *Who do the crowds say that I am?* Some believed Jesus was *John the Baptist*, though Luke pointed out that Herod had already executed John by this time (Luke 9:7). Still, Jesus' powerful preaching had convinced many that John had been raised from the dead and returned to His ministry through Jesus. Others thought Jesus was the prophet *Elijah*. This was another rumor that had made its way to Herod as he wondered about Jesus' identity (9:8). Elijah had gone to heaven without tasting death, and Jewish tradition stated that he would return to earth as a prophetic precursor to the Messiah (Mal. 4:5). Ironically, this led some to believe Jesus was just an opening act for the real thing. A third group saw Jesus as one of the other *ancient prophets* who had come back from the dead. His message of repentance and the kingdom of God reminded the people of the bold preachers they had learned about in Israel's history. After four hundred years of prophetic silence, they believed Jesus was a prophet for their generation. While Jesus certainly was a prophet, this designation did not fully describe His identity or His mission. Jesus was much more.

How do the answers given by the disciples compare to how people view Jesus today?

Day 2: Jesus is the Messiah.

Read Luke 9:20, noticing Peter's answer to Jesus' question.

Jesus may have found these opinions interesting, though He probably already knew what the crowds were thinking. His main focus was on the disciples—what did they think of Jesus? His first question in verse 18 was just a tool to lead up to His main question: *But you ... who do you say that I am?* Luke used an emphatic for *you*. It was also plural, showing that He was talking to all the disciples. The opinions of the crowds were one thing. But if the disciples accepted insufficient explanations, they would continue struggling to understand the Messiah's mission and the part they were called to play in it. *Peter answered* for the group, stating that Jesus was *God's Messiah*. The disciples had seen Jesus' works and heard His words. They might not have understood all the implications of this confession, but they believed He was the One their nation had waited centuries to see and was their hope for deliverance. The people's misunderstanding might be traced to their misunderstanding of the messianic role. The Jews were looking for a military leader who would overthrow Rome and create a new Israel. Jesus was not that kind of Messiah. He had come to set people free from sin, not from a Roman dictatorship.

Who is Jesus to you?

Day 3: Jesus' mission would involve glory only after suffering.

Read Luke 9:21-22, considering why Jesus did not want the disciples to tell anyone He was the Messiah.

Jesus warned the disciples to avoid telling anyone about Him being the Messiah. Jesus wasn't trying to hide His true identity. He simply knew that not everyone was ready to hear and respond to the truth. As noted, many Jews believed the Messiah was going to be a military leader. If those individuals accepted Jesus with that expectation, it could disrupt His true mission. In addition, any public proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah could create tension and potential conflict with the Roman authorities. Obviously, the Romans would play a role in Jesus' crucifixion, but those events would happen according to God's timing and His plan. So, while Jesus understood that Peter's confession was correct, He also understood it was incomplete. Jesus knew His mission came with a cruel cross instead of an earthly crown. Jesus again reminded His disciples that His true mission would involve glory only after suffering. For the third time in chapter 9, He predicted His crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus emphasized this suffering was necessary. It was not an accident or a tragedy. It was the fulfillment of God's plan for salvation. But He added that the cross would not be the final word because He would be resurrected. Unfortunately, the disciples forgot His words until after the resurrection. In fact, the religious leaders remembered His words more so than His closest followers (Matt. 27:62-64).

What filters do people use today that gives them an unclear understanding of who Jesus is?

Day 4: Believers must deny themselves.

Read Luke 9:23, highlighting the verse.

The disciples' ambitions and desires would need to be shelved in favor of Jesus' demands. This would include any sense of security they might draw from earthly positions. For a group who may have held aspirations of power and glory, this would have been a hard pill to swallow. Next, Jesus called each of them to *take up his cross*. Being a disciple isn't simply a matter of self-denial. It involves a lifestyle that consistently puts the needs of others first—even to the point of death, which most of these disciples would come to personally understand. What's more, this is not a one-time commitment. Jesus said we are to die to ourselves on a *daily* basis. Finally, disciples *follow* Jesus. It is one thing to give Jesus lip service. It is much more to let Him set our agendas. True believers rely on Him as their compass. Luke used a present imperative verb, which means following Jesus is a continual, ongoing command.

What does it look like for you to deny self, take up your cross, and follow Jesus?

Day 5: True followers will see His kingdom.

Read Luke 9:24-27, noting who will see the kingdom.

Those who take up their cross testify to the glory and grace of the Savior. But those who shirk from true discipleship also shirk from Him. Those who are ashamed of Christ were never really His disciples in the first place. Since they had rejected Him, He would reject them in eternity. Jesus pointed out that some of those present would not *taste death* without seeing the kingdom of God. Obviously, each of these disciples suffered physical death. A few explanations are possible. Some believe Jesus was referring to the events on the Mount of Transfiguration. It is also possible that Jesus was emphasizing again that the kingdom was present wherever He was present. Another possible meaning relates to what the disciples would witness in the days to come. In reality, the rest of their lives would be dedicated to seeing God's kingdom move across the known world. We will see His kingdom as well if we are faithful disciples of Christ.

Where have you seen the kingdom of God at work around you? How has that encouraged you to embrace Jesus when you could have denied Him?

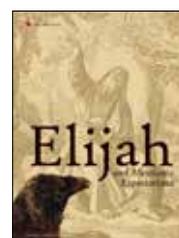
TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Luke 9, sharing with other members of your Bible study group.

What causes people to wonder if a relationship with Jesus is wise?

How might we present Jesus to skeptics of today?

As we forsake all others for Jesus, what other priorities and obligations pursue and compete for our attention?



For additional context, read “Elijah and Messianic Expectations,” available digitally in the Winter 2020-21 issue of *Biblical Illustrator* for Explore the Bible at LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator.