



## **Good Mentor or God Mentor**

### **Luke 9: 51-62**

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### **Scripture Luke 9: 51-62**

<sup>51</sup>When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

<sup>52</sup>And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him;

<sup>53</sup>but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem.

<sup>54</sup>When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

<sup>55</sup>But he turned and rebuked them.

<sup>56</sup>Then they went on to another village.

<sup>57</sup>As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."

<sup>58</sup>And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

<sup>59</sup>To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

<sup>60</sup>But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

<sup>61</sup>Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home."

<sup>62</sup>Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

### **Anchor Verse**

<sup>62</sup>Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

### **Anchor Theme**

Good mentors help us become Christians, God mentors help us be disciples of Jesus Christ.

### **Background Story**

When I first entered ministry, 22 years ago, my mentor at the time said to me, every pastor needs a mentor, coach, pastor, physician, therapist, and friend. And I have made sure I always have access to them all. When I worked with youth ministry, I worked hard to be a good mentor for the youth. But maturity in my faith and my ministry has helped me to appreciate that as disciples of Jesus Christ who seek to make other disciples, mentoring is not the goal, discipleship is the goal. So my efforts at being a good mentor are helpful, but is my willingness to be a God mentor, one who leans not on her own gifts and talents to mentor, but instead leans on God as author and finisher of our faith that is most important. To make disciples we don't need good mentors we need a God mentor. And what are disciples, followers of Jesus Christ in their loving and living.

### **Engaging the Text**

The text points to three would-be followers and the obstacles that keep them from fully understanding what being a disciple of Jesus Christ required. Even the disciples themselves struggled with this understanding and they were with Jesus!

Even though we know nothing about these three individuals, the text makes clear that they do not yet have a full understanding of what following Jesus is all about. Their responses to Jesus were not incorrect, they were just evidence that the breath of following Jesus and the implications involved had not yet been realized.

- Potential follower no. 1 gave a promise to follow, but Jesus quickly discerned that this individual didn't have a clue what that would mean for his life.
- Potential follower no. 2 was willing to follow, but asks to first handle his family business
- Potential follower no. No. 3, equally willing to follow but, wants to say goodbye to his family first

Each of them clearly had some strong foundation and understanding of family, what is right, otherwise they never would have been able to articulate as they did. They just didn't have the full picture. Sometimes I wonder if we have the full picture of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. I say that because I see the challenges we have, to not just be good mentors but instead God mentors.

These would-be followers in our text had some foundation to understand or appreciate who Jesus was, so much so that they would be willing to follow Him. But we now live in a world where many people have no foundation at all, or the foundation they have is built on something other than Christian principles or beliefs. To make disciples, not only do we have to be a good mentor, helping them learn and understand who God is, in Jesus Christ, but they also need God mentors, to impact their spirits and their souls, why we try to impact their thoughts, words and deeds.

We know that disciples make disciples. Christians make Christians. There are plenty of Christians in the world, but not enough disciples. In our text today, at the end of chapter 9, only a few verses later in Chapter 10:2, Jesus declares, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;" and isn't that where we find ourselves today. Our churches are full of Christians, but not enough Christians are ready to be disciples.

The definition of mentorship says,

*"Mentorship is a personal developmental relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. However, true mentoring is more than just answering occasional questions or providing ad hoc help. It is about an ongoing relationship of learning, dialog, and challenge."*

When I look at our world, I am confident in saying we need more God mentors to shift the tide in our congregations towards developing and nurturing and maturing disciples. We call that discipleship. But in my role, I am struck by how members in some of our churches answer my question, "what is your church doing to disciple others?" The answers are interesting, but not enough of those answers talk about the intentionality toward Christian maturity necessary to make disciples.

No matter where you serve in ministry, whether it is as clergy or as laity, if you think back to those person or persons in your life who has a significant impact on your faith journey, they helped you to *become* a Christian but more importantly they taught you to *be* a disciple. And the church is the place where that happens, but only when we decide to engage in the lives of the people who walk through that door. And not just bring them in and push them into some ministry but make a real effort to get to know a person, listen to a person, encourage a person, give them wisdom, knowledge and understanding. And help them on their journey of faith, growth as a Christian AND commitment as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

At this stage in my life, I can look back and remember all the good mentors I had in my life, even before ministry, when I was a committed lay person, and I can see the impact that each had on me, in that place, at that time, and their impact and influence that got me here today. One instance I was asked to reflect on those individuals is when in an interview I was asked to share who those mentors were and why. After sharing it was pointed out to me, in a somewhat apprehensive tone that all my mentors were male. And I was pressed on why I didn't have any female mentors. I responded, "I shared those mentors who helped me to *become* a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They were good mentors. If you want to know who helped

me *be* a committed disciple of Jesus Christ, well that's a different question." And so, I listed the names of the God mentors in my life, there were my grandmother, my aunts, mother, and godmother.

## **Conclusion**

The last verse of our scripture text today, Luke 9:62 says, Jesus said to him, "*No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.*" In my twenties, when I began to take seriously my Christianity, that was the first verse of scripture the Holy Spirit laid on my heart. And even though as a city girl I knew nothing about plows or fields, I knew what that scripture meant and what it would mean to me. That verse refers to when a farmer is plowing a field, he needs to keep looking straight ahead so the plow doesn't hit a boulder in the ground and turn over. There is no value in looking back at what has been plowed.

Friends, the world is in front of us, and it is crying for love, acceptance, grace, and hope. Looking back to our experiences or reflecting on how it used to be, will keep us from looking forward, and we may hit a boulder and turn over! Being a good mentor is always a good thing, but today we need God mentors who will help those in the world not just become Christians, but also help them be disciples. And the work starts with us. Because disciples make disciples. May we today, ask the Holy Spirit to help us stay future focused and be good mentors and God mentors who make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. May it be so, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.