

## **Distracted Discipleship**

by Guy Kent

Luke 9: 51-62

The committee sat in the room making the plans for projects that were assigned to them. Rodney sat in the room also. Rodney wasn't on the committee, but there he sat. The pastor decided to go ahead with the meeting. No sooner had the "Amen" punctuated the opening prayer than Rodney said, "There's a reason this church is not growing. There's a reason people are not becoming closer to Jesus. That's because you don't ever give an altar call."

Rodney was used to a more fiery approach to preaching. He wanted a service that ended with the singing of forty-seven verses of "Just As I Am" or a body at the altar, whichever came first. Rodney wanted the world roped, hogtied, and brought to Jesus. He would settle for nothing less.

A Charlie Brown cartoon once had Lucy proclaiming to Charlie Brown, "I would make a good evangelist."

Charlie Brown responds, "And why do you think that?"

"Well, I convinced the boy who sits behind me in school that my religion is better than his religion."

Now Charlie Brown is intrigued. "How did you do that?"

Lucy tells him, "I hit him over the head with my lunch box!"

Rodney would have loved to be engaged in Lucy's brand of evangelism.

It's the same thinking as that of the disciples when the Samaritans turned Jesus away: "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

It's a form of outreach with little call for discipleship. There's only divine coercion. The vision of that form is restricted.

The church started a free soup kitchen when the economy tanked. Rodney came by to partake. After a few months, as Rodney saw how many were coming, Rodney made a suggestion. "This thing is going pretty good; we need to figure out a way to turn a profit."

Discipleship is foremost a focused following of Jesus. "I will follow you wherever you go," said the one. And Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

"Follow me," said Jesus. And another said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." And Jesus replies, "Let the dead bury the dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Is Jesus saying we need not be distracted from the goal of discipleship?

As a boy I got to occasionally plow a few acres of an uncle's farm. Sitting up on that tractor

gave me a sense of power. Sometimes, I couldn't resist the temptation to look back and see the furrows strung out behind me. When I did I inevitably moved off course and destroyed the symmetry of the plowed field.

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

Maybe the simplest definition is discipleship is never turning away from the way and practices of Jesus.