

Elisha was permitted to return to his family but rather than continuing along his former path, what did he do to indicate that he was leaving that life behind to follow God's call?

If there are things in our past that tempt us to return to them, we, like Elisha, should offer them as a sacrifice on God's altar and set our sights on following Jesus.

3. What's First?

Take an account of what is in your "rearview mirror". The first step forward is to identify what it is, big or small, that impedes the progress of your faith journey. Identify what needs to be healed so that it won't hold you hostage any longer.

1 John 1:9 NLT - 9 But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

Take time in silent prayer to let God reveal anything that you need to be free from. Confess it to Him and accept the freedom of His forgiveness. If it involves someone else, you may need to forgive them or ask their forgiveness. If so, God will provide the opportunity.

WRAP-UP

There comes a time when we must stop looking back and focus on our journey to living fully alive in Jesus. But to do so we may need to deal with whatever holds us hostage to the past. Jesus wants to set you free from guilt, fear and pain, and to give you His peace. When you stop looking back, you will be able to embrace a new vision for your life, the life Jesus wants for you.

MEMORY VERSE

No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead,
-Philippians 3:13-14 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life

Challenge- If you'd like help dealing with issues from your past, contact our Care and Counseling Center at 805 489-3891.

"Stop Looking Back"

Pastor David Hutsko

INTRODUCTION

This week you probably saw or heard several reflections on the past year. Top 100 songs of 2021, most memorable news events of the year, important people who passed away. Remembering is not a bad thing, but sometimes we can let our gaze linger too long in the past and allow that to hold us back from what God has planned in our future. If you are still lamenting the things that have changed in the last year (or two) it may be time to stop looking back, and instead focus on what is ahead.

Ice Breaker

What is one thing you are looking forward to in 2022?

Key Passage

Luke 9:62 NLT - 62 But Jesus told him, "Anyone who puts a hand to the plow and then looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God."

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The Journey

Luke 9:57 NLT - 57 As they were walking along, someone said to Jesus, "I will follow you wherever you go."

Jesus's followers journeyed with him, learning as they walked together, heard his teaching and asked questions. The journey itself gave them an opportunity to grow in their relationship with Jesus. It was not about arriving at a destination, but about going deeper and seeing new things along the way.

Where would you say you are on your journey with Jesus:

- **curious – still figuring it out**
- **awakened- aware of the new life that Jesus offers**
- **changed - exchanged your old ways for new ones, attitudes, behaviors, desires**
- **filled and living fully alive in the Spirit**

While we are in this world we will be on the road, journeying with Jesus. We may have victories and we may have setbacks. But on the way we will learn and grow and develop in our faith.

2. Insights for the Journey

Luke 9:58 NLT - 58 But Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place even to lay his head."

Luke 14:26-28 NLT - 26 "If you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison--your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters--yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. 27 And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple. 28 "But don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it?"

In response to the enthusiastic declaration of his follower in Luke 9:57 Jesus replies with a warning of sorts- the Son of Man has no place to lay his head. So, to those following wherever He goes, don't expect comfy accommodations. We can become caught up in our excitement and declare with good intentions what we would like to do, but Jesus warns us to count the cost of those commitments.

What decisions have you made in haste only to regret it later? What, if anything, did you think following Jesus would "cost" when you first became a Christian?

Jesus' warning about having no place to lay his head was setting the expectations for his followers. They could not rely on the security of the "things" in their lives, instead they would have to hold things loosely and prepare to make changes when God redirected them to.

This past two years we have learned to hold things loosely because our circumstances have changed constantly. An essential element of successfully navigating this environment of the unknown, is determining what is most important in your life.

Philippians 3:13-14 NLT - 13 No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

As Paul told the Philippians, he focused on one thing, the heavenly prize as he called it. What do you see as your heavenly prize? What lies ahead, which outshines anything in the past that might distract you from attaining it?

It is important to know your priorities. Saying yes to one thing probably means saying no to others. Jesus extends an invitation for us to follow. But while saying yes affords us new opportunities, it also requires us to say no to things in our past.

Luke 9:59, 62 NLT - 59 He said to another person, "Come, follow me." The man agreed, but he said, "Lord, first let me return home and bury my father." ... 62 But Jesus told him, "Anyone who puts a hand to the plow and then looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God."

1 Kings 19:20-21 NLT - 20 Elisha left the oxen standing there, ran after Elijah, and said to him, "First let me go and kiss my father and mother good-bye, and then I will go with you!" Elijah replied, "Go on back, but think about what I have done to you." 21 So Elisha returned to his oxen and slaughtered them. He used the wood from the plow to build a fire to roast their flesh. He passed around the meat to the townspeople, and they all ate. Then he went with Elijah as his assistant.

In Luke 9:59 the response to Jesus' invitation was to say, let me return home first. Jesus said in verse 62, if you put your hand to the plow and look back you aren't fit for the Kingdom.

What will happen if you literally look back while you are plowing a field? What happens if you metaphorically look back while you are following Jesus?