

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Goodbye Dad...

Goodbye Dad... - posted by ceedub, on: 2009/5/17 11:13

Why did Jesus rebuke the disciple for wanting to say goodbye to his Dad?

Re: Goodbye Dad..., on: 2009/5/17 12:03

This had to do with Lordship, submission, and obedience, and I believe on a personal level. Surely Jesus was not establishing a doctrine of avoiding the funeral's of our parents...but the doctrine of following Him above all...above your parents, siblings, children, wife, or most of all, your own life.

Therefore; "Let the dead bury the dead, but YOU come and follow me."

I had a rocky relationship with my father, which evolved into much bitterness and rebellion on my part. I mocked and despised my dad. This almost destroyed my life, in several arenas. I was saved for 20 plus years, and a measure of healing and restoration had come to me ; a gift and benefit of His redemption.

I developed respect and honor for my father, and by practicing my faith, had grown to love my Dad, for the first time since early childhood. I had married, and both my son and I would give my father a hug and kiss every time we left his company, and tell him , " I love you!"

Never the less, my father rejected Jesus. One day, I got a call. My sister in law found my father dead in his easy chair. He evidently had a heart attack. I was there before any authorities...and rigor mortis had set in. Death is an ugly thing, in more ways in one. I had lost my father forever, and he was in Hell. I knew it.

Soon, the coroner came, and to remove the body on a stretcher.. they had to break his back. This was very stressful for me, and emotional, and I went outside. I pondered my failure, my guilt, and my loss. I was down, and bewildered in my grief.

Just then, as I stood, the Holy Spirit of God spoke to me, in an inward audible voice;

"LET THE DEAD BURY THE DEAD, YOU COME AND FOLLOW ME!"

Immediately every wind of loss and grief and failure was lifted off of me...and I never, ever experienced it again toward my father, even to this day.... I am still trying to follow Jesus, in the midst of stumbling and failure...I get up again and go on.

This scripture is real to me.

Re: Goodbye Dad... - posted by anonymity, on: 2009/5/17 12:18

Yes I believe it was to show the Lordship of Christ in the strong obedience to Christ.

If Christ has specifically called us to something and it is at the same time as a funeral then we are to go.

Also, of note is that the other disciples left their father's fishing business without even a 2 week notice. We must remember that following Christ is a lofty thing and remember what a great salvation we have. Or this, of how the oil was spent on Jesus before his burial.

Lastly, I would remark that possibly also that what the man meant by bury his father is that he wanted to go and care for his father in his old age until he passed away and then bury him. So this would have been a long thing.

Re: - posted by KathleenP (), on: 2009/5/17 14:13

Dear Brother,

Your description of your relationship with your father is almost identical my own situation.

I was also on very bad terms with my own for many years. Many could even say that I had the right to justify my feelings towards him. He was highly abusive to us mentally and physically.

When my walk with the Lord matured, I came to the realization that although he refused to acknowledge his abuse or Jesus, I had to make things right and apologize to him for my own actions. I knew better.

He lived in an apartment below my brother. He was found by my brother on Mother's Day 2 years ago. I had just had lunch with my Mother and she called and said, "Your Father is dead." They had been divorced for quite a time so she was simply relaying the message to me.

They estimated he had died about 4-5 days before. My sister insisted on seeing him and suffered nightmares because of it. My brother was also a wreck. I never asked them concerning his condition physically, but know it was not a good sight and when a sinner dies, there is not much dignity in their death.

I, also, had to commit it to the Lord.

My Father and I were not close and I believe it was the Lord's way of protecting me from anguish at his loss. I cannot do a thing for him now and must concentrate on praying for my living family.

I am so glad you have posted this Tom. It is not easy facing the ugliness of losing family that are not converted, but may it increase our burden to set an example to the living.

May the Lord sustain you throughout this.

Kathleen

Re: - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2009/5/17 18:42

Too many times ungodly parents will interfere in one's walk with the LORD. Jesus also says that unless you 'hate' (Luke 14:26) your family, you cannot be his disciple. According to Strong's, this hate would mean 'to love less'. This is the way I would understand it.

Brother Tom, your experience with your father is very informative. I have come to the point that once a person dies I am no longer wonder about his/her salvation: they knew the Word, had access to it and the decisions they made will follow them and they will have to give account. I am only responsible for my own soul. A person can go crazy if you take on the load of other people's souls. Jesus always talked to the individual and expected him/her to make the decision for himself/herself. You cannot do it for others.

Brother Tom, I think your testimony is among the most important piece you have ever posted here on SI. Reckon I am judging by saying this, but this is so profound. God bless you for sharing.

ginnyrose

Re: Goodbye - posted by ChrisMo (), on: 2009/5/17 22:02

I have heard preached that it was a Jewish custom if the oldest son buried his father he would get all the inheritance. So I guess it could have been more of a money issue!!

Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2009/5/17 22:10

Quote:
-----I have heard preached that it was a Jewish custom if the oldest son buried his father he would get all the inheritance. So I guess it could have been more of a money issue!!

I think Chris is on the right track. In a sense, "let me get all the inheritance first, then I will come and follow you!".

With care in Christ,
Taylor

Re: - posted by ceedub, on: 2009/5/17 23:50

57 ¶ And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.
58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.
59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.
60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.
61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.
62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

The one I was asking about wasn't the one about burial, but rather the following instance of the man simply wanting to say goodbye to his family.

Every message I've ever heard on this speaks of it as a rebuke, and that it was wrong to go say goodbye to his family? I know what the norm message is, but does that make sense to anyone? To be rebuked just for saying goodbye?

Re: - posted by ceedub, on: 2009/5/18 11:39

The reason I asked this question is that I can't figure out why it would be a rebuke to go and say goodbye to your family. To say that it denies commitment to the Lord is really tough to swallow. Who of us, leaving for missions, would recoil at the thought of saying goodbye to our families for fear of being uncommitted to Christ?

I see it different, and welcome disagreement, as I've never heard anyone interpret this passage as I do (I'm all for holding the common view and am leary of 'new' views, but this 'rebuke interpretation' I have trouble with).

When the man says he wants to say goodbye to his family, Jesus responds with...

Quote:
-----And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

I believe this perfectly mirrors the calling of Elisha by Elijah...

Quote:
-----19 ¶ So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.

Quote:
-----20 And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee.
. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee?

Quote:
-----21 And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.

Jesus uses the same analogy of the plow to illustrate, I believe, the merit in saying goodbye to your family, rather than a rebuke. Just as Elisha said goodbye to his family, this disciple would now be able to follow Jesus 'without looking back' just as Elisha did, and never looked back.

An exhortation or a rebuke?

Re: - posted by ceedub, on: 2009/5/19 14:47

Was Jesus rebuking him or praising him for doing what Elisha did?

Seems beyond coincidence that Jesus uses the same 'ploughing' metaphor connecting the goodbye to his family with what Elisha did.

Re: - posted by learn (), on: 2009/5/20 0:24

Ceedub,

Hope this helps. I will start with my view first followed with John MacArthur's biblestudy and Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary.

My belief is that sometimes when the bible says certain things, its not meant to be a literal meaning. For example in Revelation, " the living creature was like a lion"--doesn't mean that it looks like a lion. It actually mean have the courage of a lion ie brave etc. So the word "goodbye" doesn't always mean we cannot wish goodbye to our parents when we are called by God (although in some cases, the calling of God is urgent and He will want one to go about His work immediately without one being able to say goodbye to one's parents). That's why I can agree with what both Matthew Henry and John MacArthur wrote about those verses.

I don't think in the case of Elisha it was a rebuke. Why? Because one do not see any 'punishment/discipline' that Elisha received and Elisha was able to follow Elijah. God is able to see the condition of one's heart and in the case of Elisha, he was willing to follow God wholeheartedly without 'turning back' (unlike the case of Matthew and Luke).

What then about the word by Elijah " What have I done to you?"--my thinking is Elijah graciously allowed Elisha to say goodbye to his parents. This brings to mind Ezekiel 4:14-15 where God asked Ezekiel to use human waste to cook his food. However, Ezekiel had certain convictions and say that he had never defiled himself. God graciously allowed Ezekiel to use cow dung instead. So I see the part about Elisha more as a gracious mercy by God rather than a rebuke.

John MacArthur biblestudy :
Luke 9:59,60 (did not have for Luke 9:56-58)
--See notes Matt 8:21-22

Matthew 8:21

let me first go and bury my father

--This does not mean that the man's father was already dead. The phrase, " I must bury my father" was a common figure of speech meaning, :Let me wait until I receive my inheritance."

Matthew 8:22

let the dead bury their own dead

--Let the world (the spiritually dead) take care of mundane things

Luke 9:62

looking back

--a plowman looking back cuts a crooked furrow

(my own--look at 1 particular line from Matthew Henry's concise commentary ie LOOKING BACK, LEADS TO DRAWING BACK, AND DRAWING BACK IS TO PERDITION.)

1 Kings 19:20

Go back again

--Elijah instructed Elisha to go, but to keep in mind the solemn call of God and not to allow any earthly affection to detain his obedience

1 Kings 19:21

slaughtered

--The slaughter of the oxen was a farewell feast for family and friends, indicating that Elisha was making a decisive break. He followed Elijah and became his servant (lit. "aide," the same term used for Joshua's relationship with Moses in Ex. 24:13, 33:11). Just as Elijah resembled Moses, so Elisha resembled Joshua

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

Luke 9:57-62

Here is one that is forward to follow Christ, but seems to have been hasty and rash, and not to have counted the cost. If we mean to follow Christ, we must lay aside the thoughts of great things in the world. Let us not try to join the profession of Christianity, with seeking after worldly advantages. Here is another that seems resolved to follow Christ, but he begs a short delay. To this man Christ first gave the call; he said to him, Follow me. Religion teaches us to be kind and good, to show piety at home, and to requite our parents; but we must not make these an excuse for neglecting our duty to God. Here is another that is willing to follow Christ, but he must have a little time to talk with his friends about it, and to set in order his household affairs, and give directions concerning them. He seemed to have worldly concerns more upon his heart than he ought to have, and he was willing to enter into a temptation leading him from his purpose of following Christ. No one can do any business in a proper manner, if he is attending to other things. Those who begin with the work of God, must resolve to go on, or they will make nothing of it. LOOKING BACK, LEADS TO DRAWING BACK, AND DRAWING BACK IS TO PERDITION. He only that endures to the end shall be saved.

Matthew 8:18-22

One of the scribes was too hasty in promising; he proffers himself to be a close follower of Christ. He seems to be very resolute. Many resolutions for religion are produced by sudden conviction, and taken up without due consideration; these come to nothing. When this scribe offered to follow Christ, one would think he should have been encouraged; one scribe might do more credit and service than twelve fishermen; but Christ saw his heart, and answered to its thoughts, and therein teaches all how to come to Christ. His resolve seems to have been from a worldly, covetous principle; but Christ had not a place to lay his head on, and if he follows him, he must not expect to fare better than he fared. We have reason to think this scribe went away. Another was too slow. Delay in doing is as bad on the one hand, as hastiness in resolving is on the other. He asked leave to attend his father to his grave, and then he would be at Christ's service. This seemed reasonable, yet it was not right. He had not true zeal for the work. Burying the dead, especially a dead father, is a good work, but it is not thy work at this time. If Christ requires our service, affection even for the nearest and dearest relatives, and for things otherwise our duty, must give way. An unwilling mind never wants an excuse. Jesus said to him, Follow me; and, no doubt, power went with this word to him as to others; he did follow Christ, and cleaved to him. The scribe said, I will follow thee; to this man Christ said, Follow me; comparing them together, it shows that we are brought to Christ by the force of his call to us, (Romans 9:16)

1 Kings 19:19-21

Elijah found Elisha by Divine direction, not in the schools of the prophets, but in the field; not reading, or praying, or sacrificing, but ploughing. Idleness is no man's honour, nor is husbandry any man's disgrace. An honest calling in the world,

does not put us out of the way of our heavenly calling, any more than it did Elisha. His heart was touched by the Holy Spirit, and he was ready to leave all to attend Elijah. It is in a day of power that Christ's subjects are made willing; nor would any come to Christ unless they were thus drawn. It was a discouraging time for prophets to set out in. A man that had consulted with flesh and blood, would not be fond of Elijah's mantle; yet Elisha cheerfully leaves all to accompany him. When the Saviour said to one and to another, Follow me, the dearest friends and most profitable occupations were cheerfully left, and the most arduous duties done from love to his name. May we, in like manner, feel the energy of his grace working in us mightily, and by unreserved submission at once, may we make our calling and election sure

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<http://www.biblestudytools.com/Commentaries/>

Post edited for clarity

Re: - posted by ceedub, on: 2009/5/20 1:05

Thanks for the reply, (and as the post points out, it's not the man wanting to bury his father but the following man that's in discussion), but herein is my point...

Henry's commentary shows it wrong for the disciple to say goodbye to his family, but right for Elisha to do it. The commentaries you quote from contradict each other....

re disciple...

Quote:
-----If Christ requires our service, affection even for the nearest and dearest relatives, and for things otherwise our duty, must give way.

re Elisha...

Quote:
-----A man that had consulted with flesh and blood, would not be fond of Elijah's mantle; yet Elisha cheerfully leaves all to accompany him. When the Saviour said to one and to another, Follow me, the dearest friends and most profitable occupations were cheerfully left, and the most arduous duties done from love to his name.

Yet Henry shows the disciple (in the Elisha quote) cheerfully leaving all to follow Jesus. This is my point, that many, out of teaching tradition, show Jesus words to the last man wishing to say goodbye to his family, like Elisha did, as a bad thing, but turn around and commend Elisha for it.

Either Elisha and the disciple are both wrong or both right. I believe they are right, and you err to say it was a rebuke. The disciple is called of the Lord and immediately wishes to say goodbye to his family lest he 'put his hand to the plough and look back'.

How can that be rebuked? It doesn't say he wanted to go back and hang around for years as some insert from unsubstantiated presuppositions.

He was called like Elisha. He immediately went to say goodbye to his family like Elisha (though he at least is not mentioned as wanting to throw a big feast). And Jesus links (I believe) this disciple to Elisha through the term 'plough', thus exhorting the disciple to exactly as he wished to do.

He would do exactly as Henry praises Elisha for, and that is to say the goodbyes, cut the ties, and follow.

Though some have called out this disciple for showing a lack of commitment for wanting to say goodbye to his family, I can't. Nor do I believe the Lord would rebuke me for doing the same.

Re: - posted by learn (), on: 2009/5/20 1:10

Ceedbub,

I think you have not had the chance to read my edited post as most likely you were typing at the same time. Please read through it if you haven't and hopefully later I will come back and write something further with regards to your post as I have to do something first.

Re: - posted by ceedub, on: 2009/5/20 1:20

I reread your post and found the part you added about 'discipline/punishment'. But that would only reinforce my point as there's no negative comment from the Lord concerning the disciple who asked to say a final goodbye to his family. I believe Jesus is exhorting him to do what he asked, pointing out that it is better to say goodbye so that once the hand is put to the proverbial plough, there will be no looking back.

I understand what the commentators say, and with deep respect I disagree. I don't say I'm for sure right or that 'it's really simple', to avoid talking down to anyone, especially you or the commentators that agree with you. However, there is nothing in the text to say that Christ's words to this disciple were negative and there is a strong connection to Elisha which says they're positive.

Jesus wouldn't have used this connection to a positive act of Elisha's to rebuke him for saying a final goodbye. It would make no sense.

Re: - posted by learn (), on: 2009/5/20 2:07

Hi Ceedub,

First off, I tend to edit my post a lot (somehow it's a bad habit of mine that I'm unable to say clearly what I want the first time round, so hopefully you did a refresh button when you reread my previous post). Secondly, it seems to me that you are sincerely trying to understand and I don't feel that you are talking down to me or the commentators, so no worries there.

I think that Matthew Henry, John MacArthur and I have pretty much the same line of thought when we interpret the Matthew, Luke and 1 Kings passages although I guess there's something more that I interpret for 1 Kings (ie God's gracious mercy in letting Elisha say goodbye to his parents which Matthew Henry did not touch on).

The point I feel the bible is trying to get across is that Matthew and Luke's passages are to be interpreted in the 'same way' ie those that are less sincere or will tend to look back/recall to what they left behind when they decide to follow God.

Elisha on the other hand, was willing to cut his ties forever and follow God. His request for 'goodbye' was granted by Elijah because God could see what was in Elijah's heart compared to the hearts of the people in Luke and Matthew. It's my thoughts, that God was not 'congratulating' Elisha for saying 'goodbye' but rather was showing His mercy and kindness to Elisha.

By right if God ask one to do something immediately, one may not have the chance to say goodbye/clear one's affairs (if it's not God's will for one to do so especially when one is not truly sincere and keep looking back to what he left behind), however, if one's heart is truly right and God is willing to grant that person the chance to say 'goodbye', then it's God's mercy towards that person.

I hope this makes it clearer and is of some help.

Re: - posted by learn (), on: 2009/5/20 2:13

Hi Ceedub,

Had time to reread your post that you feel there was nothing negative in Luke. I think that is not that true.

For me, I see how Luke 9:57 builds up to 62, it gives different instances/examples of those that are not 'completely' following God.

For example verse 57, 58--see how Jesus answered verse 57. Jesus could see that the man may not have counted the cost/was hasty --and that's why he's telling the difficulty of following Him (ie the Son of Man has no place to lay his head' . And so on and so on.

Re: - posted by ceedub, on: 2009/5/20 10:11

It's not that it's hard to see or unclear why many teach that it is a rebuke. That is the common interpretation.

I can easily see how your side could be right. As I said before, it's not crystal clear to me, only that the evidence in the text, and letting scripture explain scripture, points to Jesus exhorting him to do what he did.

In the one case the man wanted to wait for an inheritance (as is taught by many and very well could be true), but in the second case it seems there is an immediate, full commitment that would not warrant any rebuke at all.

If I watched Jesus call you to a life of missions, and you straightway said, 'Just let me go say by to those in my very house', I'd be praising your commitment, not questioning it.

Re: - posted by broclint (), on: 2009/5/20 10:20

I do not want to take away from the theological discussion at all, but since it was posted on this thread I want to agree with Ginny regarding Tom's post. Experiences of that sort and how God uses them to teach us and shape us are worth more than thousands upon thousands of words. Thank you Tom for sharing a part of your heart.

Clint

Re: - posted by ceedub, on: 2009/5/20 10:47

This is just one example of how tough it can be to judge right, to rightly divide the word of God.

Another account that I would disagree with MacArthur on (who is probably my favorite commentator), is that of Abraham and Pharaoh. Did Abraham sin by how he handled the situation with Sarah in Egypt?

Re: - posted by learn (), on: 2009/5/20 11:56

Ceedub,

I sense your frustration, however at this point I don't really know how to help you further in this. Maybe there will come a time when you will have the same view or have a view that you are much more at peace with. Maybe there are others who are able to help you.

With regards to Abraham and Sarah, I hope others will chime in to help.

Re: - posted by ceedub, on: 2009/5/20 12:27

Actually I'm not frustrated at all. Nor am I lacking peace over the text. As I said, I can see the other view but don't see the proof.

Further to your comment about the negative responses building up to this disciple, the first guy was just warned that it wouldn't be comfortable, the second was simply told not to wait for the death of his father, and the third was told (I believe) to say his goodbyes so he wouldn't 'look back'. None of them were disqualified or called out for being uncommittal.

For me, there is as big an issue on how we judge the people in the bible, for it will certainly affect how we judge each other.

Re: - posted by ceedub, on: 2009/5/25 10:56

Are these verses speaking to those called to ministry or those called to be christians, or both?

When Paul says to the church it is good for them to mind their own business and work with their own hands, does that apply to those called in ministry?

Is there only one type of call in God's family in scripture or do these need to be taken in context of who's being spoken to and what the call is?