

Travel Tips for a Tough Trip

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[0:00] Good evening everyone. First of all let me say thank you for everyone for your many prayers and encouragement and support over the past few months. Phoebe has arrived which was fabulous and is fabulous and she's going fairly strong. She's in a tank thing but she's breathing on her on her own so apart from the tank thing she's breathing on her own so we're and she's getting stronger the doctor's very happy with her and all going well so thank you for that really appreciate it. Let's pray. Gracious God thank you for your word we thank you for your many promises to us Lord we pray that as we look at discipleship tonight what it means to follow you I pray Father that you would encourage us that you would challenge us particularly over the next couple of weeks as we walk with Jesus to Jerusalem as as we see what it means to follow him Lord I pray that you would you would help us to understand it with clarity in a way that the disciples didn't understand it so Lord that we might truly be your disciples challenge us we pray rebuke us we pray that you would change us and encourage us as your people amen. It was December 2000 and Natalie and I had been planning to go on a holiday to the UK it was the first time that we'd been overseas and it was kind of one of those things we had been planning it for you know six months or something like that and we'd planned every contingency. We'd spoken to a number of people who had been to places like the UK and so they gave us all the bits of advice and we wrote all the advice down and covered all our bases so we had everything covered we organized our passports we had clothing for every kind of weather contingency in the UK both cold and freezing we we had medication for every known disease that we may potentially pick up on the way we had pre-booked accommodation put cars tours I think even meals I think we'd pre-booked basically everything we had we figured we had everything we were so you know had all the pamphlets and books and we you know our bags were just completely loaded we're so looking forward to this and you know we had it all prepared and I was we're flying out on a Sunday afternoon and so I decided I would preach and do services that Sunday morning and then left church and went straight to the airport and so I arrived at the airport we're excited we're happy booked in and all that sort of stuff and we got to the back of the plane and which is where we were seated right at the very back of the plane and I sat down and then I went oh no I'm not ready for this

I had it was the first time that it dawned on me that it's a long way from Australia to the UK and I got to sit in this plane and that guy there is too close to me and that seat is too close to me and there are too many people too close to me and I got I realized however that there was a map on the back of the plane on the back of the seat and so I watched the map basically all the way to the edge of Australia and so it was like five hours and I got on the plane I didn't have a change of clothes I didn't have a book I had I had nothing I literally walked out except for my sermon notes is all I had I hopped on this plane and I got to Singapore and it was like is there any other way to get to London than to get back on that plane I'm just not ready for this I just this is this is I mean we have we're not even halfway there yet and I've got to get back on this plane and fly the rest of the way it was yeah I got to say it was probably the worst travel experience of my life I just had not at all mentally prepared I prepared everything else it was down there in the dungeon the plane somewhere but I had not actually mentally prepared for the actual trip at all and and I just fidgeted and

I whinged and I complained all the way I didn't sleep a wink all the way and this guy beside me wanted to talk for most of the way it was mind-boggling I said to that I got to the UK and I said look if we can book a boat home that would be fantastic I love the boat dates what we're about to embark on here is a journey that Jesus is beginning with his disciples and it's a journey that we have to prepare for it's a journey that we have to be clearly prepared for because Jesus talks about it in the end of that verse 62 he talks about fickle following he talks about fickle following he wants to make it very clear what we are to expect if we're going to be his disciples and follow him and he says this in verse 62 no one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God what Jesus is saying is you want the good stuff you want heaven but you're ready for the trip are you ready for the trip to get there because we can have this idea of heaven and the trip's going to be like heaven as well and Jesus said guys it's not quite like that this is the most significant turning point in Luke's gospel we've seen the great things that Jesus has done we've seen his compassion for the lost and we've seen his authority over all that is and now it says in chapter 9 verse 51 having just moments before had Peter's confession that you are the Christ and God himself saying this is my son whom I will please it's quite clear who Jesus is now what does it mean to follow this

Jesus and so in 9:51 it says Jesus said his face for Jerusalem that's what it literally means he resolutely set out for Jerusalem he said his face for Jerusalem and so we are about to embark on this trip with Jesus let's turn however to chapter 19 because in chapter 19 we get the end of the trip where Jesus is just about to arrive so Luke chapter 19 it's the last week of his life and Jesus says this in verse 37 when he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord peace in heaven and glory in the highest it needed to be said as Jesus arrived at Jerusalem it needed to be said blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord

Jesus said it had to be said the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law said Jesus tell your disciples to shut up and Jesus said if they do not speak that which is true the stones would speak it it had to be said the king has arrived I like to think of our worship in this age as a rehearsal for the age to come I like to think that as we gather week after week that that's what we're thinking as we come to church and worship it's a rehearsal of that which is to come in the age when we are gathered around the throne one day we who by God's grace have been faithful to the Lord are going to stand with innumerable millions of believers from Bangladesh and Poland and Egypt and the United States and Iceland and Cameroon and Ecuador and Burma and Borneo and Japan and thousands of tribes and peoples and languages all purified by Christ with palms of praise in their hand and when we raise those palms of praise in salute to our King Jesus he will see almost an endless field of green shimmering with life and pulsating with praise and then like the sound of a thousand choruses we will sing our song of salvation while the mighty Christ with heartfelt love looks out over those whom he has brought with his own blood that is the future that is the worship that we are in rehearsal for right now but as Jesus approached Jerusalem if he had taken his throne on that day at Jerusalem none of us would be robed in white none of us would be waving palms of praise in the age to come there had to be a cross and this is what the disciples had not yet understood so back in chapter 9 flick back to Luke 9 as Jesus resolutely sets out for Jerusalem from Galilee he tried to explain this to his disciples in verse 22 of chapter 9 he said the son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders the chief priests and the teachers of the law he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life and then in verse 44 he says to them listen carefully to what I'm about to tell you

[9:43] I mean you should pick up at that point the son of man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men but verse 45 tells us they did not understand what this meant it was hidden from them so they did not grasp it and they were afraid to ask him about it you see clearly their understanding of Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem was actually flawed they saw him as a king who was moving in to take control and he was but they could not grasp that the victory that Jesus would win in Jerusalem was over sin and Satan and death and all the enemies of righteousness and joy and that this victory would be won through his own horrible suffering and death and that the kingdom which they thought was going to be established immediately was going to take thousands of years to be established and their misunderstanding of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem resulted in a misunderstanding of what it meant for them to be disciples of Jesus this is why this is so important for us to see lest we make the same mistake as those disciples in Luke chapter 9 verse 51 to 56 we learn how not to understand Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem as the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven

Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem to resolutely set out is to set his face towards to doggedly, stubbornly, determinedly head for Jerusalem and it meant something very different for the disciples than it did for Jesus you can actually see the visions of greatness that danced around in the disciples' minds at this point verse 46 an argument started amongst the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest it's like Jesus, we're almost there another week and we're going to be there sort of stuff we're going to be in Jerusalem you're going to be king and let's fight over who's going to be foreign minister and deputy prime minister and you know who's going to be the greatest in your kingdom Jesus because Jerusalem and glory were just around the corner for the disciples oh what it would mean for them when Jesus took his throne but Jesus had another vision in his head and one wonders frankly how he carried it for so long and alone here's what Jerusalem meant for Jesus

Luke chapter 13 verse 33 in any case I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem Jerusalem meant one thing for Jesus certain death and he was under no illusions as to whether it was going to be a quick death or a heroic death he pointed out in chapter 18 of Luke verse 31 onwards we are going up to Jerusalem and everything that is written by the prophets about the son of man will be fulfilled he will be turned over to the Gentiles they will mock him insult him spit on him flog him and kill him when Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem he set his face to die so he sets out and he says in chapter 9 verse 52 he sent messengers on ahead who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him but the people there did not welcome him because he was heading for Jerusalem it doesn't really matter whether his rejection is because Jesus and his companions were Jews and the Samaritans hated Jews or whether the rejection is a more personal rejection because they didn't want Jesus being their Messiah that what matters for this story is simply that Jesus is already being rejected and then what happens is this focus shifts from Jesus to the disciples and their response and especially the response of James and John you see it there in verse 54 they said to Jesus

Lord do you want us to call down fire from heaven to destroy them you get a glimpse here why Jesus called these guys the sons of thunder and you know frankly I can imagine being there I can imagine saying it you know Jesus do you want me to whip the guns out you know come on Jesus you know we're on our way to victory nothing can stop us now let's let the fire fall Jesus let the judgment begin oh Jesus how Jerusalem is going to tremble when they see us coming Jesus let's get on with the business right now and Jesus turns to them and rebukes them in verse 55 and they simply went to another village those couple of verses help us to see that a mistaken view of Jesus journey to Jerusalem can lead to a mistaken view of what it means to be his disciple if Jesus had come to execute judgment and take up an earthly rule then it would make sense for the sons of thunder to launch missiles at this Samaritan village but if Jesus had come not to judge but to save then a radically different form of discipleship is required and so here is the question

I think that this passage is asking every believer does discipleship mean deploying God's missiles against the enemy in righteous indignation or does discipleship mean following him on the Calvary road which leads to suffering and death the answer in the whole New Testament is that the surprise about Jesus the Messiah is that he came to live a sacrificial dying service before he comes a second time to reign in glory and the surprise about discipleship is that it demands a like of sacrificial dying service before we reign with him in glory what James and John had to learn and what we must learn too is that Jesus' journey to Jerusalem to die is our journey to Jerusalem to die as well there are certainly those that view it as the exact opposite that since Jesus suffered so much and died in our place therefore we are free to go straight to the head of the class we skip all the exams he suffered so that I could have comfort he died so that

[17:15] I could live he bore abuse so that I could be esteemed he gave up all the treasures in heaven so that I could build up treasures in earth he brought the kingdom and paid for our entrance and now we live in it with all its earthly privileges but that goes against the plain teaching of the Bible even the plain teaching the context here Luke chapter 9 verse 23 and 24 Jesus says if anyone would come after me he must deny himself take up his cross daily and follow me whoever wants to save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for me will save it friends what I'm saying here is that when Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem to walk that Calvary road he was not merely just taking our place he was setting our pattern he's not just our substitute he's actually our pace setter if we seek to secure our life through returning evil for evil or surrounding ourselves with luxury in the face of human need this passage says we will lose our life we can only save our life if we follow

Christ on the Calvary road Jesus died to save us from the power and punishment of sin not from the suffering and sacrifices of simplicity for love's sake Jesus died to save us from the power and punishment of sin not from the suffering and sacrifices of simplicity for love's sake and so verses 56 to 62 are Jesus way of correcting the misconception of discipleship the misconception of all the glories of discipleship that James and John had three times here in these passages these verses we see the word follow to describe what it means to be his disciple verse 57 I will follow you verse 59 follow me and verse 61

I will follow you the point is that being a disciple of Jesus is more than just learning about Jesus it's actually following Jesus where Jesus goes and as it says in Luke 14 verse 27 whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple when Jesus says these words follow me he says it in the context of having just been rejected at Samaria as he said his face to go to Jerusalem and so just for a moment I want to dwell on those words those two little words follow me and if you're dozing off at all right now you need to tune into this bit follow me follow me what I want you to do tonight after church is go home pick up your Bible turn to

Luke chapter 9 and you dwell on those two words you hover over them you meditate on them you read them you think about them you incline your heart to them you ask God to pray you pray to God ask him to bend your heart to understand those words follow me follow me follow me until they burn until they burn deep in your heart and in your mind and if they're not burning deep in your heart and in your mind you read them again you ponder you meditate you think you pray you ponder you meditate you think you pray again and again and again until they burn deep in your heart because my guess is for most of us we read those versus and we skip straight over them.

Follow me, follow me, follow me. And they are so significant. They reveal two things. They reveal a person and they reveal a path. They reveal Jesus, they reveal his mission.

[21:39] They reveal a sweetness and they reveal a suffering. When Jesus responded the way he did to these three would-be followers, he was teaching that the Calvary Road through Jerusalem would be a hard road and would require personal sacrifices.

And he was testing, testing, testing to see if he, the me in the follow me, was their greatest treasure.

There are two things happening here. Firstly, Jesus is offering himself for our fellowship and our friendship and our partnership. Just think about that.

This is the me bit. This is the me of the follow me. The creator of the universe, the king of kings, the lord of lords, the one who upholds everything by the power of his word, the one who is from everlasting to everlasting, that's mind-boggling in of itself, born of a virgin, the holy one of God, perfect in obedience, triumphant over sin and death and hell and demons.

In him are hidden all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom. And this Jesus, this me, says follow me. Me. Me.

[23 : 07] Do you get who's saying follow me on this Calvary Road? The significance of those words. And the second thing that Jesus is doing here is testing us.

Testing us that if this is in actual fact enough. In other words, he's testing us.

Do you know who's calling you to follow him? Is it enough to have Jesus? Is it enough to be satisfied in him?

Is he your treasure, your joy, your security, your hope, your friend in times of loneliness, your home, your father, your mother, your power to look straight ahead rather than to be turned aside in fickleness of discipleship?

When Jesus says follow me, he wants us to be satisfied in him and not to be satisfied in our homes, our furniture, the security system which keeps it safe, the manicured garden, the climate controlled atmosphere, the cockroach, mouse free, ant free, fully automated kitchen, not even the cosy comfort of the bedroom where we lay down our head at night and cuddle up under a doona because the son of man has no place to lay his head.

[24 : 43] No place to lay his head. He wants to know are we satisfied in him? In him.

We don't need to make these words any harder than they are. Jesus isn't saying there will never be a time when you will have a bed or a pillow or a roof.

Jesus is not saying that one of the criteria of being his disciple is that we must sleep standing up but it has something to say. It has something to say about how many beds and how many pillows and how many rooms and how many doonas we have.

It has something to say about how many places we've invested in to lay our head, how much comfort and luxury that we seek to surround ourselves with.

It has got something to say about that. Brothers and sisters, we're 16,000 people groups in this world still waiting to hear the gospel and millions of children and people starving through no fault of their own and many people in our own country hard pressed because of jobliness and just emptiness of the soul.

[26 : 03] It is inconceivable that a disciple of Jesus Christ can go right on pursuing the great Australian dream. What excites me so much is when I see Christians who have an alternative dream, a dream of breaking loose from the shackles of this self-serving consumer culture in which we live, a dream of doing something radical, something radically loving with your house, something radically loving with your portfolio, something radically loving with your income, something radically loving with your free evenings or mornings or afternoons or weekends or something radically loving with your job.

Some of us have discovered such wonderful freedom from the love of things, but some of us are yet to discover it. Likewise, Jesus isn't saying here, it will always be wrong to go to your dad's funeral.

The point is that Jesus Christ is absolute and all other allegiances are relative to that. That's the point Jesus is making here. Jesus isn't trying to create a bunch of laws that all disciples have to keep.

This is where we get bogged down so much. We fight over, thou shalt not give all your money or thou shalt not have a bed or thou shalt not go to your dad's funeral.

And we forget about the me, who it is that's called us to follow him. We get so caught up in the follow bit and we forget about it's me, the me that's called us to follow him.

[27:55] The point of this whole passage is Jesus sets out to Jerusalem is that he knows our idols. He knows it. He knows perfectly what is competing in your heart with affection for him.

He knows it. It's why he raises the question in verse 62 about fickle following. It's the danger of indecisive discipleship.

No one after putting his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God. In other words, you can't plough in a straight line if you're looking behind you. No, I know it.

I come from the country. I've tried it. You cannot serve Christ. You cannot make Jesus look great to this world if you're always second guessing whether or not he's worth following and trusting.

Looking back means longing back. It means we are not really sure if he's worth following. It's having a divided heart and James says that the double minded person is unstable in all they do.

[29:13] Friends, tonight Jesus is coming to us through his word and he's looking in our faces and he's looking straight to our hearts and I want to say please let him do it.

Please let him do it. Let him mess with your heart. Let him mess with your heart. Let these words follow me burn.

Burn deep within you until you burn for a passion for his glory. Burn for a passion for his kingdom. Jesus is worthy, he is worth following even through Jerusalem, even to the cross and from there to all the nations of the world.

Yes, he died just outside of Jerusalem but it's not bad news. His death is our life and so follow him.

Follow him. sh ■■ him.