



*To Know Christ . . .
and to Make Him Known*

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Joining God: Major Adjustments **Luke 9:18-26**

Imagine for a moment that you had the opportunity to fulfill your greatest dream.

Maybe it's the job you've always wanted or the trip you've always wanted to take. Maybe it's for everything to be with your family as you've always hoped it would be. Maybe it's some accomplishment or achievement you've longed for through the years.

What kinds of adjustments would you be willing to make in your life to fulfill that dream?

If it meant leaving your job, would you do it?

What about moving your family?

What about investing some or even all of your resources—financial, personal, spiritual, or emotional?

Would you do it?

Now imagine for a moment that God has revealed to you something He's about to do or is doing, and He has invited you to be part of it.

But to do it, you'd have to make some *major adjustments*.

It might mean leaving your job.

It might mean moving your family.

It might mean investing some or all of your resources—financial, personal, spiritual, or emotional.

Would you do it?

For over two months now, we've been on a spiritual journey together of getting to know God more deeply and learning to know and do His will. We've been looking from a biblical perspective at the themes of Henry Blackaby and Claude King's study *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*.¹ We've thought about what it means to know God and how knowing God's nature is related to doing God's will. We've been considering one by one what Blackaby calls the *Seven Realities of Experiencing God*. So far, we've looked at the first five:

- *God is always at work around you.*
- *God pursues a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal.*
- *God invites you to become involved with Him in His work.*
- *God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.*
- *God's invitation to work with Him always leads us to a crisis of belief that requires faith*

and action.

Today we're focusing on the theme of the sixth reality: *We must make major adjustments in our lives to join God in what He is doing.* We're looking at it in light of our text, Luke 9:18-27, where *Jesus described the major adjustment that anyone who would follow Him must make.* Listen to the story as you follow along in your Bibles. *Read text . . .*

Adjusting to Jesus

Do you remember the story? Jesus had taken His disciples off to pray in private. While they were there, He asked them, **"Who do the crowds say I am?"**² His disciples told Him what the crowds were saying: **"Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life"** (9:18-19).

Isn't it interesting that any of these possibilities required resurrection?

Then Jesus turned the question on them: **"But what about you? Who do you say I am?"** The way the question is phrased in Greek is very emphatic—Jesus was asking them what *they* thought, and He was asking *all* of them (9:20).

It wasn't unusual for Peter to be something of a spokesman for the group, so he spoke up and answered, **"God's Messiah."**

It seems strange to us that Jesus would respond by commanding His disciples not to tell this to anyone at this point (9:21). But it seems that He didn't want people to know yet that He was the Messiah because they would try to force Him to be Messiah according to *their* expectations.

But what must have been even stranger for the disciples was what Jesus said next when He predicted His passion, His death, and His resurrection (9:22). And it no doubt blew their minds when Jesus told them all:

"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? (9:23-27).

Deny self? Take up their cross *daily*? We're talking *major* adjustments here, aren't we? But isn't that a key point of this story? *Jesus described the major adjustments that anyone who would follow Him must make.* He was demanding *radical* adjustments!

What we have to do to join God

This is just one of many passages from Scripture we could point to about this idea of how we have to adjust our lives to God and His will and purpose and plans. The point of this text for us is clear, isn't it? *We must make major adjustments in our lives to join God in what He is doing.*

If we're to follow Jesus and be a part of what God is doing in His kingdom purpose, we have to be willing to make these kinds of adjustments in our thinking, our attitudes, our beliefs, our commitments, and in other areas as well. It's important that we understand several things here and that we commit ourselves to God accordingly.

First, *adjusting to God is a second critical turning point in knowing and doing God's will.* First we experience *the crisis of belief* that we talked about last Sunday—whether we believe

God will do what He says He will do, whether we'll take God at His word. This has to do with *what we believe about God*.

Adjusting to God has to do with *how we position ourselves in relation to Him and His word to us*. Once we believe God, then we have to adjust our lives to Him accordingly, so that we can go on in obedience.

Now these two critical points are distinct but closely related, like two sides of the same coin. The crisis of belief is about taking God at His word; adjusting to God is about acting on that belief.

Think about it this way. God calls you very clearly to do a particular task you can't do in your own strength. He makes it clear in your relationship with Him that He's inviting you to join Him in this area of His work. He's spoken to you by His Spirit through Scripture, prayer, circumstances, and other Christians. You've made up your mind that you can take Him at His word that He'll empower you to do this task.

But *will you?* It's not enough just to believe God with our minds; we have to believe Him in our hearts in such a way that we'll adjust our lives however He wants us to!

Here's the second thing we have to realize. As Blackaby puts it, "*You can't stay where you are and go with God.*"³

Adjusting our lives prepares us for obedience. When God invites us to join Him in something He's doing or leads us in a new direction, we can't simply go on "business as usual." We can't stay where we are, and go with God in obedience. That's true for us individually and as a church!

God reveals Himself and calls us to join Him *where He is*. That requires changes in our situation, *even when we have been walking in obedience*.

As Blackaby points out,⁴ these changes may be costly for us and for those around us. This was certainly the case with a lot of biblical characters:

- Noah couldn't do things as usual *and* build the ark (Genesis 6).
- Abram couldn't stay where he was *and* follow God to Canaan to become the father of many nations (Genesis 12:1-8).
- Moses couldn't stay on the backside of the desert herding sheep *and* lead Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 3).
- David had to leave his flocks to become the king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:1-13).
- Amos had to leave his sheep and his sycamore fig trees to preach in Israel (Amos 7:14-15).
- Jonah had to leave his home and submit to God despite his misgivings and prejudices to preach to Nineveh (Jonah 1 – 4).
- Peter, Andrew, James, and John had to leave their boats and nets to follow Jesus (Matthew 4:18-22).
- Matthew had to leave his tax collector's booth to follow Jesus (Matthew 9:9).
- And Paul had to be converted and redirected to be the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:1-19).

You see, adjusting our lives to join God prepares us to follow through with Him in obedience.

Now there's great comfort, stability, continuity, and assurance in walking with God. But we have to understand that we are *walking* with God! We're on *a journey*! And you don't make progress on a journey by sitting still!

Jesus made major adjustments to do the Father's will and fulfill His purpose (Philippians 2:5-11; 2 Corinthians 8:9). Likewise, we also have to make major adjustments to God, His thoughts, His purposes, and His ways. Believing God demands adjustment; adjustment leads to obedience.

Have you ever driven a car that was out of alignment or the tires were out of balance? It makes it harder to control, doesn't it? It may make the car bounce or pull to the right or left, and cause the tires to wear out more quickly. How can it be fixed? *Adjustments* have to be made!

When God calls us to join Him and we neglect or refuse to adjust our lives to Him and His will, we're out of alignment and our lives are out of balance. And the only way to fix that is to *adjust our lives to God and His will*, so we can go with Him where He's leading.

One other thing we need to realize and act on—*adjustment to God involves faith—total submission to God and total dependence on God!*

Again, as Blackaby so rightly points out,⁵ this kind of surrender and dependence may mean that we have to make adjustments that involve:

- Our circumstances (job, home, finances),
- Our relationships (family, friends, church, business),
- Our thinking (prejudices, methods, our potential),
- Our commitments (to family, church, job, plans),
- Our actions (how we pray, give, serve),
- Our beliefs (about God, His purposes, His ways, our relationship to Him).

Wasn't that the case with Simon Peter in Acts 10? Through his experience with Christ and Cornelius, he had to adjust his thinking, his actions, and his beliefs about God's inclusion of the Gentiles in His purpose.

We need to remember two things about submitting to God and adjusting our lives to Him. First, God's will is always best, and it's always for our ultimate, eternal good. And second, we're adjusting our lives not to an object or to an abstract principle, but to a Person—God, who is our Heavenly Father!⁶

When we completely *submit* to God, we'll *depend* on Him totally. That total dependence often leads to *actively* waiting on the Lord. Rather than trying to accomplish something for God through our own strength, we depend on Him and His power to accomplish what He wants to do through us. That may take time; but as we wait we pray, we watch, we seek His will with other believers, and we continue to do the last thing He told us to do.

Waiting on God shifts the responsibility of the outcome to God—where it belongs! His timing and ways are always right, so we *must* wait on Him in humble submission and dependence to guide us and accomplish His will through us.

Just as Jesus described it, *we must make major adjustments in our lives to join God in what He is doing.*

Through the years, many believers have understood this fact and gladly submitted to the Lord and depended on Him.

One of the most powerful examples in the 20th century was Jim Elliot, a missionary who along with four other missionaries was martyred by the Auca Indians in Ecuador, to whom they were trying to take the Gospel. On October 28, 1949, he wrote in his journal: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."⁷

So what is God doing in your life? What is He doing in the life of our church? Are you willing to make the adjustments that are necessary to join Him—to deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow Him?

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¹ In this sermon series, I am relying heavily on Blackaby's ideas as presented in Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King, *Experiencing God: How to Live the Full Adventure of Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994).

² Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version[®] (2011 edition).

³ Blackaby and King, 147.

⁴ Blackaby and King, 147-148.

⁵ Blackaby and King, 149-150.

⁶ Blackaby and King, 151.

⁷ <http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/faq/20.htm>.