

Luke Chapter 9 - John Karmelich

1. In the last lesson, I focused on the who, what, when's and how's of we go making a difference for God in our lives. This lesson is sort of a part 2: I see the main issue is what we're supposed to do as Christians and what power does God give us to make a difference for Him. Therefore my title for this lesson is the word "what", as it asks what is it we're suppose to do as Christians and what power do we have to do what God's us to do. This chapter focuses on how Jesus' teaches His 12 disciples. The point for you and is me is what they learned is also for us to learn and hopefully those "what" concepts can be applied to our lives and past on to others as well. With that said, let me describe the stories in this chapter and show how it ties to my "what do we do" theme:
 - a) The first story is about Jesus sending the 12 disciples out on their own. They are given the same power Jesus has to heal people of diseases and cast out demons. They're also told to go preach the Gospel message. They are to travel light with no food or money. If they are rejected from a town, they are to go to the next one. This story does not mean that Jesus is calling you and I to go preach the exact same way. It is a short time mission trip designed to spread the word about who Jesus was. The "what" for us is as Jesus is training His men for service so God essentially says to us, "I know you're not perfect, but you know enough about Me (Jesus) to make an effort to tell others of Me or be of service to Me."
 - b) The second story is about the government leader (under Rome) named Herod. This is one of the sons of the Herod who killed the babies at the time of Jesus' birth. The point here is that word got back to this Herod about Jesus' miracles, after he had John the Baptist killed effectively for preaching repentance. The "what" here is about being careful as we preach the Gospel message, as forces exist that want to harm us for preaching Jesus. That doesn't mean we hide in fear. It just means we can expect resistance if we live for Jesus.
 - c) The third story is in effect the epilogue of the first one. The disciples returned from their short-term mission trip to report the good news of the miracles they did, without having Jesus literally with them on their trip. The point is God gives each of us gifts and talents that we can use to make that difference for Him and we can expect positive results if we're willing to take steps in faith to serve Him despite any resistance.
 - d) Next we get the "largest" miracle in the bible, the feeding of 5,000 men. If all of these men brought their wives and children, the crowd could have been as large as 20,000. I call this Jesus' largest miracle in terms of helping the most number of people at once. It's the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels, so it must have made a big impression. The "what" here is Jesus is showing us not only to preach about salvation, but also to take care of real needs. It's about having a heart for other people and wanting to see them survive so they too can make a difference for Him.
 - e) Next we get Jesus explaining to the disciples that He has to die and rise again. The "what" here is simple: If Jesus is to pay the price for our sins, the disciples needed to understand that so they could preach it to others. Even if they didn't believe it or accept it here, once the resurrection happened, then they could preach it as the truth they have seen. We end this section with Jesus telling His disciples that if they truly want to remain His disciples then they literally have to "die to themselves". This isn't about selling all we own. What it means is that as Christians we put the needs of others as priority over our own needs. We see ourselves as needing Jesus not only for salvation but as one who guides our lives.
 - f) While that story is tough to accept, know that the next one's designed to give the disciples the courage to accept that lifestyle choice. It's the story of three of the 12 disciples seeing Jesus as He is physical changed as to how He'll probably look in heaven. At this moment, Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus. There's more to this story, but the important point is the "what": Jesus is God and it's worth the trouble to live life putting others first.

- g) Hang in there, I've only got three points left to make in this long chapter. The next one is about when Jesus returns from that event looking "normal" again, some people greet Him to say how the disciples couldn't help a boy who's regularly attacked by a demon. Jesus responds by condemning the crowd for not believing who He is but just demanding more miracles. Of course Jesus cures the boy. The "what" for us is about discovering what His disciples (and us) have to accept in order to utilize that same type of power in their lives and our lives. My point is Jesus does give us power over demons and I'll discuss that in more detail as I get into that story later in this lesson.
 - h) After this we get an argument among the disciples about who's the greatest. I'm guessing that because only three of them got to see Jesus "transformed" on the mountain that fueled the debate. Jesus then taught the disciples the next "what": That is if we want to be one of His disciples we have to be as dependant upon Him as a little child is dependant upon his or her parents. The point is to be a great Christian is not about being doing more miracles or leading more people to Jesus than others. It's about letting Jesus be in charge of every aspect of our lives the same way a child is dependant upon their parents.
 - i) The final story is about the start the journey to Jerusalem for Jesus to face His death and His resurrection. This marks the end of Jesus ministry in the Lake Galilee region as He is now beginning his journey to Jerusalem that will lead to His death and resurrection. As this journey begins Jesus is then questioned about what does one have to do in order to be a disciple of His. Jesus gives a famous and probably old Jewish saying translated: "Foxes have holes and birds...have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." The point of that quote is simply that if we want to be Jesus disciple we can't just sit there and do nothing. We have to be willing to make the constant effort to follow Him.
 - j) If you ask me to sum up the whole lesson in one thought, it would be Verse 23: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." The point is in order to be Jesus disciple, we have to in effect give up trying to do things by our own power and be dependant upon His power to make a difference in the world. If one gets that idea, one gets the "what" of this lesson. Speaking of which let's get started.
2. Chapter 9, Verse 1: When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. ³ He told them: "Take nothing for the journey--no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic. ⁴ Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. ⁵ If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them." ⁶ So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.
- a) To understand these verses, remember that Jesus had a large crowd following Him as He went from town to town. Jesus named the 12 disciples earlier, but until this point they've never been asked to do anything without Jesus physical present in their midst. Now they are told to travel from town to town on their own with no supplies. Their mission was to preach the gospel (that Jesus is the Messiah who pays the price for their sins). In order to validate their authority, Jesus gave each of them the power to heal people of whatever is ailing them at that moment as well as cast out demons.
 - b) OK, why the "no supplies" rule? First, this is a short-term mission and has nothing to do with us packing for any of our trips. The point is Jesus didn't want people to think that the disciples had the wrong motivation to do this. It is to show that wherever they went, they didn't want anything in return for the help they were to give others. It teaches us of the idea of giving to others without expecting anything in return. We don't preach the gospel message in order to get rich or even be compensated, but only to warn others of the judgment to come and how to avoid that inevitable judgment on our world.
 - i) I need to emphasize these verses have nothing to do with how we pack for what mission we want to take on. This is a specific mission with specific instructions.

- ii) The way I look at this mission is simply that if Jesus says they don't need any food or money, then Jesus will provide those things for them. Later in the text we'll see when the disciples returned, they didn't lack anything or "starve to death" during this mission trip. Just as Jesus said "go empty handed", the "what" for us is about learning to be dependant upon Him in order to make a difference for Him.
 - c) I also want to give a few technical comments before we move on. The text says to take "no staff". A staff is a walking stick. In Mark's Gospel, the text says take nothing except for a staff. (Mark 6:8) Is that a contradiction? The most likely explanation was that it was ok to take a walking stick, but as a supply don't take a second one. It's pretty trivial, but I think the key point is just go from place to place and don't worry about supplies.
 - i) The next technical point is that if a town rejected the Gospel message, the disciples as a final sign were to "shake the dust off their feet as a sign". This was a practice of Jewish people as they left non-Jewish lands as to emphasize their belief that the only way to salvation was through the God of the Jewish people. As I considered that expression, I keep thinking of an expression I heard many years ago, "If they won't listen to Jesus, give them Moses". (I heard it from the late Walter Martin.) The point being is that if people won't accept the free gift of Jesus salvation, then the follow up message is the judgment to come based on disobeying God's laws.
 - ii) The point is the disciples were to go from town to town preaching about accepting Jesus as the Messiah and doing miracles to prove it. If people still wanted to prove their own worth to God and therefore reject the gift of free forgiveness, the act of shaking the dust off their feet was the equivalent of preaching eternal punishment.
 - d) Last thing to ponder: Where would they stay? One has to understand that "hotels" in that land was effectively brothels. If the townsfolk saw the disciples doing miracles and after seeing that didn't offer anyplace for them to stay, that was the equivalent of rejecting them as the miracles didn't earn their respect. The good news is we'll read in a few verses of the disciples coming back and not complaining about any lack of need for this trip.
 - e) With all that said, the text changes topics for the next three verses.
3. Verse 7: Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was going on. And he was perplexed, because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead,⁸ others that Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life.⁹ But Herod said, "I beheaded John. Who, then, is this I hear such things about?" And he tried to see him.
- a) In effect, we get an interruption in the story of the disciples first mission on their own to get a report of what Herod was hearing about Jesus. To explain this, it is probably best if I give a little background on this Herod. The first thing to realize is that there is more than one Herod in the bible. Herod's father was called "Herod the Great". He was non-Jewish and appointed by the Romans to rule over Israel in exchange for keeping the peace. That Herod had a bunch of wives and a whole bunch of sons. The short version here is after he died, his territory was split in four parts with four of his children ruling over each of those four territories. Anyway, "this" Herod is one of those four. He's also famous for seducing one of his half brother's wives. He convinced her to marry him and leave his half brother. That act is why John condemned him and that same act made Herod's new wife angry, so she asked Herod to have John killed for preaching that message. That story's told in more detail in Mark and Matthew's Gospel.
 - b) I give all of that background so that one can understand why this Herod was perplexed of the stories he was hearing about Jesus. It's as if Herod was thinking, when I had John the Baptist killed, I thought that all of this talk of a Messiah to rule over this land would come to an end. Yet I get reports about this Jesus character and the miracles that are performed by Him. You may recall that I said in the last lesson that one of the woman who followed Jesus was married to the man in charge of Herod's stuff. I suspect that is how the word of Jesus got back to Herod.

- c) Now for the important question: Why is this story here? Why interrupt the story of Jesus sending out the disciples to tell us that Herod was curious about Jesus? I suspect it is to show us that if we're going to make a difference for Jesus, even though God gives us the power and authority to do so, we can expect resistance from others. If you're ever tried to make a difference for Jesus one learns quickly "stuff just happens" and bad things occur. Just as Herod will be involved in the process of bringing Jesus ministry to an end, so we can expect our own resistance in making a difference for Jesus, even though it won't stop us from making that difference. To sum it up, anytime we do make a difference for God, it will work out for God's glory whether or not we see the results ourselves. While we are doing that, we can expect resistance and bad things to happen in the process.
 - d) With that tough warning completed, it's time to get back to the twelve disciples as they've finished their short-term mission journey.
4. Verse 10: When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida,¹¹ but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.
- a) I have to admit, I love the first sentence of Chapter 10. It's one thing to watch Jesus do a whole bunch of miracles. It's another thing when God uses ordinary people like you and me to do great things by His power. One of the things one learns as a Christian is that it involves a lot of trial and error. The way we often discover what it is that God wants us to do as believers is not a magic pill given on day one. We may know what we are especially good at and we may have some idea what it is God wants us to do, but I have found that it isn't until we actually start walking in faith that the "what" kicks in: That is God using our lives in amazing ways to make a difference for Him.
 - b) That little speech leads me back to the first line of Chapter 10. The disciples were told to go on this short-term mission trip, perform miracles and preach the gospel. I'm sure they didn't know what to do next, but just went out and took risks. It's when they came back and considered what they have been through that they realized that God had given them powers and "coincidences" beyond human explanation when they went out on their own in pairs as Jesus commanded them to do.
 - c) That leads us to the second sentence. Jesus wanted them all to rest. The "what" we do for Jesus is not always involve being on the move. Constantly traveling from town to town to preach the Gospel without any supplies let would wipe out anyone and God understands our need for rest. However, even as they attempted to get away, crowds followed them.
 - d) The next point is Jesus didn't say to the crowds following Him, "Please go away we're all exhausted and we really need some rest right now". To be honest, most of us can relate to that type of message and if Jesus said that, the crowds would have probably left for a bit. One of the things to catch in the Gospels is that Jesus is never too tired to help anyone in need or to preach the Gospel to anyone willing to listen. That gives me comfort to be able to seek Him no matter what the situation. A wonderful little application here is there are times when I am also extremely tired, but if I get the sense it is God's will for me to go do a specific project then and there, He provides me with the strength to take it on. That's a lesson I believe Jesus is teaching the disciples in these verses. Speaking of verses, it's time for us to keep moving.
5. Verse 12: Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here."
- a) From Verse 12 to Verse 17 is the famous story of Jesus feeding the "5,000". To be technical I suspect it was more like 20,000 as only the grown men were counted. If one adds for the women and children, that's why I think Jesus miraculously feed 20,000 people. To start, we do get the idea that it was a large crowd following Jesus based on the miracle size.

- b) This verse also gives us a little clue as to a "where". It was a desolate place. Remember in the previous verses, Jesus and the disciples were trying to get away to rest. I'm sure they all walked to some desolate location and this large crowd just keeps following in order to see what Jesus would do next. Now it's almost dinnertime. The disciples said something they thought was relevant by asking Jesus to tell the crowd to go to the nearby villages in order to find food and lodging for the night. There is nothing wrong with that request. As almost all of us know, Jesus is about to use this moment to teach the disciples and the crowd a lesson about who He is and what He's capable of doing.
6. Verse 13: He replied, "You give them something to eat." They answered, "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish--unless we go and buy food for all this crowd." ¹⁴ (About five thousand men were there.) But he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." ¹⁵ The disciples did so, and everybody sat down. ¹⁶ Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to set before the people. ¹⁷ They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.
- a) I seriously doubt anyone reading these verses is not familiar with this story. Even those who don't believe in Jesus as God know the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000. As I said in the introduction, it's the only miracle recorded in all four Gospel accounts. In fact, Luke with all his details may have given the briefest description of this event. Remember that Luke wasn't there and he learned all of this from interviewing eye witnesses. Luke does not tell us the story of the five loaves and two fish coming from a small boy. Luke just focuses on what the disciples did as his purpose here is on the "what" the disciples did as they were learning to follow Jesus.
- b) With that said, why did Jesus command the disciples to make the people sit in groups of 50 each? The answer is so it would be easy to count. Why were only the men counted? To answer, know that in a Jewish synagogue service, the men and women each sit in their own sections. I've been to a number of synagogue services and what one sees is a large curtain between the men and women's section. As my host explained to me, that keeps the focus of the men on the speaker and not on the women. My point is I suspect the men and women were used to be separated to listen to a speaker, so this is nothing new here.
- c) The great question of course is how did Jesus actual do this miracle? If I could explain the "how", it wouldn't have been a miracle. It's just another proof that Jesus is God and could do things that are beyond our ability to comprehend.
- d) A few last things and I'll move on. Notice that Jesus didn't bless the food, but He thanked God for providing the food. That should be our attitude when we pray over a meal. The next point is that everyone ate enough to the point of being stuffed. If Jesus is going to go and multiply food, there would be plenty of food for everyone.
- e) Finally we get to the classic point about leftovers. Jesus not only somehow made enough so that this large group was stuffed, but there were exactly 12 full baskets leftover. This is not about avoiding waste, but about showing us that when we're doing things for God, He also provides for us as well. (As in one basket per disciple). My speculation is that all during this time the disciples didn't eat themselves as they were working there with their mouths wide open about where all this food came from. It wasn't until the entire crowd was stuffed and they collected these leftovers that it started to sink in that when we make a difference for Jesus, He takes care of us as well.
- f) The "what" here of course is that God calls us to go make a difference for Him. If we're willing to do that, He provides for us to help the needs of others and provides for us as well. So does mean I should go gather a big crowd of people and food will just show up out of nowhere to feed everyone? Not that I've seen. The answer is about praying about what God calls us (not the 12 disciples) to do, and using what resources we have to make a difference for Him and let God work through us with what we have.

7. Verse 18: Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?"¹⁹ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life."²⁰ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God."
- a) The scene now moves to a separate time in Jesus' ministry when He was alone with the disciples. The other gospels record more to the "loaves" story, but Luke here wants to focus on specific events where the emphasis is on teaching the disciples (that includes us) of what it is He wants us to do in order to be such disciples.
 - b) With that said, these verses read like a marketing survey. Jesus asked His disciples who do the crowds say that I am? The response was some say that he is John the Baptist who has already been killed at this point in history. Others say the reincarnation of one of the Old Testament prophets. Then Peter says effectively, "We as your disciples get the idea that you are the Messiah, (Hebrew) or Christ (Greek) who is the one promised in the Old Testament that will rule over the world from Jerusalem forever." It may not have sunk in yet that Jesus is God Himself, but they accept the idea that Jesus is the promised Messiah who will rule the world one day forever from Jerusalem.
 - c) That leads me back to the idea of a "marketing survey". That wasn't Jesus purpose to ask that question. Jesus wanted to know if it sunk in yet what is His role in His first coming, to pay the price for sins. Obviously it hasn't yet which is why He gives the speech that He gives in the next few verses:
8. Verse 21: Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone.²² And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."
- a) I can just see the disciples thinking as Jesus said this, "That's not how it works. You Jesus, are supposed to lead a rebellion to overthrow the Romans and rule from Jerusalem. You are not supposed to be rejected by the religious leaders, be killed and be resurrected. Get the idea that these verses are here so as to show the reader Jesus did explain a key part of His eternal plan to the disciples, but it didn't sink in, because they wanted Jesus to rule.
 - b) Let me explain this concept another way: I suspect there is nothing we would like more as a society to live in a world with no wars, and others to treat us fairly. I'm convinced if Jesus did overthrow Rome, the Jewish people would have accepted Him as their Messiah. However, we would still have the "sin problem" of thinking we have to prove our worth to God based on being a good person. My point is to live in a peaceful world with a good world leader over us is a wonderful thing to desire. To know that we can live forever for all of eternity without having to prove our worth to God is something far greater and that is why accepting who Jesus truly is, is far more important than the Messiah who will rule.
 - c) Of course Jesus realized this would not sink in here and now, but it was still important to say all of this so that after Jesus did rise from the dead, the disciples could then realize not only that Jesus is God but that they no longer had to work in order to be pleasing to God with their lives. If that's true, then what is life's purpose? The answer is in the next verse:
9. Verse 23: Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."²⁴ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.²⁵ What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?²⁶ If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.²⁷ I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God."
- a) As I said in my introduction, if I had to pick one verse to memorize in this chapter, Verse 23 would be it. The key point of this paragraph is that if we consider Jesus to be in charge of our lives, then like Him we have to "take up our cross daily" to follow Him. The key is not to earn points with Jesus, but to do it out of gratitude for what He has done for us.

- b) To explain all of this let me start with the idea of "taking up our cross daily". The disciples lived in a world where if a criminal was sentenced to death, they were required to parade through town carrying a cross that they would then have to hang upon and die. My point is the disciples got the idea what taking up one's cross meant. What Jesus is getting at and is a key point of living the Christian life: To live for Jesus is to literally live for Him daily and let go of our old life. That is also what Paul meant when he wrote in Romans 12:1 for us to offer up our bodies as a living sacrifice for God. The classic point is our problem is we are constantly "crawling off that altar" as we desire to do our will and not God's will.
 - c) So does that mean we have to earn our salvation by constantly trying to do His will? No. Jesus point is that if we do believe He is God, then we would just naturally want to live this way as it is best way for us to live out the limited time we have on earth to go make the difference for Him. Again, I'm back to my "what": Let us turn from what it is that we may desire to do in order to make a difference for Him. Practically speaking, that could mean any of a 1,000 things. It's a matter of studying His word, avoiding sin as much as possible, using whatever talents and gifts we have and praying for God's guidance as to how He wants us to use our time for His glory. I've found that the one prayer that God can't resist is when we totally surrender ourselves to Him to do His will, that is when He will guide us in ways we could never imagine going. That's the "take up our cross" life.
 - d) From that verse, Jesus uses an illustration to say, "what good is it, if we have everything this world has to offer, but lose eternal life?" If all we live for is fame, money or power, and care nothing about His eternal kingdom, in effect it's a waste of a life, because even if we achieve any of those things, how much do they account for all of eternity? Let me also say that I don't believe this means Jesus wants us to sell all we own. It's just a realization that all we own belong to Him in the first place so He's in charge of how we use our stuff.
 - e) Coming back to the disciples one has to understand how difficult this was, to let go of the life they had in order to "die daily for Jesus". In order for the disciples to understand why this lifestyle choice is necessary, Jesus makes the point in Verse 26 that when He returns to rule one day, anyone who is ashamed to be His disciple and live this way, will not get to live with Him forever in heaven. So are we back to "works" again? No it's a matter of our mental choice of how we choose to live. Jesus is saying if we choose to live that way, He as God will be aware of it and that is the proof that we are His disciples.
 - f) Finally Jesus says in Verse 27 that some of them will get a preview of what heaven will be like. So why did Jesus say "some of them" and not all of them? My guess is so it will sink in that they had to be willing to give up living as they know it in order to "die to Jesus".
 - i) Speaking of that preview of seeing Jesus in His heavenly state, time for Verse 28.
10. Verse 28: About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. ²⁹ As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. ³⁰ Two men, Moses and Elijah, ³¹ appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. ³² Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. ³³ As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters--one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.)
- a) Here we see Jesus alone up on a mountaintop. Jesus only permitted three of His disciples to travel with Him as He climbed this mountain. At this point, Jesus appearance changed so that He was "dazzling white". Don't think white clothing, but think of white lightening or maybe "diamond white". The kind of white that's hard to stare at in its brilliance.
 - b) Then the text says Moses and Elijah were there. If one knows the history of these two in the Old Testament, Moses death is not recorded. Elijah was simply taken into heaven "in a whirlwind". Moses recorded God's law. Elijah was considered the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. (References to their deaths: Deuteronomy 34:6 and 2nd Kings 2:11.)

- c) The classic question is how did the disciples know who was who? I don't think that they wore nametags. Jesus either did introductions or what I'm hoping is that in heaven, we just know who is who, and that's why we don't have to worry about remembering names.
 - d) One of the reasons those two Old Testament key figures were there is to show the three disciples who were there that Jesus is the Promised Messiah as predicted by the prophets and as implied in the Jewish law itself. The text says Moses and Elijah spoke about Jesus' departure, which means they got the idea of what Jesus was there to accomplish. None of the disciples got to ask these two any questions as the text teaches us to focus on what it is Jesus wants us to do, not what the "law and prophets" want us to do. I suspect that is one reason why the other two men departed so quickly.
 - e) With all of that said, let me now come back to the disciples who were there. Why only let three of the apostles there? Why not bring the whole group to witness this? One answer is one of God's laws is that "a thing shall be established by two or three witnesses" (taken from Deuteronomy 19:15). Therefore the number of disciples represents the legal number of witnesses as specified in the bible. As to the question of "why these 3", all we know is that this is "Jesus inner circle" of closest disciples that He was training for ministry. As I suspect most of you know, Peter was the main source of Mark's gospel, John went on to write three letters in the New Testament and the book of Revelation. James was the first recorded martyr for the church. (A different James, Jesus half brother wrote "James"). My point is Jesus picked three who were to make a major difference for Him and understand why it was necessary to suffer in this lifetime (take up our cross daily) as we now live to make a difference for Him and not for our own desires.
 - f) The text also says the three disciples were sleepy. The original Greek text gives the idea that they were overcome with sleepiness. I suspect Jesus allowed that to happen so that they couldn't record for us the details of how Moses and Elijah just appeared there. The point is three of the Gospels do record this event so that after Jesus died, this event did have the effect He wanted to communicate, that some of the disciples did see Jesus as I suspect we will see Him when we get to heaven.
 - g) Finally we get Peter as the spokesman for the disciples saying something. The classic joke is that the only time Peter opened His mouth was to change feet. Peter reminds me of the line that some people have something to say and some people need to say something.
 - i) With that said, what Peter said was in effect, "Thank You Jesus for letting us see this event, let me make three places of worship, one for each of you." It's like Peter was thinking, "This is what we wanted. We want to see Jesus ruling in power. So don't do that "die on the cross thing", let's just worship you three here and now".
 - ii) In effect God the Father is about to tell Peter to shut up and listen in the next verse. I admit I feel bad for Peter here, but like us he had to learn about what it means to have Jesus in charge of our lives on a moment by moment basis.
11. Verse 34: While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." ³⁶ When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.
- a) In the Old Testament, the voice of God the Father is always associated with clouds. That's because we can't fully understand who God is, just as clouds make things, well "cloudy". I get the impression that the three disciples got the idea that this was no ordinary cloud, especially given the fact Jesus was there in this "brilliant white" appearance. That is when the voice of God the Father spoke and in effect rebuked Peter's words by saying, "Jesus is My beloved Son listen to Him." Then this party came to an abrupt end as after God spoke Moses and Elijah were gone. I suspect Jesus looked like His "old self" at that point. I can just see Peter thinking, "Boy did I blow it there". Anyway, Jesus then told those disciples to not mention this as another gospel puts it, until after the resurrection.

- b) I really wonder what these three disciples said when they came down from this mountain. Did they say something like, "Wow, did you guys miss out. Jesus made us promise not to tell you the details, but let's just say you should have been there." Since Peter's the kind of person who has to say something, that's what I picture him saying here. In effect, we will get to that idea in Verse 46. However, before that happens, something else happens when they come down from the unspecified mountain and meet the other disciples.
12. Verse 37: The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him.³⁸ A man in the crowd called out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child.³⁹ A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him.⁴⁰ I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not."
- a) When one reads the text carefully, it seems the demon possessed boy had epilepsy. The only way one could know if he had something different is based on what he said when he was attacked this way. Before I discuss Jesus curing the boy of the demon, I'd like you to consider why so many demons were around Jesus back then? None of the epistles in the record any demon activity. It is only mentioned briefly in the book of Acts. So why is it so prominent in the Gospels? The answer is to remember that demons understood Jesus is God. They just don't want Him to rule over their lives. By being near Jesus, they were around the action to get people to not turn their lives over to God and try to counteract what Jesus was doing. I'm just stating all of this so one understands why there were so many demons around Jesus.
- b) Before Jesus actually cures the boy, I'd like to go state what Jesus said in the beginning of this chapter. Verse 1 said Jesus gave the disciples authority over all demons. The point is "all means all". That's why in the next verse coming up, Jesus rebuked His disciples by effectively saying, "I told you all you can do this without Me".
- i) In Mark's account, Jesus said "this kind of demon" can't come out without prayer and fasting (the fasting reference is debated whether or not it's in the text.) The point is there is more than one kind of demon. My joke is how can any of else tell what type of demon that is? Jesus point is that we as Christians all have greater power than any demon, but we have to pray for God to take them away and not try to rebuke them base on our own power. The "other kind of demon" is just the idea that like solders, demons have "ranks" and some are more powerful than the others are. However, God's power is greater than all of them.
13. Verse 41: "O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here."
- a) As I read this verse, my first thought was, whom is Jesus talking to? It most likely refers to the crowd as they are only interested in seeing miracles and not interested in Jesus' teaching of repentance which is far more important than living a healthy life on earth.
- i) Jesus also could be speaking to the disciples themselves as I stated earlier: Verse 1 of this chapter stated that Jesus gave the disciples power over all demons. So why couldn't they cast this one out? My guess is they saw the epilepsy-like seizures the boy suffered and thought, "this is too tough for us". I'm sure they said things like, "Ok demon come out of you" and nothing happened. Jesus stated that this type (referring to higher ranking demons) requires prayer and perhaps fasting. Jesus wants us to pray hard over tough problems mainly because such prayer shows our commitment to God to work in tough situations. Like the old army expression, "when the going gets tough, the tough get going" is the attitude God wants us to have when dealing with tough situations: In other words, not to quit or run away, but to even trust more for God to work in such situations.
- ii) Coming back to the demon possessed boy, of course God has the power to deal with tough demons, but we have to depend upon His power, not our ability.

- b) With that said, of course Jesus wants to help the boy. That was never the issue. The issue is that the crowds didn't believe that the disciples had the power to help the boy. At the same time, the disciples tried to help the boy based on their own power and not rely upon God's power to make a difference. With that lecture stated, time for Jesus to do a miracle.
14. Verse 42: Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. ⁴³ And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.
- a) Short version is Jesus didn't have to go into deep prayer or put on a fancy show in order for this demon to go away. Jesus simply rebuked the evil spirit and from that point the boy probably never had an attack of that demon again.
- b) Notice at that point the crowds didn't believe in Jesus as God, but just as a great prophet who was given power to do great things. The crowds were amazed by the miracles, but they were not interested in trusting in Him for their salvation, but still their own works. If you ever wondered why the Jewish nation rejected Jesus despite all of the miracles He did it come down to the idea of wanting to prove their worth to God by how they lived their lives as opposed to just trusting Jesus as the complete (key word) payment of their sins.
- c) The reason I gave that little speech here is it leads well into the next few verses.
15. Verse 43 (cont.): While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples, ⁴⁴"Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men." ⁴⁵ But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.
- a) While the crowd was still standing there with their jaws hanging open from the miracle, Jesus wanted to use that moment to tell His disciples one more time about what is about to occur to Him in Jerusalem. Remember at this point in the story, Jesus is beginning His final journey to Jerusalem and wanted the disciples to understand why. Yes they didn't get it, but the point of saying it here and now is so that after He rose again all of them can think, "OK, now I get it, it's sinking in."
- b) As someone who has spent a lot of time teaching, I know what I say doesn't always sink in the first time, but over time, if people recall being taught "this or that" the truth will be recalled when needed. It's amazing to consider the things I've been taught over the years and how the brain can bring things in our memory from years earlier based on what we are taught. My point is even though Jesus disciples didn't get it now, it was necessary for them to hear this message before the event so it can all "sink in" at the right time.
- c) These verses also show that the disciples were still thinking of Jesus as someone who was going to go overthrow Rome and set up the eternal kingdom then and there. When Jesus did talk about His death and resurrection, in effect the disciples refused to accept it. They still wanted that ruling Messiah to come here and now. This leads me right into the next set of verses perfectly:
16. Verse 46: An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. ⁴⁷Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. ⁴⁸ Then he said to them, "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For he who is least among you all--he is the greatest."
- a) John MacArthur gave a great illustration of this: He said one disciple said, "When I was on my mission trip, I made three blind men see." Another said, "Yes, but on my mission trip I made three deaf people hear". Then the three disciples who saw Jesus appear with Elijah and Moses probably said, "If you saw what we saw, you would realize that we're the top disciples". The point being our big egos get in the way of God's desire for us.
- b) Jesus solves this debate in Verses 47 and 48. Notice that children were there as part of this scene. Jesus took one of the children who was there and used that child as an example of how to be considered a great disciple. It is to humble ourselves like a child depends upon his or her parents, we have to fully trust in God to guide our lives.

- c) Consider the demon that the disciples could not cast out a moment ago. The point is such an act requires our dependence upon God to act, and not what we can do. The concept of being a witness for God is all about depending upon Him to work His way on His timing. The reason many things we pray for don't happen is because we want it and not God. I've seen many a tragedy happen to many a wonderful person. The hardest thing to accept is for us to let go of our wills and let His will be done, even in horrible situation. The point is to do all we can, the best we can and accept the idea that God is in charge, period.
 - d) As the old expression goes, "our ego's are the last things to die", meaning that we always want to prove our worth to others. Even as Jesus was using a small child as an illustration to make His point, notice in the next verse how the disciples still wanted to prove their own value to Jesus in Verse 49:
17. Verse 49: "Master," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us." ⁵⁰ "Do not stop him," Jesus said, "for whoever is not against you is for you."
- a) I can just hear one of the disciples saying, "That Christian is not one of us "12". You only gave us the power to do those miracles and yet that guy is doing good things too. Again one can see their ego's thinking, "We're something special. We are the "12"". Jesus' point is simply that what I'm teaching you twelve to do is also what I'm trying to teach anyone willing to become My disciple. That leads to the question, how can we tell whether or not someone is a true or false disciple? Easy, watch their lives and see what happens. It does not mean people have to be perfect. It just means we have to fully trust in God for every aspect of our lives. Do we mess up? All the time. Still, a Christian is one who realizes it is not up to us, but fully up to Him and when we mess up, we confess it as sin and turn from it to trust in Jesus again.
 - b) With that said, we're almost through this long chapter, time to move on.
18. Verse 51: As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. ⁵² And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; ⁵³ but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" ⁵⁵ But Jesus turned and rebuked them, ⁵⁶ and they went to another village.
- a) Here is the "official point" when Jesus stopped focusing on towns in the Lake Galilee area (that is northern Israel) and sent out to go to Jerusalem for what would be the last time. If you know your Israel geography from that time, Israelites would have to travel around an area or through an area controlled by "Samaritans". This is a group that were descendants of a mixture of Jewish and non-Jewish people who created their own religion with a lot of elements of Judaism mixed in with other ideas. The reason I gave that little speech is to remember that these two groups hated each other. When the locals in a Samaritan village found out Jesus and His disciples were traveling to Jerusalem, the locals were not helpful to them as they were not Samaritans.
 - b) With that background stated, remember how I said our big ego's are the hardest things to kill? Here were two of the disciples saying to Jesus, "Shall we call down fire from heaven and destroy these Samaritans?" Again, think of the disciples in terms of wanting Jesus to rule over the world from Jerusalem. From the disciples standpoint, for Jesus to wipe out any and all enemies of the Jewish people would be the thing to do.
 - c) At that point, Jesus had to rebuke His disciples one more time. It was to remind them of the concept that Jesus didn't come to destroy, but to give life. The idea is that Jesus is to die not just for the sins of Jewish people who believed in Him but anyone. That's why we read here of Jesus rebuking the disciples again and they all traveled to another village on their journey to what will end up being Jesus' march to death and resurrection. However, there is still more teaching for Jesus to accomplish here, so we read on.

19. Verse 57: As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." ⁵⁸ Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." ⁵⁹ He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." ⁶⁰ Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." ⁶¹ Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." ⁶² Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."
- a) I see these last set of verses here as all tying together. Jesus states what many scholars do believe were common expressions of that day and I don't have a problem with that. What these verses really come down to is the idea that if we are truly going to be Jesus' disciples we have to think about what it cost to be a disciple. Before I begin to explain these verses, a point to consider is not everyone who on "Day 1" claims to be a Christian will turn out to be one. We can only tell over time who has truly committed their lives to that concept. While God the Father knows the hearts of people, we can only judge people by actions.
 - b) That idea leads back to these final verses in this chapter. Jesus is showing his disciples and us how we can tell if we and anyone for that matter truly is one of Jesus' disciples:
 - c) That leads me right into Verse 58: Jesus says, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." That expression means that if we want to commit our lives to serving Jesus, we don't have our homes on earth, but our jobs is to follow Jesus wherever He leads us. This verse has nothing to do with say, buying or renting a place to live. It just means that just as God can be everywhere at once, we have to focus our lives of being where God wants us to be and doing what He wants us to do. It means to be a disciple of Jesus requires us to regularly remind ourselves that He and He alone is in charge of our lives and our job is to focus on doing His will for our lives.
 - d) That leads me to the second thing Jesus said here: "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God" (Verse 60). The point has nothing to do with attending the funeral service of a loved one. The point again is about focusing our lives on what it is God has called us to do. It doesn't mean ignoring our families, but again to focus on what He's called us to do.
 - i) Let me give an illustration here. Suppose one believes Jesus is God and one knows one has a gift or a calling to do a specific something to make a difference for Jesus. At the same time, one's parents say when we're grown up, "Forget that God stuff, you are coming into the family business" or "We belong to a different religion and we don't want you to do things for Jesus". That's what Jesus meant by not burying your dead, but following Him. It's not about never being part of one's family, but to realize our priority in lives as a disciple of Jesus.
 - e) The final illustration Jesus gives in this chapter is Verse 62 is translated here, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." To be a disciple of Jesus is a lifelong choice, not something we do for a week or a year. This isn't about the length of say, a mission trip or a project we're doing for God. It's the realization that our choice to follow Jesus is a lifelong and permanent commitment. The "what" here is all about if we accept the idea that Jesus is God and He's in charge of our lives then we need to realize what is the cost of that commitment as well as the eternal benefits for us to live our lives that way.
20. With that said, we made it through all 62 verses. Let me end this in prayer and hopefully help us to understand what it means to be Jesus disciple: Heavenly Father, there are times when we can realize how difficult it is to be one of Your disciples. We realize that to live this way requires us to constantly get our minds off our will and focus on what it is You desire we do. However, if we realize that You are God and You are in charge of our lives, then choosing to live this way not only has eternal benefits, but it is also the best way to live out our lives. May Your Spirit guide us as we use our lives for Your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.