

## Weekly Bible Study for Highcliffe and Bransgore Methodist Churches

Discipleship #3 The Path of Suffering Luke 9:51-62 by Norman Bonnett - January 2021

At present our lives are suffering from a feeling of insecurity and of apprehension. For those who are more pessimistic (glass half empty) by nature may feel that these tensions are not unusual.

Clearly the virus is the most threatening feature though some small signs of encouragement are beginning to surface. We may feel uneasy about many situations around the world particularly the United States, that bastion of freedom and democracy as it undergoes a transition of power from one administration to another.

I encourage you to read the passage through a few times and ask yourself about the problems and frustrations that Jesus is facing. The Samaritans are not welcoming and may in fact be blocking the short road that Jesus wants to travel because of the ill-feeling between the Jews and the Samaritans. Jesus however exercises, tolerance, compassion and patience and continues onwards.

**Q1 Are there short-cuts on the road to Salvation?**

**Q2 Was Jesus right to rebuke James and John?**

**Q3 Where had their approach come from and do we still hear echoes of “calling down fire to consume them” in the church?**

Next, we read of the reactions that some people take to the invitations that Jesus is placing before them to commit their lives to Him.

It would be interesting to keep a list of the times when we use excuses especially when dealing with people who reject the gospel. Jill is at present in deep discussion with an old friend who has leanings towards the Jehovah Witnesses. This friend cannot let go of the difficulties she has with the Trinity. Often people will say that there is a contradiction between science and God or that the established church is elitist or out of touch with modern society.

**Q4 What are the common excuses you hear from people rejecting the gospel? The church? Jesus?**

We are all experts at finding very convincing reasons why we can't possibly do the right thing, call someone who is ill, express our love to someone who has been bereaved, write a letter of thanks to a person who has influenced our lives in some way or another.

**Q5 Does “the rubber hit the road” for you? Does anyone who doesn't know you are a Christian see it in you?**

The Christian life is about ongoing commitment, but there will be days when it all seems aimless and even the wonderful truth of the gospel fades (like coming down from the mountain) especially when the shadows over our lives overcome us (in the valley). Take a moment to think how the shadows and sometimes the excitements in our lives can divert us from the Way. Jesus never promised an easy path and there will be times of doubt and even disillusionment as we find in the hymn “When the road is rough and steep, Fix your eyes upon Jesus.”

In Huddersfield there used to be meetings in my school where leaders of the different religions met to try and find common ground for a working relationship. I have treasured memories of Pastor Nelson, the minister of a majority black church would suddenly break into the chorus, “Jesus is the Way.” That is our position of strength, of truth and supreme encouragement. I suggest that you seek that encouragement as you respond to His calling and follow the Way. May God be with you all at this time – Yours because His Norman.