DIVING DEEPER DISCUSSION GUIDE

TEXT SUMMARY

In today's text, Matt 8:18-22, Matthew tells us of how two men who approached Jesus, to follow Him, and how Jesus explained that discipleship is more costly than they realized.

INTRODUCTION (OBSERVATION):

1. How does Matthew describe the two men who approached Jesus?

2. We most often see the scribes in connection with the Pharisees. What did Jesus say about the scribes and Pharisees in Matt 5:20?

3. What would the scribe need to give up if he wanted to follow Jesus? What would the other man, "another of the disciples," need to give up?

DISCUSSION (INTERPRETATION):

Jesus was not afraid to say hard words to His followers, but His response to the man who wanted to bury his father first probably wasn't as harsh as it sounds. The man was probably not in mourning at that moment; he probably was saying that once his father was gone, he wanted to return to follow Jesus.

Still, Jesus' response sounds harsh: "Let the dead bury the dead." What was Jesus saying about the competing priorities of discipleship and family obligations? (See Mark 3:20-21, 31-35 for another instance of Jesus' attitude toward familial obligations.) How can we square this system of values with our natural desire to love and care for our family?

SO WHAT? (APPLICATION):

Someone once said that Jesus doesn't come in to take sides: He comes in to take over. Our text reminds us that following Jesus never has been about half-measures. If I want to follow Jesus, I don't just add Him to my life like another activity I squeeze into my busy schedule. Following Jesus is a matter of total surrender, and I must rearrange my priorities around the one great priority of loving and serving King Jesus.

Our text speaks of two different ways we are tempted to relative the non-negotiable claims of Jesus on our lives: underestimating the cost and delaying the investment.

1. **Underestimating the cost:** This is a First World problem. Christians in Nigeria or in China or many Muslim-majority countries don't have this problem. They know that joining the Christian community will likely bring great suffering on them and their families. But we live in a relatively tolerant liberal society, where identifying as a follower of Jesus is not likely to create difficulties for us.

   This means that we are tempted to think that our faith shouldn't create difficulties for us, and when it does, we think something has gone wrong (but see 1 Pet 4:12). What are some of the hidden costs of following Jesus in a society in which all manner of religious expression is permitted?

2. **Delaying the investment:** This is a temptation especially for the young, who reason that getting serious about their faith is a matter that their future, mature self will want to consider. But a man can spend his whole life planning to get serious about his faith later and never discover what it means to follow Jesus with all his heart. What lies do you need to tell yourself to put off a serious commitment to Jesus? Do those lies carry weight in your life right now? …in the lives of people you love?