

'THE REALLY GOOD LIFE' *(The Life of Christ Series)* **The Gospel of Luke**

Summit Descent

Mountain climbing is challenging, exhilarating, and life-changing (or so they say). I'll take their word for it since watching movies and documentaries about it is the extent of my virtual ascent to the world's highest summits. Those few daring souls who make this their recreational calling go to great time and expense for their 'mountain top experiences'. The cost for some goes far beyond the gear, the travel, and the physical demands of going higher than men were meant to go. Most accounts I've seen, read, or heard about tell much about the climb to the summit, but very few say much of anything about the descent back to normal life with mere mortals in the valley below. Who went up, must come down – you can't stay on the summit – corpses of all who went up but didn't come down litter the trail to and from the top.

Great devotional times with the Lord can be spiritual summits for Jesus' disciples willing to get away from the comfort zone 'base camp' Christianity most believers like. In-depth expositional Bible study, meditation, and prayer needs to replace little motivational 'sound bites' of Scripture to experience the higher abundant Christian life. For serious disciples of Christ, the spiritual heights of meaningful time with the Savior and His Word are well worth the extra time and commitment. The heavenly viewpoint at the summit inculcates God's perspective to disciples' minds and hearts. The dangerous part for *summit saints* isn't the arduous hike into the Lord's presence – it's the descent back to the valley of human need and suffering in the world below.

Jesus' disciples experienced 'summit descendant syndrome' immediately following their awesome devotions with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. **Luke 9:37-62** is an account of the descent of Peter, James, and John back to the spiritual flatlands of faithlessness (**37-42**). Then all twelve fell down in the lowlands of religious pride (**43-50**). Their descent continued into the canyon of religious intolerance and a final temptation into the spiritual cave of delinquent discipleship (**57-62**).

From the summit of spiritual heights back to the real world where we must live and work can be a slippery slope or a step up on the way to becoming like Jesus. As we shall see in the next chapter (**Luke 10**) – the way to preserve mountain top spiritual experiences is to get busy sharing the gospel, serving others with your spiritual gifts, and inspiring more brethren in Christ to also go up to the spiritual summit for a Scriptural mountain top relationship with the Savior.

The more often you do it, the easier it becomes. Not because the mountain gets shorter, but because you are getting stronger each time you go up, up, and away to meet with the Savior. Living and working in this real world valley is much more enjoyable if you are looking forward to your next spiritual climb into His presence.

The climb isn't easy, but breathing the rare air nearer heaven is refreshing, the view from above the world is clearer, and the congested traffic of human hustle-bustle thins out up there where only the most devoted dare to go. The trek is worth it! Jesus invites you to join Him there! God's Word will speak loud and clear if you go! Just don't lose the wonder of it all when you leave the summit to serve the valley people below – get busy for the Savior and preserve the experience until you do it again (**2 Peter 3:18**).

"See you at the top!"
(Psalm 18:33 & Habakkuk 3:19)

Troubles at the Base Camp (Training the 12 – The Problems with Disciples / Part 1) Luke 9:37-48

Chapter context: The two year ‘Great Galilean Ministry’ of Jesus and His disciples is over. The wonderful initial enthusiasm about Christ has begun to fade and official hostility against Him has escalated. Jesus has gone with the 12 into the surrounding Gentile areas to the north and east of Galilee for private discipleship training before moving the ministry south to Judea and Jerusalem.

In **Luke 9**, Jesus’ focus is on the **purposes, privileges and problems** of being committed to Him as a **disciple**. The **purpose** is to learn to love God and people like Jesus did, and does (learned through the feeding of the 5,000). The **privilege** is to be transformed by knowing, fellowshiping and worshipping Him intimately (learned on the Mount of Transfiguration). And finally, the 12 (and us who follow Christ today) need to learn that although we are growing as we follow Him, we have **problems** in our spirit, soul, and body that need constant attention as we serve the Savior. **3 main problem areas show up in the last half of this chapter:** **1)** our **lack of faith and power** in ministry, **2)** our **lack of love** for those we minister unto and **3)** our **lack of full commitment** to follow the Lord 100%. These 3 must not keep us from serving God – they are inadequacies that must be ***corrected ‘on the job’ as we follow Him.***

Impotence in Ministering

(Synoptic accounts: Matthew 17:14-18, Mark 9:14-27)

*“Now it happened on the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, that a great multitude met Him. Suddenly a man from the multitude cried out, saying, “Teacher, I implore You, look on my son, for he is my only child. And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out; it convulses him so that he foams at the mouth; and it departs from him with great difficulty, bruising him. So **I implored Your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.**”* **9:37-40**

*“Then Jesus answered and said, “**O faithless and perverse generation,** how long shall I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.” And as he was still coming, the demon threw him down and convulsed him. Then Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the child and gave him back to his father. And they were amazed at the majesty of God.”* **9:41-43a**

What happened?! What happened to their apostolic power and authority and faith?

Why don’t yesterday’s successes guarantee fruitfulness for today?

Impedance in Understanding

(Synoptic accounts: Matthew 17:22-23, Mark 9:30-32)

*“...But while everyone marveled at all the things which Jesus did, He said to His disciples, “**Let these words sink down into your ears,** for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men.” **But they did not understand** this saying, and **it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it;** and they were **afraid to ask Him** about this saying.”* **9:43b-45**

What had the disciples so preoccupied that they didn’t ‘get it’ about Jesus’ mission?

Why is it so important to let the Word of God go deeper than our ‘ears’?

Impudence in Leading

(Synoptic accounts: Matthew 18:1-5, Mark 9:33-40)

*“Then **a dispute arose among them** as to **which of them would be greatest.** And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him, and said to them, “Whoever receives this little child in My Name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him Who sent Me. **For he who is least among you all will be great.**”* **9:46-48**

What are the ‘tell-tale’ signs of pride in and among disciples of Christ?

How does Jesus’ object lesson help us become great at humility?