

## Lesson 4 | Can the Dead Bury?

**Objective:** Understanding the words expressed by Jesus when he said, Let the dead bury their own dead

**Biblical Reading:** Luke 9:57-62

**Memory Verse:** But Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead." **Matthew 8:22**

### Biblical Topic

In the biblical reading, we find three people who express their interest in joining the mission of evangelization led by Jesus Christ. However, when it is revealed to them that spiritual service requires total and unreserved surrender, each one begins to present justifications based on their circumstances.

One of them argued the following: "Lord, let me go first and bury my father," Jesus said to him: "Let the dead bury their dead; but you go and preach the kingdom of God." First, we will consider that, within the figurative language of the Scriptures, the term "dead" is not limited only to those who have lost their vital signs, but also applies to those who, because of sin, live separately from God. This condition of spiritual death implies a disconnection from true life, which comes only from the Creator (**Ephesians 2:1, 2; Colossians 2:12, 13**). However, there may be several reasons for this seemingly harsh instruction. One could have been to "prove" the character and attachment of the man. If he had a true love for Christ, he would have been willing to leave his friends, even in the most tender and difficult circumstances. Furthermore, this is required in **Luke 14:26**.

At first glance, these words may seem harsh or insensitive, which leads us to wonder if Jesus is minimizing an event as painful as the loss of a loved one, especially when it comes to one's father. If he has received spiritual life in Christ, his calling is clear: to announce the kingdom of God with urgency and conviction. Earthly responsibilities, as important as they may seem, should not divert his focus from the eternal purpose. Jesus himself

taught that there are those who, being physically alive, are spiritually dead, and it is they who can take care of temporary things, while we attend to eternal matters. The calling of the kingdom does not admit postponements, because it's time to respond with full surrender (**Matthew 6:33, 34**). That is why these words of the Lord Jesus can be understood that the father of this follower of the Teacher was not physically dead. Rather, it is likely that he was an elderly person, and his son asked to stay at home until he could be buried and then undertake the evangelist work.

Jesus' approach is not a lack of compassion, but a revelation of spiritual priorities. He is teaching that the call of the kingdom of God is urgent and absolute, and that, in some cases, even the most sacred and sentimental duties must be subordinated to that call. His answer invites us to discern between the eternal and the temporal, the spiritual and the earthly. (**Luke 14:26, 27; Matthew 19:29**)

A clear example of someone who gave high priority to God's call and demonstrated a genuine willingness to serve is the prophet Elisha. When he was called by the prophet Elijah, he did not hesitate or make excuses; instead, he responded with decisive and radical actions. Although he asked to say goodbye to his parents, he did not do so as a way to postpone the call, but as an act of respectful closure. Immediately after, he sacrificed his oxen and burned his plow, elements that represented his previous life as a farmer. With that farewell meal, he broke with his past and made it clear that there would be no turning back. Then he got up, followed Elijah, and began to serve him by embracing his new identity as a servant of the Lord. The story of Elisha teaches us that following God's call requires decision, detachment, and total dedication. (**1st Kings 19:19-21**)

Jesus' call admits no excuses or delay; nor does He reject those who approach Him, but He does make clear that following Him requires total dedication. As Elisha, we are called to respond decisively, break with our past, and embrace the eternal purpose with conviction.

## Questions

1. What do the people who approached Jesus in **Luke 9:57-62** have in common?
2. What did Jesus teach by saying "...Let the dead bury their own dead"? To what kind of death did he possibly mean? **Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13**
3. What types of excuses can prevent a person from obeying God's call today?
4. What do **Matthew 6:33** and **Luke 14:26** reveal about the priorities of the Kingdom of God in the face of personal or family commitments?
5. Could Jesus have been insensitive to human pain, or is he revealing something deeper? What is the correct approach?
6. What is the difference between the excuse of the one who said he was going to bury his father disguised as a duty and a respectful act, and Elisha's response? **Luke 9:61; 1 Kings 19:20**