

The Things We Leave Behind

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In the Gospels, we find an interesting and significant truth that many often miss. It is a truth that can have a dramatic impact for the good on our Christianity. What is this life changing truth? Almost everyone who comes to Jesus leaves something behind. Have you ever noticed?

Consider this scene when Jesus calls Peter, Andrew, James and John. On this particular occasion, these men had been fishing all night without catching a single fish. When Jesus told them to head out into the deep water and let down their nets, they reluctantly obeyed. To their surprise, their nets were now so full of fish the load began to sink their boats. Upon coming to shore with their boats full of fish, Luke tells us:

When they had brought their boats to land, **they left everything** and followed Him.
Luke 5:11 (Emphasis Mine)

Look at that! They left everything and followed Jesus. Keep in mind what had just occurred. They caught so many fish their nets were beginning to break and the boats began to sink. When they came to shore they left it all behind! Can you imagine? Fishermen leaving behind such a wonderful catch of fish? This was their business. It was all they really knew how to do, yet they walked away from it.

This is only one of a number of scenes where things of importance were left behind in order to follow Jesus. Matthew left behind his tax office (Luke 5:27-28). The woman at the well left behind her waterpot (John 4:7-29). The apostle Paul left behind all his accomplishments in Judaism (Phil. 3).

Of course, there is the familiar scene of the rich young ruler who could not leave behind the things that were important to him. Because he refused to leave behind his possessions, he went away from Jesus grieving (Matt. 19:22). Peter responded to this situation with these words:

Then Peter said to Him, "Behold, **we have left everything** and followed You; what then will there be for us?"

Matthew 19:27 (Emphasis Mine)

To Peter's question, Jesus offers some powerful words of encouragement for those who have left things behind in order to follow Him.

And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.

Matthew 19:28-30

All of this begs the question, what have we *really* left behind in order to follow Jesus? I am not saying we cannot own houses, cars, or a business. I am not advocating we have no money. In talking about leaving behind our possessions, I'm talking about keeping all these types of things in proper perspective. I am talking about possessing our possessions, and not being possessed by them. When our possessions possess us, they demand our time, energy, and interest. As a result, we find ourselves with little time or energy for God. Pretty soon, our involvement in the church is limited, our time to study is hampered, and praying is at the bottom of our "to-do" list.

We have been talking about things, but maybe it's an emotion that possesses you: Bitterness, anger, jealousy, or hatred. You'll do much better in life if you will leave those things behind (cf. Eph. 4:31-32). In His sermon on the mount, Jesus talked symbolically about leaving behind a hand or an eye if it was going to lead you to hell (Matt. 5:29-30).

There is a joyous freedom to be found in the things we leave behind in order to follow Jesus. It is the freedom to fully trust. The freedom to be completely available for His service. The freedom to really live. So, what needs to be left behind in your life?