

## ROAD RULE #6 – HOST A BONFIRE

Last week? Rule #5 - *Tour guides, not Travel Agents*

We spoke to the value of having somebody with you to guide you, coach you, and give direction from the passenger seat.

**1 Kings 19** - Elijah's prescription for anxiety, his source of joy- *refocus*- on pouring into others.  
- *Dead Sea vs. Sea of Galilee* – Sea of Galilee teems with life because there's an outlet.

When Jesus said “follow me” in **Matt 4:20** to Peter and Andrew, it says:

*“at once” they left their nets and followed”.*

They didn't hang onto them or pocket them just in case it didn't work out.

You could almost hear their hearts singing:

***“I have decided to follow Jesus. No turning back. No turning back.”***

Later in the gospels we see three people that wanted to follow Jesus in Luke 9.

Jesus' reply in verse 62? – *“Anyone who puts a hand to the plow and then looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God.”*

Jesus isn't looking for half-hearted followers. Following Jesus isn't a holy hobby or a part time pursuit, it's a perpetual assignment. It is – as we've quoted Eugene Peterson again and again in this series – *“long obedience in the same direction”*

But in order to follow well we need to prepare our hearts well.

***“he did evil, because he did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord.”*** – 2 Chronicles 12:14

***What does this preparation look like?***

First – repent. Turn. Turn from sin. Turn to him.

This whole series isn't some self-help to help you on whatever path you're on.

Jesus said I am THE way, THE truth, and THE life. Any other way is a dead end.

The first step is to turn to Jesus and follow his path.

***If we've taken that step, how else do we prepare our hearts?***

You pack different depending on the trip. Road trip. Overnighter. A weekend. A week.

*People* also pack differently.

The most experienced a traveler you are the lighter you'll likely pack. And you can often tell those that don't travel regularly because they look like they're moving whenever they take a trip.

Why do the experienced fly with less? For one: **Bags cost us.**

Sure in cars there's a cost- they cramp your space and cost your gas mileage.

On flights, the cost is more in your face- there's baggage fees.

The more bags you have, the more money you will pay. Baggage costs us.

It's why experienced travelers don't check bags. They pack light.

Once you travel enough you realize that all the things that you consider necessities and non-negotiables barely get touched.

Earlier in Luke 9 - Jesus tells his disciples not to bring anything for the journey. No bag, bread, extra shirt. They weren't committed to or burdened by stuff. They were committed to the destination.

Elisha would have had no trouble understanding Jesus' words later in Luke 9 about putting your hands to the plow and not looking back.

He plowed the same Palestinian terrain. The ground was rugged.  
To look back or lose focus would be to make mistakes.

Not only is it likely that Elisha would have understood Jesus.  
It's entirely possible that Jesus was- in this command- alluding to Elisha. Why?  
What does Elisha do to begin his journey of following Elijah?

### **1 KINGS 19:19-21**

**ROAD RULE #6** – speaks to the preparation we need – **HOST A BONFIRE.**

Elisha hosts a bonfire. He hosts a BBQ for the whole neighborhood.

Yet this wasn't just any bonfire. This bonfire would have raised eyebrows.

The fuel for the fire? His plows.

The food? His cattle.

Jesus is- many believe- pointing to Elisha in Luke 9, saying:

*you can't step into your future **with** me if you're holding onto your past **without** me.*

If we are careful our future will simply be an extension of our past. There is a natural domino effect from the moments behind us to the moments in front of us. To eliminate it- burn it.

Elisha's act was a declaration of determination. A cry of commitment.

**Commitment is a lost art.** Why?

We've lost the art of packing. Of preparing. Of counting the cost.

If the student gets bored, they stop taking lessons.

If the player gets stressed, they quit the team.

If the thrill is gone, they quit the marriage.

The same lack of commitment creeps into our faith, and it can be damning.

There is an art to preparing our hearts to follow God.

Christ says don't put your hand to the plow and look back.

*Greek warriors and their commitment to bravery is the stuff of legend. They were both respected and feared by their peers and enemies. They seemed to have an unshakable commitment and bravery going into battle. As much as their actions on the battlefield spoke volumes, the key has as much as to do with what they did before they completely arrived. The Greeks were master motivators who understood how to use a "dramatic demonstration" to infuse a spirit of commitment into the heart of every warrior. The very first order to come out of the commanders mouth once the warriors had been offloaded onto enemy territory was a simple but powerful one: "BURN THE BOATS." As the boats turned to ash and slipped quietly out of sight into the water, each man understood there was no turning back and the only way home was through victory. Any notion of retreat or thought of surrender sank with the ships.*

As they began their journey toward the battlefield, they practiced Road Rule #6 – Host a Bonfire. It wasn't "win or go home," the phrase used in sports to emphasize urgency of a game. It was win or die trying. No plan B.

*"I have decided. To fight this battle. No turning back. No turning back."*

### **Philippians 3:13-16**

*One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.*

Last two verses are significant:

Vs 15 – maturity is marked by our ability to not be grounded by our past- even the achievements of our past- & press into the future mindful of the cost. Focus forward.

Vs 16 – **military significance**. – his term used in "let us walk on" is a military term in the Greek that speaks to marching in order.

As we pursue him, as Paul highlights in these verses, we can focus on the past or the future. There's a reason the windshield is far bigger than our rearview mirror. Our focus is supposed to be ahead of us.

Rearview mirrors are good to **glance** at. But not to **gaze** at. If you gaze at it you're asking to wreck.

It's the same in life. God calls us to the future. Never to the past. If we aren't careful God's promises can be eclipsed in our vision by our past. The past might be the good we would cling to. The past might be the bad that would cling to us.

In ancient Rome, the god **Janus** was a key symbol. He's actually where we get the name for January from. The first month. That's significant because Janus had two heads- one to look forward and one to look back. You could say the Romans understood the impulse to look both directions. Yet later, an Italian custom was born preceding January that was practiced in Rome. On **New Year's Eve**, people would toss possessions into the streets- anything that held a negative. Out with the old, in with the new. When January came, they wanted to be focused forward.

Elisha didn't just throw his stuff out. He made a bonfire out of it. A BBQ. What set Elisha off to burn what made up his life? Elijah chose him. He threw his cloak around Elisha as a symbol that he'd chosen him. Or more importantly, God had chosen him.

Elijah doesn't say much. He doesn't give a blueprint. He doesn't give step by step directions. He simply lets Elisha know he is chosen.

There's immense power in knowing you're chosen.  
But just because we're "chosen" doesn't mean we won't have choices to make.

Because of this, one can tell you your future, at least not in 100% certainty.  
Why? Because it's YOUR future.  
You have to decide what future you will choose, pursue, and work toward.  
You have to burn the boats.  
You have to make defining decisions.

God gives us a blueprint for a new creation. A new life. We have to apply it.  
Jesus didn't die for a renovation.  
He died to make new creations.  
We weren't "run down" and in need of TLC.  
We were completely broken and in need of a savior. To be made new on a new foundation.

Jesus tells a parable about building... it's a warning to **COUNT THE COST.**

**Toll booths.**

It's embarrassing to have to throw it in reverse because you don't have change!!

In life some occasions will require us to rise to the occasion. To pay a price. To have what it takes. Many are unavoidable. They either become tollbooths we progress through, or roadblocks that turn us around.

If turning back is an option, we will inevitably turn our head like the Israelites in the desert. Multiple times they looked back at Egypt- where they had been enslaved for centuries!! – and longed to go back because the price to go forward was high.

And like the Israelites, when we take detours, those detours can end up costing us more than the price of the toll in front of us. The generation of Israelites that left Egypt got to the Promised Land and decided it would be better to go back than to fight for what God had already promised to give them. So they returned and went back into the desert, where they lived wandering til they died.

If we aren't careful our future will simply be an extension of our past.  
If slavery is an option we'll inevitably go back to it.

Slavery is just disguised as safety, comfort, and responsibility.  
We settle into irresponsible responsibility and comfort when God is calling us forward.

So like Elisha, we have to create our own disruption to provoke ourselves forward.  
We have to host a bonfire.

There are moments in life where a cloak gets placed on our shoulder.  
Not physically. But there's a sense of opportunity as God calls us forward.

Often the cost is high. There's a need for **defining decisions**.

As the author **Bob Goff** would put it so simply on Twitter on Thursdays: **quit something**. He committed to quit one thing every Thursday for a year. If you're a new creation it takes putting out the old and making room for the new. Because low key we're all naturally hoarders. The longer you live somewhere the more you accumulate. The harder it is to move and pack it all up! It can become the same way in our spirit.

Choose to leave excess baggage behind.

**DECIDE** – (let's play Dr. Seuss... what does it rhyme with? Homicide, genocide, suicide...)  
In its etymology, means to kill all other options.  
- de- off // cyde – to cut

It paints this word picture: whatever you aren't deciding in favor of, you are cutting off. What do you need to cut off? To quit? To leave on the ground?

If anything keeps you from following Christ with all your heart, pull and Elisha, host a bonfire, and **BURN IT**.

Hebrew 12- *throwing off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles*.

We get it with sin- it entangles. We understand its danger. Its wages are death. But "*everything that hinders*" – those things aren't sinful. Yet they should be included on our burn list. What distracts you? What takes time away from God? What keeps you unfocused, worried & anxious? For Elisha that was plowing with his cattle. So he said goodbye.

We're all low key hoarders. We cling to things considering them treasure. We pack things thinking we'll need it. Ultimately - they're just excess baggage. They're a hindrance, like dragging countless suitcases through an airport.

3 items of baggage we often lug around with us to deal with now:

**PAST PAINS.**

Past pain handled improperly can be paralyzing. We replay the pain. We feel it all over again. We pick the scab. We fail to heal. And ultimately—we fail to move forward.

**PAST SIN.**

You've tried to keep God in one suitcase and your sin in another. Compartmentalized.

**STATUS QUO.**

What are you clinging to as treasure that's actually excess baggage? What is good, but God is calling you to greater?

Tomorrow will come regardless of what we do.  
But we walk into God's destiny for us because of defining decisions.