



“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...” Matthew 28:20

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What Does It Mean to Follow Jesus Christ?

Roger D. Campbell

Luke records that on one occasion in the life of Jesus there were great multitudes with Him. To this multitude He turned and said, “And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:25,27). Another time we read that the Master said to Matthew, “Follow me” (Matthew 9:9). But what does it mean to follow Jesus? Before one can come to and follow the Son of God, he must understand that following Jesus includes knowing Who Jesus is, knowing His doctrine, obeying His words, and imitating His example.

Jesus Wants All Men to Follow Him. With the following words, Jesus Christ invites every person to come and follow Him: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Christ’s invitation is universal, as He commands His disciples to preach to every person in the world, and through that preaching men are invited to come follow the Savior (Mark 16:15). It is the Father’s will for all men to follow His Son, Jesus, for only through Him Who is the way, the truth, and the life can one come to the heavenly Father (John 14:6). After Jesus rose from the dead, He told Peter, who had been a follower of Jesus for over three years, “Follow me” (John 21:19,21). This shows that a person must not only become a disciple of Jesus, but must continue to follow and serve Him faithfully. Christians must walk in His foot steps by following His perfect example (1 Peter 2:21). One who does not want to do this does not really want to follow Him!

What Are Some False Ideas That People Have about Following Jesus? The list of false concepts is almost endless! First, consider some false ideas that those out of Christ sometimes have

about what it means to follow Him. Some think that all those who follow Jesus are strange or radicals. Some thought this in the first century and spoke evil of Christians (1 Peter 4:3,4). Friends, to do God’s will and faithfully follow His Son is never out of place and never strange, despite what the world thinks about it! Others think that if they will become a follower of Jesus, then no one will like them. True, there would be some who would oppose a person who wanted to serve Jesus, but in Christ we have the greatest friends in the world! For example, Aquila and Priscilla were Christians who were willing to lay down their life for their brother in Christ, Paul (Romans 16:3,4).

Others say that those who follow Jesus have no freedom. What does Jesus say? If the Son of God makes us free, then we are free indeed (John 8:36). True, one who follows Jesus does not have the freedom or right to fulfil the lusts of the flesh and live as he pleases (Galatians 5:13,19-21), but Christians stand fast “in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free” (Galatians 5:1). Thus, in Christ we have the best liberty, freedom from sin. Some say that in general they are not opposed to Christianity, for Jesus did many good things. However, the road that Jesus requires His followers to walk is too narrow. Not so! The path by which Jesus instructs us to walk is just right, for one who follows the narrow path that Christ shows, and enters the strait gate, receives eternal life (Matthew 7:13,14).

There are also those who have the false idea that following Jesus requires little effort. This is proven false by these words of Jesus: “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able” (Luke 13:24). It is suggested by others that following Jesus is something that one does only when it is convenient to him. Following Jesus is not a part-time job. It is not like working in a factory where you punch a card in a time clock when you begin and end your work day. Following Christ is something that we must do all the time, and those who want to follow Him only when it is convenient need to listen carefully to how Jesus rebuked some members of His church: “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot, So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:15,16).

One of the greatest tragedies in the religious world is that Satan has convinced multitudes of people that it is possible to follow Jesus without obeying His commands. A very popular idea is “Give me Jesus, but don’t give me His teaching (the Bible).” How absurd! One could never know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, without the Bible. The Lord Jesus said, “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say” (Luke 6:46). Thus, only one who truly obeys Jesus can claim Him as the Lord of his life. How does one express his love for Jesus? Not simply by believing that He is God’s Son, but by keeping His commandments, for Jesus Himself said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Do we not see that according to the Bible, it is impossible to separate following Jesus from following His teaching (commandments)?

What Does it Really Require to Follow Jesus? Our Lord said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23). Here we see that one must first have the desire to follow Jesus. Let each of us ask himself, “Do I really want to follow Jesus?” We are not asking if others want us to follow Him, but what about us personally, do we have

this desire? Secondly, according to Jesus one must deny himself in order to follow Him. This involves saying “no” to sin and to the lusts of the flesh. When one truly denies himself, he no longer is most concerned about what pleases him, but rather with what pleases Christ. In that period of our life before any of us became followers of Jesus, who was most important in our life, and who was sitting on the throne of our heart, ruling our affairs? We ourselves were! We lived to please ourselves. If we are going to follow Jesus, then we must kick ourselves off the throne of our heart and allow Jesus to rule there, fulfilling His will, and not ours. What are we in Christ? A new creature for whom old things have passed away, and all have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

What else? In order to follow Jesus one must also take up his cross. This is not an optional matter, but is necessary! Jesus said, “And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:38), and “Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27). Whose cross must one carry? Not the cross of someone else, but his own. Thus, we see that the matter of carrying a cross is a personal responsibility that every one of us must fulfil himself. We can pray for one another, exhort one another, and help each other in many ways, but when all is said and done, each person must carry his own cross. And what is the significance of our “cross?” First century listeners of Jesus’ message understood that when they saw a man carrying a literal cross on his back, that he was soon to die on that cross. For them, the cross was a symbol of certain death. For a disciple of Jesus, this cross must include performing our duty to Christ and suffering for Him, regardless of the cost.

The emphasis in Jesus’ words of Luke 9:23 (see above) is the sacrifice that we must make in order to follow Him. That (sacrifice) is just the opposite of what most people want. It appears that the majority of the people of our generation are looking for a religion that requires little or no sacrifice, requires few or no obligations, and requires little if any of their time. My friends, if that is what one is looking for, then he does not really want to follow Jesus Christ. Jesus commands us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). He plainly declared, “Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). What are we to forsake for Jesus’ sake? Everything! What does that include? It includes all affairs or activities that are sinful, and anything or person that comes between us and our Lord. Jesus must be first in our life! He will not accept second place. And how often should one take up his cross to follow Jesus? Some try to soothe their conscience by attending one religious service each year. Others think that serving Jesus once a month is enough. But friends, the time that we serve Jesus is not like a light switch that you can turn on and off. We must follow Jesus at all times. Jesus said that we must take up our cross “daily” (Luke 9:23). If one is too busy to follow Jesus each day of his life, then he is, in fact, too busy!

The moral darkness in the world today disturbs all of us who want to serve the Lord faithfully. Jesus said, “He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). How great it is to know that when we walk with and follow Jesus, then we are walking in the light and are safe in His hands. May God help each of us to strive with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength to follow Jesus Christ, to better know His will, obey His will, and imitate His perfect example.

Observations and Concerns

December 28, 2022

Welcome Visitors! A special Greetings to our Guests.

“He hath not dealt so with any nation: and *as for his* judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD” (Psalm 147:20).

Expression of Gratitude: With the end of the year, we celebrate the coming new year with all it hopes and desires. Let us be thankful to God for another year and be determined to have an attitude of gratitude throughout the coming year.

Lord willing, there will be a *Budget Planning Meeting* for the men of the congregation Friday evening, January 6 at 6 P.M. There will not be a regular men’s business meeting in January.

Remember in Prayer:

- ▶ *Nelda Hudson* spent the night in the hospital on December 24th. She had an MRI, but the doctors were unable to find the cause of her episode.
- ▶ We are thankful to God that *Bill and Lynn Dilks* were able to be with us this past Lord’s Day. Bill is still recovering from cancer treatments, but was feeling well considering the circumstances.
- ▶ *Ed Dindy*, father of Tia Swearingen, received good news that his cancer is localized and has not spread. He had an MRI yesterday to gather more information about his condition.
- ▶ *Amanda Georgakus*, friend of Sherry Carmona, has cancer that has metastasized to her spine. She is now home from the hospital.
- ▶ *Donna Wagner*, friend of Sammy Gray, is recovering from a concussion.

Schedule of Services	Assignments			
		Wednesday, Dec. 28	Sunday, Jan. 1 AM	Sunday, Jan. 1 PM
	Announcements	Chuck Northrop	Chris Nelson	Russ Earl
	Song Leader	Ross Swearingen	Doyle Jackson	Ross Swearingen
	Prayer	Russ Earl	Paul Praschnik	Doyle Jackson
	Lord’s Supper (speaker)		Chuck Northrop	Chris Nelson
	Lord’s Supper		Chris Nelson	
	Lesson	Doyle Jackson	Russ Earl	Chuck Northrop
	Prayer / Door Attendant	Chris Nelson	Ross Swearingen	Paul Praschnik
Sundays				
Bible Classes. . . 9:30 AM				
Worship 10:30 AM				
Worship 5:00 PM				
Wednesdays				
Bible Classes. . . 7:00 PM				
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