**Come follow me**

* Do you believe in God?
* Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?
* Are you a follower of Jesus?
* What would your life be like if you didn’t know Christ?” Would it be any different? Would anyone notice?

It's one thing to say you believe in someone and another to follow them.

You may believe a tight rope walker can walk a rope across a canyon but is another thing to follow him across.

You have to be honest about where you currently are before you can figure out where you are going. You have to be honest about what you believe to know how much you are willing to suffer standing up for it.

David wrote in Psalm 119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

To use a map, you first need to know where you are at. The lamp on our feet shows us where we are currently at in our relationship with God and the Light on our path shows us the direction we should be going.

So, the lesson I have for you today is not going to be very popular. It will not leave you with a warm fuz zy feeling at the end but it is the truth and Jesus tells us the truth sets us free (John 8:31-32).

The verse we are going o be talking about is in Luke

Luke 9:23 And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

These words were spoken by Jesus so we know it is true but many Christians tend to overlook this passage. The bottom line is:

* **You can’t “Come after” Jesus without denying yourself first**

The words “deny himself” here is more than just saying “no” to a few bad things. This is about giving up everything to Christ; your money, your time, your career, your desires, your family, your friends, everything. This is not to say that God will call you to give up everything but if he were to call would you be willing to give it up. This is not an easy question and should not be taken lightly.

**You may ask: Will it cost me anything to follow Jesus?**

Jesus told a parable of a hidden treasure buried in a field and when someone found it they had so much joy they went and sold **everything** in order to have that treasure (Matthew 13:44-46).

# Jesus Told another parable about a merchant seeking beautiful pearls and when he had found a pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had to purchase it. (Matthew 13:45-46)

That treasure and that Pearl is what Jesus is offering you today but not only will it cost you something it will cost you everything. You have to be willing to lay everything down for Christ.

# The basic truth is: you will not be able to follow Jesus without a willingness to walk away from those things you desire most in this world. You must be willing to Lose your life

Matthew 10:39 Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

If you love sleeping in on Sundays and God calls you to lead an early morning study group would you do it? If God showed you a person who needed a friend but it meant losing all your current friends would you do it? If God called you to leave everything you have to be a missionary overseas would you do it? Are you willing to say “I choose Jesus over my family, I choose Jesus over my money, I choose Jesus over pornography, I choose Jesus over what my friends may think of me.” Fill in the blank: I choose Jesus over …

* **Bottom line: You have to Love Jesus more than everything else in your life.**

Luke 9:23 And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

I think many overlook this verse, including myself, because it asks for too much. You can see why this is not a popular verse for Churches to preach. It definitely isn’t a crowd pleaser.

Many Churches now days are looking to only teach those areas that draw people in. Things like: Clamming your blessing, Live in peace, be happy all the time because you are forgiven! The message of these churches starts sounding more like the Burger king slogan “Have it your way” than Christ invitation to give up everything and follow him. Things like “denying yourself” or giving up all your desires, do not go over well as a crowd pleaser and many have and will walk away from Christ because of this.

In the book ”not a fan” by kyle Ideleman he writes:

“The biggest threat to churches today is fans who call themselves Christians but aren’t actually interested in following Christ. They want to be close enough to Jesus to get all the benefits, but not so close that it requires anything from them”

* **The right to pursue happiness seems to be in direct conflict with Jesus call to deny yourself.**

We see this in the story of the Rich young ruler

Mark 10:17-22 As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” 18 And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. 19 You know the commandments, ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’” 20 And he said to Him, “Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up.” 21 Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, “One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” 22 But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property.

This man wanted to follow Jesus but he was unwilling to give up those things in his life that were more important to him to do it.

Many people come to their faith in Jesus with the question “What can Jesus do for me?” Instead of asking “What can I do for Jesus?” and many people who call themselves Christians aren’t actually interested in following Christ. They want to be close enough to Jesus to get all the benefits, but not so close that it requires anything from them.

* **It’s not that we don’t want a relationship with Jesus it’s that we want the relationship on our terms**

For those that may be saying this is not the message of the gospel: we only need to look at the disciples of Jesus to see the truth in this. They gave up everything to follow Jesus even their lives.

The disciples even called themselves servants to Christ.

* 2 Peter 1: 1 Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ…
* Jude 1:1 Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James …
* Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,
* James 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ (This is the brother of Jesus calling himself a servant to his brother)

The term servant used here is the Greek word *doulos* which actually translates to our word slave. The difference is a servant works for someone but a slave is owned by someone. So they call themselves slaves to Jesus. Stating they are owned by Jesus. Usually we think of the term slave we think of forced labor but in the Bible there were people who choose to be slaves called Bond Servants or Bond Slaves. These were people who were once slaves but set free but decided to stay with their master.

Deuteronomy 15:16-17 But if he says to you, ‘I will not go out from you,’ **because he loves you and your household, since he is well-off with you**, 17 then you shall take an awl, and put it through his ear into the door, and he shall be your slave forever.

A bond slave gave up all their rights to their master because they loved him and knew they would be taken care of. So it is out of love that we become bond slaves to Jesus and give up all our rights to do as we please to follow him and do his will.

Now we know the enemy likes to call us his slaves but when we except Christ as our lord and savior God Calls us his sons and daughters.(2 Corinthians 6:18)

So When you are baptized you go into the water a slave to sin and come out a Son of the living God. Everything that is wrong with you gets left in the water and now Christ lives in you. (Galatians 2:20)

* **The term Leader is only mentioned 6 times in the (KJV) Bible while Servant is mentioned 889 times!**

So when you decide to follow Christ you are giving up everything for him; your house, your car, your bank account, your career, your friends and your future

The great part of this story is when you become a slave to Christ he makes you his son or daughter

John 1:12-13 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

At this point we may ask ourselves the same thing the Disciples asked

Mark 10:26-27 “Then who can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.”

When the relationship with Christ is right on the inside, the outside will follow and what we do or don’t do must come from who we are as true followers of Christ. If we truly want to follow Christ and that is our hearts desire then he will change us. We can’t do this on our own we need the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised would come to us, to work in us and make those changes.

* **Being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit begins with an honest acknowledgment of our own weakness – revealed by the Holy Spirit.**

I know this for a fact. I have had many bad habits that I could not stop on my own, and tried for years, but once I confessed them to God and truly asked him in prayer to take them away. Then and only then was I able to stop. I still have more to go but I take one step at a time.

Don’t get me wrong we are saved by God’s grace when we believe in Jesus and put our faith in him, but belief is more than something we confess with our mouths; it’s something we confess with our lives.

James 2:17 … faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

If you follow Jesus it will cost you. Things have to change. You cannot go on with your life the same way you did before you accepted him.

Galatians 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ; and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."

Philippians 1:21 "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Philippians 3:7 "But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ."

2 Timothy 3:12 (NIV) In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted

Philippians 1:29(NIV) For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him

When is the last time that following Christ cost you something? Maybe a relationship, friends, money, time… Can you really say you are carrying a Cross if it has never cost you anything?

Luke 9:23 And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and **take up his cross** daily and follow me.

The Verse also talks about **taking up your cross.** To the people of Jesus’ day the cross was a vivid reality. It was the instrument of execution reserved for Rome’s worst enemies. It was a symbol of the torture and death that awaited those who dared raise a hand against Roman authority. Before Jesus came and after the revolt that followed the death of Herod the Great, 2,000 Jews were crucified by the Roman proconsul. Crucifixions were a common sight, and it has been estimated that perhaps some 30,000 occurred under Roman authority around the time of Christ.

When the disciples and the crowd heard Jesus speak of taking up the cross, there was nothing mystical to them about the idea. They immediately pictured a poor, condemned soul walking along the road carrying the instrument of his execution on his own back. A man who took up his cross began his death march, carrying the very beam on which he would hang.

So the cross wasn’t just a symbol of inconvenience, pain or suffering; it was a symbol of death. What Jesus was telling them is that they needed to put to death their own desires and plans, and turn their lives over to Him and do His will every day. To take up one’s cross is to be willing to pay any price for Christ’s sake. It is the willingness to endure shame, embarrassment, reproach, rejection, persecution, and even martyrdom for His sake.

If we look back at the verse in Luke 9:23 it says we are to take up our cross **daily**. Many people think that their acceptance of Christ is a onetime decision but it is more than that. It is a decision we need to make every day to follow him. What does it look like to die every day for Christ?

* Maybe spending your lunch hour talking to someone about Christ.
* Maybe giving the money you were saving to buy some new luxury for yourself to someone in real need.
* Maybe giving up time with your friends to read to some elderly person.
* **How can you follow Jesus if you won’t go wherever he goes**

Now look at the next verse in Luke.

Luke 9:24 (NIV)  For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.

It is only by dying to ourselves that we truly find life, a life with Christ now and forever more. When you live for yourself life has no real purpose and in the end you will lose everything.

Luke 14:27 Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

So the bottom line is if you don’t bear your cross for Christ you cannot be his disciple. (Disciple: a follower)

**So this presents a choice, will you follow Christ or Not?** Many people hearing this will try blowing this off, Make excuses, and/or explain it away. Anything but except the truth: You cannot have it your way and follow Christ. There has to be a change

* **Can you say “I choose Jesus” even if it will costs you everything?**

Remember Jesus gave up everything for you. He put aside his crown in Heaven to be crucified on earth for you. He, who had the world at his feet, chose to come and wash the feet of the world.

Think about it. What do you have to loose other than your whole life? And if anything stands in your way ask God to remove it

I Surrender All written by Van DeVenter Late ~1898

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| --- | --- |
| All to Jesus I surrender,  All to Him I freely give;  I will ever love and trust Him,  In His presence daily live.  I surrender all,  I surrender all. | All to Jesus I surrender,  Humbly at His feet I bow,  Worldly pleasures all forsaken;  Take me, Jesus, take me now.    All to Thee, my blessed Savior,  I surrender all. |

**(some content paraphrased from Not A Fan by Kyle Idleman)**