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# Follow Me

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January 10, 2021

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Last week, Steve mentioned what Jesus says is the “**Greatest Commandment** — to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.”

***This week, we’re going to talk about the Great Commission... found in Matthew 28... “to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I’ve commanded...”***

This is the mission of the church. Equipping people to be Passionate Servants of Jesus Christ. That’s discipleship — and it’s not just the clergy’s job, it’s not just the pastor’s job, it’s the job of every single person who claims to be a follower of Christ. But there’s a caveat here — **in order to make disciples, you first have to BE a disciple.**

Because there are whole lot of people in the world today who *claim* to be Christians that *look nothing like Christ.*

This is where we’re going today. It doesn’t matter what changes there are in culture, it doesn’t matter what changes you face in life, it doesn’t matter what changes there are in the Church, in political parties, in our families, communities — what we’re talking about today is universal.

## **Luke 9:23-25, 57-60**

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. <sup>24</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. <sup>25</sup> For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? <sup>57</sup> As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” <sup>58</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” <sup>59</sup> To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” <sup>60</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” <sup>61</sup> Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” <sup>62</sup> Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

**What does it mean to be a passionate follower of Jesus Christ?**

**COUNT THE COST  
LOSE YOUR LIFE  
FOLLOW ME**

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## **Count the Cost**

At the end of Luke 9, there are people that came up to Jesus and made commitments... “Jesus, I’ll follow you wherever you go!” In each of the three instances, Jesus discerns something. He basically says, “*Look, I love the enthusiasm, but there’re other motives going on under the surface of this statement. I don’t think you really understand what kind of Savior I am.*” Then Jesus says this...

## Luke 9:58

“Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

In other words, *“I’m not the kind of Messiah who rallies people to His cause and overthrows empires through brute strength and military might. I’m not leading a political revolt that will end with you having prestige and influence. That’s not who I am. That’s not the way I win. See, I’m the kind of Messiah that wins battles through losing them. I bring about righteousness and justice through suffering injustice. I bring freedom by being imprisoned. I bring life by entering into death. That’s who I am. **And if you’re ready for that kind of life — then let’s go, follow me.**”*

Jesus is saying, *“You have a nice home? You willing to give that up? That nice standard of living? The familiarity of family, your comfort, your security? Will you leave that behind for me?”*

## Luke 9:62

Jesus said to him, *“No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”*

A plow is pulled by animals, and a farmer knows you could never look away because 1. The furrows in the soil wouldn’t run parallel, 2. you have to watch for rocks in the soil, which could easily break the plow.

What Jesus is saying is: *“**My disciple, my follower, has to be totally focused in on me. Nothing else. No distractions. No secret agendas or hidden sins. An undistracted, totally devoted, spiritually disciplined life...**”*

Then he says... *“no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”* That’s **not** saying, unless you’re completely undistracted and totally committed, for every moment of the rest of your life you won’t make it into the kingdom of heaven! If that were the case, none of us would make it. The word “**fit**” is better translated as “**useful.**”

In other words, Jesus says, *“If you’re not ‘All in with me,’ you’re not actually useful.” Unless you prioritize me and my kingdom above everything else... there’s not much I can do with you.*

A few chapters later in Luke 14... Jesus looks at this big crowd and says, *“Unless you your love for me is so powerful that it makes your love for your family look like hatred in comparison, you’re not worthy to be my disciple! And if you don’t bear your cross, the ultimate symbol of suffering and torture, and follow me to the cross... you’re not worthy to be my disciple!”* You know, Jesus loved people, but he didn’t trust the crowds. And then he uses an analogy about counting the cost as it relates to building a tower, or going to war... and then Jesus says, as it relates to his followers...

## Luke 14:34-35

*“Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile.”*

Jesus says, *“tasteless salt is worse than crap! You can actually do something with manure, it fertilizes... but tasteless salt — half-hearted followers...”* Jesus says, *“what am I supposed to do with this? A pile of crap is more useful than this!”*

***What Jesus is telling us through all these really shocking analogies is this:***

*All of creation, the cosmos, the galaxies, the planets and their orbit and down to the most intricate details of your body and how it functions... I created it all and everything is held in its right order, in its rightful place by the word of My power... and you want to invite Me into your life to be your personal assistant? You want me to serve your every whim?*

**Jesus is trying to get us to wake up!** We're in this comfortable consumeristic American Christian coma and Jesus is trying to wake us up!

*He's saying,*

*"You're not ALL IN with me because you don't really see me.*

*You're not totally committed because you think you understand me.*

*You don't have an inkling of an idea of my glory, my power, my goodness, my majesty, my splendor."*

When you behold Him, when you see Him as He is... it wrecks you! It ruins you for normalcy. It changes your heart, your desires. He totally transforms your priorities, your allegiances, your passions.

That's why Jesus is so hard on the half-hearted followers, or the people who are quick to say, "I'll follow you wherever you go!" Jesus says, "I'm going to the cross." *"Nevermind!"*

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## **Lose Your Life**

### **Luke 9:23-25**

And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. <sup>24</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. <sup>25</sup> For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?"

At first this sounds like counting the cost... "deny yourself, make Christ your first priority..." — but look what it says after....

### **Luke 9:24**

*For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.*

That word life isn't talking about your physical body. It's talking about inner life — psyche, soul.

### **Jesus destroys this idea we have around finding our identity. Finding ourselves.**

In fact, Jesus destroys multiple approaches to this in one sentence...

On one side, there is this idea that you need to just lose your identity... your individualism, whatever makes you distinct... and achieve Nirvana. This is Buddhism, the **Eastern approach**.

- And if Jesus only said, "Lose yourself," and that's it, that would be one thing — but he doesn't say that. He says, "lose yourself to find yourself." In other words, "I want you to die to your old ways of finding meaning and value and security in life!"

On the other hand, you have the **Western approach** which is find yourself by figuring out what you really want and going after that — success, career, security, affirmation, wealth, relationships...

But Jesus comes along and says, **“You’ll never find yourself by trying to find yourself. You’ll never figure out who you really are, by trying to figure out who you really are!”**

***“The only way to find who you really are is to lose yourself for My sake. Let go of your life to find it!”***

Look how he ends this... *“What good is it for someone to gain the whole world...?”*

*At this point in the sermon, Pastor Rob told the story of Eric Liddell in the movie “Chariots of Fire.” Watch the video for full impact. The point of the example was, if you build your life on your career, success, influence, family, reputation, wealth — you are trying to justify your existence — and it will never be enough. If your value comes from things, when you lose them, you’ll lose yourself too. There will be no YOU left.*

Jesus says, *“The solution is not just to let go of all of those things, it’s to let it all go and come to me... **build your life on Me and Me alone... make ME the center, the Son that everything else in your life orbits around, and THEN and only then will you have a worth, a value that isn’t conditional**, that isn’t based on temporary things. You’ll have a new identity that cannot be shaken by the world, it cannot be taken from you, and you won’t be less distinct, **you’ll be more you than you’ve ever been!** You’ll come alive if you’ll just lose your life for Me!”*

*You’ve got to take an honest look at your life and ask yourself, are you willing to lose your old, even some of your current ways of finding meaning, value, worth, identity, for Jesus’ sake?*

*Are you really willing to let go?*

*No one else can answer that for you, but that’s what Jesus is asking you today.*

*Where is your allegiance? To yourself?*

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## **Follow Me**

In the first century, it was every Jewish boy’s dream to be a disciple, a learner, a pupil, a student — *a follower of a Rabbi*. They would memorize the entire Torah, and at around age 12 and they would approach a Rabbi and say, “Can I follow you?” The Rabbi would then ask a series of questions, and depending on the answers, the Rabbi would then say, “Follow me.” In other words, “I believe you have what it takes to be one of my disciples.” Then everything the boy did, he did through the filter of what the Rabbi would do. *“Facing this situation, what would the Rabbi do about this? I’ll do that.”*

And so a disciple was someone that wanted to become a literal extension of the One they were following.

“Somehow, many have come to believe that a person can be a “Christian” without being like Christ. A “follower” who doesn’t follow. Many people in the church have decided to take on the name of Christ and nothing else. This would be like Jesus walking up to those first disciples and saying, “Hey, would you guys mind identifying yourselves with Me in some way? Don’t worry, I don’t actually care if you do anything I do or change your lifestyle at all. I’m just looking for people who are willing to say they believe in Me and call themselves Christians.”<sup>1</sup>

*~ Francis Chan*

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<sup>1</sup> Beuving, Mark, and Chan, Francis. *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples* (David C. Cook, November 2012)

The concept of following Jesus isn't hard. The *idea* of being like Jesus — we would even say, “That’s a good thing. I want to be like Jesus.”

***The question then is, “Why are there so many disengaged, inactive, passive Christians?”***

**Here’s why:** the **concept** of following is easy, but ***actually following*** requires your whole life. And if we’re honest — *we’re just not sure we want to give up our life.*

**I thought God was a God of grace!?**

He is. But “effort” is not the opposite of “grace.” Many of us get lazy in our faith because we just say, “Oh God’s got me covered in Jesus.” He does... but when you see all that Christ has done for you, that ought to ignite your life!

When a Rabbi would say, “**Follow me,**” he was literally stating, “*Based on your education, your skillset, on your track record, I believe that you have what it takes to be an extension of everything that I am, not just to be a representative, but literally to be ME to the world.*”

In that context — think about all 12 apostles — these were the failures, the outcasts, the traitors, the nobodies, the unaccomplished, the unsuccessful. Jesus walked right up to them and said, “Follow me.”

- *Why? Because **Jesus saw them, not for what they’ve done, but for who they would become!***
- ***Follow Me. I believe you have what it takes to be a literal extension of me to the world, not because of your track record, but because of mine.** Not based on your obedience, but based on mine... and one day, through Me, you all are going to start this thing called the church, and not even the gates of hell are going to be able to stop you.*

**TODAY**

He’s looking at every one of you in this room and He’s saying, FOLLOW ME!

**FOLLOW ME!**

- *Don’t just slap a fish sticker on the back of your car*
- *Don’t just adhere to some country club Christianity and “believe in me”*
- *Don’t say, “oh yeah, I’m one of those Christians...”*

**“FOLLOW ME!**

- *Be with me!*
- *Become like me!*
- *Not to earn anything from me,*
- *but because I’ve already poured out the riches of heaven over your life!*
- *I’ve given you my Holy Spirit*
- *I’ve placed my glory inside you!*
- *Now stand up, dust yourself off!*
- *Get off your butts!*
- *Let’s go love the sin out of some people!*

Have you settled for complacency?

Have you settled for sitting on the sidelines, simply observing others who have skin in the game?

**Or are you a follower?**

**Are you a passionate servant of Jesus Christ?**

**Are you a disciple?**

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## CONCLUSION

If you say, *“I feel like today is a wake-up call. I sense God challenging me to step up in some ways that I don’t even fully understand yet. I don’t just want to be a Christian — I want to be a disciple. I want to be an extension of Jesus to the people around me.*

1. **Count the Cost:** *What price have you been unwilling to pay for Him? Comfort, security, reputation, status, wealth. Bring the things that have been too valuable in your life to Him. And lay them at His feet... because His plans are far better, far greater, far more powerful than your highest endeavors. Count the cost.*
2. **Lose your life:** *Commit to a lifelong obedience... of going, doing, risking whatever He asks of you.... commit to doing, saying, living, whatever is in line with your character, your ways.*
3. **Follow Him:** *Allow God to change you, teach you, restructure the motivations of your heart. Change your dreams, desires, and plans to align with His purpose, His will. Allow Him, to make you an extension of His transformative love and power to a hurting world.*

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## Discussion Questions

1. What motives do people have for saying they are followers of Christ, when their lifestyle does not look like Christ?
2. What does Jesus mean when He says that unless you prioritize Him and His kingdom above everything else, there’s not much He can do with you?
3. How does the power of your love for Him more than your love for your family play out in day-to-day living?
4. How does Jesus feel about half-hearted followers?
5. Discuss: *The only way to find who you really are is to lose yourself for My sake. Let go of your life to find it!”*

# NOTES