

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “FOLLOW CHRIST?”

By Marvin Hawbaker

What does it mean to “follow” a person?

What do we mean when we say “You’re following the wrong people?”

Luke 6:40

"A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.

What is a “disciple?”

Are a “follower” and a “disciple” the same?

A follower of Christ is a believer in Christ. *Following Christ* means to turn away from sin, trust Jesus Christ alone for forgiveness and become more like Christ in attitudes and actions through learning God’s Word and obeying it.

The Bible also teaches that every believer is to be part of a group of believers called a church. These believers encourage each other in learning, growing and serving Christ *together* or *Following Christ Together*.

WHAT CHRIST TAUGHT ABOUT FOLLOWING HIM

Note the following passages in which Jesus talks about some of the implications of following Him.

John 10:26-28

"But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

Jesus said to these people that they did not believe in Him because they were not His sheep. What does that imply about Christ’s sheep in reference to believing in Him?

How do the sheep relate or respond to Christ?

What does Christ do for the sheep?

Are you one of Christ's sheep? Why or why not?

Matthew 8:19-22

Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go." 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." Then another of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

Note: This man's father probably had not yet died. This was a figure of speech for saying that he wanted to wait until his father died so he could collect his inheritance.

What was Christ saying about what it means to follow Him?

Matthew 16:24-27

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

John 12:25-26

"He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

What does Jesus say one must do if he wants to "come after Me?"

What does Jesus mean when He says that one who "desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it?"

What is usually the goal or motive of those who love their life in this world?

Why does Jesus say that even if this goal is reached the actual result is losing one's life?

What is the reward of "hating our life in this world?"

John 8:31-32

³¹ *Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.*

³² *"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

John 14:15

"If you love Me, keep My commandments.

John 21:17-19

¹⁷ *He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep.*

¹⁸ *"Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish."*

¹⁹ *This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me."*

WHAT PAUL TAUGHT ABOUT FOLLOWING CHRIST

The Apostle Paul wrote the book of First Thessalonians to the church at Thessalonica. His purpose seems to be to encourage believers in their commitment to the gospel and following Jesus Christ.

Throughout the book we see a clear picture of what Paul believed it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Paul begins the letter as follows:

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

¹ *Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

² *We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers,*

³ *remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,*

⁴ *knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.*

⁵ *For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.*

⁶ *And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit,*

⁷ *so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.*

⁸ *For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.*

⁹ *For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,*

¹⁰ *and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.*

Paul said that the believers in this church “became followers of us and of the Lord.” What does Paul say they were doing that would demonstrate they were following the Lord? (He mentions several things.)

Read the following excerpt from the letter that Paul wrote to the believers in the church at Philippi and then prayerfully evaluate your own commitment to *Following Christ* on the following page.

Philippians 2:5-13

⁵ *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,*

⁶ *who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,*

⁷ *but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.*

⁸ *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

⁹ *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,*

¹⁰ *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,*

¹¹ *and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

¹² *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;*

¹³ *for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

**EVALUATING MY COMMITMENT TO
FOLLOW CHRIST . . . TOGETHER**

Yes	No	Doing Well	Needs Work	
				I believe that Jesus Christ is God in human flesh who died and rose again and is living today.
				I desire to be a follower and a disciple of Jesus Christ. I accept the challenge of Christ to "follow Me."
				I am working on becoming more like Jesus Christ
				I am committed to (passionate about) God's purpose for my life
				I accept the challenge of "taking up my cross" – my responsibility to fulfill the purpose for which Jesus Christ saved me.
				I deny my own desires when they conflict with following Christ
				I understand and accept that following Christ means giving up my own desires for my life (deny myself) and striving to fulfill God's will for me.
				I understand and accept that living for myself actually results in "losing my life."
				I understand the importance of following Christ together in the family of the church.
				I am faithful in following Christ together with other believers in the family of my church.

All Scripture references are from the NKJV except where otherwise noted.

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