

The Messenger 2010

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Who Are We Following?



Introduction:

What makes someone a follower of Christ? Is it that they go to church somewhere, or that they believe Jesus is real, or they don't do "bad things"? Are these things the standard of following or is there more to being a follower of Jesus?

We should all want to be followers of Jesus but few are willing to do what it takes. It is easy to see that many want the hope of Christ but according to Matthew 7:13-14, few will find it.

There are elemental changes going on in our society today. This new way of thinking has become rooted-in over the last number of years. It is an increasingly well-known fact that we are living in a time wherein neighborliness is diminishing. Goodwill for others, in many places, is being replaced by the pursuit of self. It used to be that the golden rule used to be "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you". Today, it can seem to be more like "Do expect all others to do for you what you want".

There is danger in this for all of us because whether or not we want to admit it the world affects the church. We are affected by the trends of the world. When these situations come into our lives we must not buy in and jump on board. The reality is that selfishness is a big, big, problem. The pathway of Christ is found through opposite of selfishness. It is ours through self-denial; cross bearing; and following Jesus.

Jesus said, "Let a man deny himself"

The first step is a difficult transition. We must know that we cannot even begin to follow Christ until we get out of our own way. The whole idea of me, my, and mine are things that vanish into the submission of one's life to Christ. Think about this from the perspective that Christ continually showed us: Jesus opened our eyes to self-denial by teaching it (Matthew 5:38-48; Matthew 6:24). Jesus declared His willing self-denial in His prayer recorded in Matthew 26:39. Jesus showed us that the suffering of one for the benefit of all can be done (1 Peter

2:21-25; 1 Peter 4:1-2).

Self-denial prepares us for entrance into the kingdom (Mark 10:13-15). Self-denial prepares for the acceptance of Christ's direction (John 14:15) and our submission to Him as Lord (Luke 6:46-49). Self-denial is also important in our relationship to our brethren according to Romans 12:9-15; Ephesians 4:1-3; and Hebrews 10:24. When we consider these passages we find actions that are "to one another". This tells us that when we are the people that we need to be; we can give without thought of self, because others are thinking about us.

Jesus said, "...take up his cross"

The cost of discipleship is higher at some times, more than others. The cost could be the sacrifice of family (Mark 10:29-30) and friends (1 Peter 4:3-5).

We can face persecution (John 15:18-20). We could even face physical threats (Revelation 2:10). There is always going to be "ebbs" and "flows" in this life. There will be times of plenty and lean times too (Philippians 4:11-12). There are seasons of welcome and seasons of rejection for truth (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

"Our cross" is not literally a cross, but it is real. The cross was out in front of our Lord everyday of His earthly life. It was His challenge and His responsibility—for us; and He set His face [focus] to the task (Luke 9:51-53). He freely laid down His life—He bore His cross (John 10:17-18).

Whatever we must endure to the most faithful we can be to God becomes our cross to bear. We must face our task as our responsibility—for our soul (Hebrews 10:35-39). We must set our focus to the task (Colossians 3:1-2) and freely offer ourselves to the Lord (Romans 12:1-2)

Jesus said, "...and follow Me"

The pathway has been clearly marked for us (1 Peter 2:21-25). We, through the study of the scriptures, and proper application, can walk the narrow path of life (Matthew 7:13-14). Any success is first formulated in the mind and there are things that people believe are impossible until they see them accomplished in others. This is the beauty of being able to see the life of Christ—we can know that we can do what we need to do. If we are following Christ we do not deviate from His pathway; we follow His steps; and we press to achieve (Philippians 3:12-14).

Conclusion:

The hope is great; the instructions are simple; and the task is difficult. Heaven is waiting for those who are willing to: deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Jesus. This plan will take determination, strength, and endurance. We need to know it can be done—we can do it!

We can follow Jesus starting right now. Take new steps today and align your life with His through obedience. The opportunity is yours right now. ~tss

The Gospel Plan

HEAR THE GOSPEL MESSAGE Romans 10:11-16

BELIEVE IT !!! Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:6

REPENT – CHANGE Luke 13:3; 2 Peter 3:9

**OPENLY CONFESS — JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD
Romans 10:8-10; Acts 8:37**

**BE BAPTIZED — FOR THE REMISSION OF YOUR SINS
Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38-39; 1 Peter 3:21**

LIVE ON FAITHFULLY Hebrews 10:35-39; 1 Peter 1:6-9

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Sean