

If You Want to Follow Jesus

II Corinthians 5:15; Romans 12:1 to live the Christian life means turning away from yourself and the way you want to live. We are either doing this or we are living in clear disobedience to the Word of God.

--**Phil. 2:3-7** – If we follow Jesus, who had nothing to prove and nothing to lose and no personal ambitions but His whole heart was to glorify the Father, ***our lives will mimic His.***

Luke 9:23-26 --**To follow Jesus is not a means of self-fulfillment but of self-denial.**

--He says something that is clear, hard and fast; delivers us from being able to escape into our own definitions of the same syrupy spiritual slogans that have no real meaning.

--We may say, “What discipleship is is this...” No its not, but we like to flatter ourselves that there is another set of rules for us.

--What Jesus is saying is fundamentally opposite of what many preachers are preaching today. Some believe: “Jesus is here to solve all your problems and make all your dreams come true, make you feel good about yourself, raise your self-esteem to the highest level possible.”

--What does it mean to be Jesus’ follower? What does it take? What is required to come after Jesus?

--**“Do you want to follow Me and live the life I have for you?”**

--Die to yourself, deny yourself: your dreams, goals, ambitions, whatever your plans may be—throw it all away, then you can be My disciple.”

--Following Jesus is the only means to fulfillment, the only means to find yourself and your purpose.

--But it will never be found in seeking what’s best for yourself, never be found in seeking your purpose.

--Dietrich Bonhoeffer – “Salvation is free but discipleship will cost you your life.”

1. Jesus gives us four conditions of discipleship – Desire, Denial, Death, Devotion.

--**Mk. 8:33-34** – Jesus isn’t just speaking to the 12, He’s speaking to the entire crowd.

--Not a select few, but everyone who would consider following Jesus.

2. The “IF” of discipleship

--Jesus was big on conditions; He used the word “if” often with regards to following Him:

Lk. 14:25. That’s a big if!

--Grammatically speaking, “if” introduces a conditional clause,

--If is one of the first words a child learns to associate with logical thinking and conditional results. “Johnny, if you eat all your carrots, then you can have some ice cream” (I can’t just cut straight to the ice cream; I have to eat the carrots.) “If you finish the chores you can take the car out this weekend”

--Lots of “if’s” in the New Testament (574) but almost half of those are in only the first four books—the gospels—where Jesus’ teachings are contained

--Jesus was the master of the IF: **Mk. 4:23; Jn. 7:37; Jn. 8:31; Jn. 14:15.**

3. The first “if” of discipleship is Desire: “If anyone *would* come after Me...”

--**“If anyone would”**, “If anyone wishes...”, “If anyone wants to be My disciple”

--**“If anyone wants to come after Me...”** – that implies movement – lining up behind and following where He goes—we don’t walk in front of Him and ask Him to follow us “Hey, Jesus I think discipleship should be thus and such.”

--**“If anyone wants”** – Until you desire to be a disciple, you won’t be one.

--Do you desire to be a disciple of Jesus? Discipleship will cost you your life.

4. The second condition of discipleship is Denial.

--Self-denial – your dreams, goals, ambitions, plans—put them away or be willing to.

This is where we got off the boat on this whole self-esteem thing, the Self-Esteem movement is totally opposed to discipleship.

--Jesus is calling you to forsake the one person you like most!

--“But I’m so awesome, I bring so much to the table, the ministry will be so blessed to have me working for it” **no it won’t.**

--Leave all of you out of this—be willing to lose your whole self—totally pushing Jesus forward and totally pushing yourself out of the picture.

--“let him” – puts the responsibility on each of us; it must be intentional; it is not automatic.

--“Deny” – a firm refusal; the same word used to describe what Peter did to Jesus 3 times. What did say about Jesus, “I don’t know what you’re talking about”, “**I never knew the man.**”

--Lk. 14:33 – is this unclear? Jn. 12:25 “I hate my life”, like a teenager who can’t get her way?, **no.** you hate what you’d do with, what you’d make of it, how you’d manage it;

--Lk. 14:26 Jesus was not indicating emotional hatred on our part, only preference. Near East culture was patriarchal—parents determined your life, wife, job, where you lived—to not do what they said on these things was considered a form of hatred.

Hate how your parents would direct your life, what they’d make of you as opposed to what Jesus would make of you “I want you to follow in my footsteps son” sorry I have to follow Jesus’ footsteps to be His disciple.

--Deny self – is in the aorist imperative meaning we are to do it right now without delay.

--We renounce self-will and live to do God’s will.

--We renounce self-exaltation and live to exalt God.

--We renounce self-seeking and live to seek God and His Kingdom.

--We renounce the self-centered life on every level and of every kind.

--Alexander Maclaren – “Flagrant vice is not needed to kill the real life. Clean, respectable self-centeredness will do the work quite well.”

--I deny self because I’m not my own, I’ve been bought out and belong to another:

I Cor. 6:19-20; Romans 12:1

--This is critical and crucial because there is not a third position, it is either self or the Savior; we are either denying ourselves or we are denying the Savior.

--We have to confess Christ and deny self, or we will confess self and deny Christ.

--You either live for self or live for the Savior, there is no third alternative.

Mercy Me put out a song a couple of years ago called “**So-Long Self**”

The Lyrics describe a man breaking up with Himself.

“So long, self. Its been fun, but I’ve found somebody else.

So long, self: There’s just no room for two, so you’re gonna have to move.

So long, self. Don’t take this wrong, but you’re wrong for me. Farewell.

So long, self.

--Have you ever broken up with yourself?

--There really is no room for two.

--Either self is on the throne or the Savior is.

Salvation is free, but discipleship will cost you your life.