



Follow Me

And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself (his soul)? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:23-27)

There was a time when we were what we were born. If our father was a cobbler, we would be a cobbler. If he was a farmer, we would be a farmer. Sure, there were probably exceptions, but for the most part, we followed in our father's footsteps, becoming what he was professionally. This is less true today. We have choices now, and often follow our dreams, or follow what we have been told will be a good career path, or follow the advice of a teacher, a mentor, a friend, etc. But we are still following something. People are followers. Even the most individualistic of us are following their ideals of individualism. We all follow something.

Jesus tells us to follow Him. What does He mean when He tells us this? Is He asking us to become martyrs and literally die on a cross as He did? Is He calling us to the life of poverty and homelessness that He lived? Is He calling us to publicly preach and perform miracles? Maybe. But for most of us, He is calling us to something else, I suspect.

Looking again at the context of this verse, we see that Jesus includes a few key areas of life that He is asking us to follow Him in. Specifically, He is asking us to not focus our life on gaining wealth and possessions (gain the whole world at the expense of our soul), and He is telling us to not be "ashamed of Him and His words". He is asking us to follow Him in the area of money and possessions, and in the area of being associated with Him and His word.

Money and possessions are always a popular topic...not. Most people get pretty squirmy when the pastor in their church starts talking about this subject. Why is that? What is it about money and possessions that cuts us so deeply? Is it that we are putting the weight of our life on our money and possessions rather than on God? Are we depending on these things too much? Are they too important to us? Is it easy for us to volunteer in a homeless shelter, but tough for us to share our wealth with a stranger or someone in need? It has even been said that God's only competitor is money.

When Jesus says follow me, the first thing He is telling us to do is to put the weight of our life on Him. To trust Him, not our wealth and possessions. Matthew 6:33 says it well:

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

"All these things" is in reference to the verses before verse 33 – food, clothing, etc. – all the stuff we need to live. Jesus is telling us to focus our minds, our efforts, our time, our entire life, on seeking His Kingdom, rather than trying to become the next millionaire, live in the biggest house, drive the coolest car, marry a trophy wife, become famous, create the greatest career, eat the best food, etc. Jesus tells us to focus our lives on seeking His Kingdom, and He will add these things to our life as needed. This also includes looking out for the interests of others rather than only focusing on our selves, (see Philippians 2:3-7), which ties in to denying our self for the sake of others, particularly in the context of money and possessions. We are to put the weight of our life on God and on His word, not on money and possessions.

The other aspect of following Jesus includes wearing Jesus and His word like we would wear a shirt. We are to publicly identify our self with Jesus and the word of God, at all times. The first time we do this is in baptism. But we are to continue to identify ourselves with Him and His word from that point on. We are not to keep our Christianity a secret, as many do. It is to be on display for the world to see (this ties back to the spectacle of crucifixion). Cowardice is a sin (Revelation 21:8). We are to boldly live in the world as followers of Christ, publicly identifying ourselves with Jesus and His word. Jesus is to be the source of our identity, the source of our significance, etc. We are to build our life on Him and His word. (see Luke 6:45-49)

What are you building your life on? What are you building your marriage and family on? Do the people around you know that you are a Christian, or are you more of a secret Christian, keeping Jesus and God's word to yourself? Are you striving to build a great career or are you striving to see the Kingdom of God? Where do you put your energy, your time, your creativity, your money? Are you investing in the things of the world, or are you investing in the Kingdom of heaven? Where is your treasure? Is it your sports car, or have you put it in your bank account in heaven by giving to the poor? Have you gained the whole world by stepping on others, or are you putting others first? Did you get thru the traffic light by cutting someone off, or did you slow down and let them get in front of you? I urge you to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus.