

# If Any of You Wants to Be My Follower...

Message 3 of 5 in the series: "If"

"If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me."  
Luke 9:23 (NLT)

## A. The context of Jesus' "If" statement:

"When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' 'Well,' they replied, 'some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.' Then he asked them, 'But who do you say I am?' Simon Peter answered, '**You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.**' Jesus replied, 'You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being... Then he sternly warned the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. From then on Jesus began to tell his disciples **plainly** that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead. But Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things. '**Heaven forbid, Lord,**' he said. 'This will never happen to you!' Jesus turned to Peter and said, 'Get away from me, Satan! You are a dangerous trap to me. **You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's.**'" Matthew 16:13-17, 20-23 (NLT)

1. Even though Peter and the rest of the disciples recognized Jesus as the Messiah, they had mistaken ideas of who He was and false expectations of what He came to do.

*What they got right:* "For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity." Isaiah 9:6-7a (NLT)

*What they got wrong:* "But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all." Isaiah 53:5-6 (NLT)

**Life Application:** We must be on our guard against wrong teaching and false expectations about Jesus. "For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. They will reject the truth and chase after myths." 2 Timothy 4:3-4 (NLT)

2. When Peter reprimanded Jesus for not carrying out His ministry the right way, he was completely out of his depth and using many of the same words Satan used when he had tempted Jesus.

"My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,' says the Lord. 'And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.'" Isaiah 55:8 (NLT)

"Then the devil took him up and revealed to him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 'I will give you the glory of these kingdoms and authority over them,' the devil said, 'because they are mine to give to anyone I please. I will give it all to you if you will worship me.' Jesus replied, 'The Scriptures say, "You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him."'" Luke 4:5-8 (NLT) (*Deuteronomy 6:13*)

**Life Application:** If we're not following Jesus, we're following Satan. "You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else." Ephesians 2:2-3 (NLT)

## B. The challenge of Jesus' "If" statement:

1. If we want to follow Jesus, we must deny ourselves/give up our own way/surrender everything.

"My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Galatians 2:20 (NLT)

“Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him.” Philippians 3:8-9a (NLT)

*Note:* Surrendering everything includes my health, family, resources, occupation, skills, relationships, sexuality, time management, successes, failures, choices, weaknesses, strengths, emotions, fears, insecurities, past, present, future, and my understanding of how things ought to be.

*Note:* Denying ourselves should look a whole lot like Peter’s denial of Jesus. “A servant girl noticed him in the firelight and began staring at him. Finally she said, ‘This man was one of Jesus’ followers!’ But Peter denied it. ‘Woman,’ he said, ‘**I don’t even know him!**’” Luke 22:56-57 (NLT)

2. If we want to follow Jesus, we must take up our cross daily.

*Note:* “Our cross” is the loss/rejection/humiliation/persecution we experience because we are followers of Jesus, NOT an annoyance, problem, or difficulty.

“God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.”

Matthew 5:11-12 (NLT)

“Students are not greater than their teacher, and slaves are not greater than their master... And since I, the master of the household, have been called the prince of demons, the members of my household will be called by even worse names!” Matthew 10:24-25 (NLT)

### C. The consequences of Jesus’ “If” statement:

1. “If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?” Mark 8:35-37 (NLT)

“Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity.” John 12:25 (NLT)

“Because of that cross, my interest in this world has been crucified, and the world’s interest in me has also died.” Galatians 6:14b (NLT)

2. “If anyone is ashamed of me and my message in these adulterous and sinful days, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Mark 8:38 (NLT)

“For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes...” Romans 1:16a (NLT)

“So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. And don’t be ashamed of me, either, even though I’m in prison for him. With the strength God gives you, be ready to suffer with me for the sake of the Good News.” 2 Timothy 1:8 (NLT)

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### Connect Group Questions:

Read Luke 9:21-27 then answer the following questions:

1. Why do you think Peter rebuked Jesus and Jesus rebuked him right back? (Matthew 16:20-23) Have you ever tried to tell Jesus how He should be running things? How’d that go?
2. What do you think it means to pick up one’s cross and follow Jesus? (Matthew 5:11-12 & 10:24-25) What kinds of persecution for being Bible-believing Christians might we be facing very soon?
3. What does it look like to deny ourselves/give up our own way? (Galatians 2:20, Philippians 3:8-9) How might denying ourselves look similar to Peter’s denial of Jesus? (Luke 22:54-62)
4. What are the consequences of going our own way/NOT following Jesus? (Mark 8:35-38, Luke 12:15-21)

5. Discuss John Wesley's Covenant Prayer and the prayer of surrender below. How difficult would it be for you to pray either of these prayers? Why?

"I am no longer my own, but Yours. Put me to what You will, place me with whom You will. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be put to work for You or set aside for You, praised for You, or criticized for You. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and fully surrender all things to Your glory and service. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, You are mine, and I am Yours. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen."

"Lord, today I surrender my: health, family, resources, occupation, skills, relationships, sexuality, time management, successes, failures, choices, weaknesses, strengths, emotions, fears, insecurities, past, present, future, and my understanding of how things ought to be. Amen."