

No Easy Jesus

Question To Ponder: What would it look like to follow Jesus through every circumstance or trial?

- I. What does it mean to be a follower?
 - a. Follower is used **77 times** in the Gospels "a follower," or "companion" expresses "union, likeness," "one going in the same way"), metaphorically, of "discipleship," implies a living relationship. *Mark 8:34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. KJV*
 - b. Just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, now, you must continue to **follow him**" *Col 2:6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: KJV*
 - c. Following demands going wherever the Shepherd leads, no matter where that may be, whatever it entails, regardless of the difficulty, whatever it costs; and **it will cost** something.
 1. Job suffered the loss of children, material wealth and his health.
 2. The Disciples left everything
 3. Stephen was stoned
 4. Paul was beaten, destitute, ship wrecked and jailed
 - d. God is Sovereign and He is the Great Shepherd of our lives. He has **designed** every road we travel and every detail of our lives specifically for our sanctification and His glory.
 - e. The cost to us of following Jesus includes **every** testing, trial, suffering, pain, triumph and tragedy; all for His purposes and to His glory. What is Jesus leading you through right now?
 - f. Whatever it is, rest assured, there is **no easy Jesus**.
- II. On Being a Follower
 - a. What I saw in house churches
 1. Why we don't see that here. We are a church **at ease**, we lack passion, we have no urgent need of Him. *Rev 3:13-17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. 14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. 17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: KJV*
 2. Passion without perseverance is nothing. When our passion for Jesus burns out, we settle for an easy Jesus, one who demands **little** from us, one that is comfortable, like an old shoe.
 3. The life Jesus invites us into cannot be experienced if we think of Him as an easy Jesus **who asks** nothing of us. Jesus doesn't want us to follow him one day—he wants us to follow him today. *Matt 8:21-22 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead. KJV*
 4. American Christianity has become more about **information** than transformation. We end up "believing in" Jesus but not following Him. *James 2:19-20 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? KJV*
 5. Information can never transform our hearts. At some point, good intentions and information must translate into moment by moment commitment **to follow**.
 6. Our footprints behind the footprints of Jesus become the record of our faith. Spiritual maturity is measured in footprints, steps that **we have taken** as we follow Jesus.
 7. Spiritual maturity **is not** measured by how many Bible studies or Sunday School classes we've attended over the years or how much Bible doctrine we understand. *John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments. KJV*
 8. The effect of believing in an easy Jesus is that we ask God to change us, and then we **wait** on him—but there is more to real change than asking and waiting.

9. Transformation happens at the intersection of God's grace with **our grit**. It requires that we take the next step to work out our salvation instead of waiting for it. *Phil 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye 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. KJV*
10. Since we are saved by His grace, we are therefore called to step out in faith and **operationalize** the grace He has boundlessly given us to do what He has given us to do. *Phil 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. KJV*
11. Grace is always opposed to earning, but it is not opposed to effort and it takes **effort** to follow Jesus.
12. Another inhibiting factor in our failure to whole-heartedly follow Jesus derive from the internal struggles we face. Two of those struggles are **fear and shame**.
13. Fear is worry about the future—shame is holding onto the past. When we let those things control us, we can't move forward. We cannot **follow**.
14. If you're in Christ, grace has covered **everything**, even our well-deserved, overwhelming shame, Christ has us covered. *Acts 10:15 What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. KJV*
15. There is nothing you have done that disqualifies you from following Jesus today and being an effective witness of **His love**. *John 21:16 Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. KJV*
16. His substitutionary sacrifice for our sins **transcends** all guilt, all shame, and every disqualifier that keeps us bound and which inhibits our following after Him. *Heb 9:12-14 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. 13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: 14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? KJV*
17. Our fear and shame keep us bound in chains even though those chains have been **broken** and we are free to wholeheartedly follow Christ. *Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, KJV Rom 8:15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. KJV*
18. More often than not Jesus **leads** us into situations where our greatest hurts and worst defeats can be used to help others. God comforts us in our troubles so that we can comfort others. *2 Cor 1:3-4 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; 4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. KJV*
19. Our willingness to own and offer our scars is what will convince others that ours is a God who **redeems**. Our pain may not be relieved—but it will always be redeemed. *Rom 8:16-18 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. KJV*
20. The invitation to follow Jesus is an invitation into a relationship with him, a relationship that demands that we **follow Him**. *John 10:27-28 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. KJV*

III. The Challenge

- a. What would you be willing to do differently, today, if you had absolute assurance that Christ is with you and that He is leading you through your difficult circumstance? PS. 139: 7-13
- b. Never settle for an easy Jesus—the easy Jesus does not exist, follow the real Jesus.