

**TITLE:** AM I A COMMITTED FOLLOWER OF JESUS?

**TEXT:** LUKE 9:18-26

**INTRO:** This is a scripture I use often (v. 23) in studying with non-Christians to show them the commitment required if they choose to become a Christian. And since this is a life-long commitment, it's clear that Christians need to be reminded of this too.

**I. WHO JESUS IS (v. 18-20):**

- A. Jesus first asks His disciples what they're hearing about Him from the people (who is He?). Then He asks *them* who He is.
- B. Jesus' identity is extremely important (then & now). Is He the Son of God, or just a prophet? His followers needed to know for sure who He was – that He *was* the Messiah – in order to understand His mission (and theirs)!

**II. WHAT JESUS MUST DO (v. 21-22):**

- A. Jesus must suffer, be rejected by the elders, chief priests, & scribes, and be killed! He had to be 100% committed to this mission, otherwise He couldn't have gone through with it. He had to know what was going to happen to Him, so He could be ready for it.
- B. This couldn't have been what the disciples expected to hear! But they too needed to know in advance what He was going to do (i.e., what was going to happen to Him), so they would understand the seriousness of His mission, & of being His followers.

**III. WHAT YOU MUST DO (v. 23-26):**

- A. (v. 23) *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*
  1. "If" – Jesus doesn't **force** anyone to believe & obey. He wants this to be our choice (free will)!
  2. "Any man" – This means exactly what it says – **everyone** has this option – this opportunity to "come after" (follow) Jesus.
  3. But if you choose to accept Jesus and His way, you **MUST** ("let him" – imperative):
    - a. Deny yourself – "to affirm that one has no acquaintance or connection with someone; to forget one's self...and one's own interests" (Thayer). You must accept and admit that something else is more important than you – even more important than your own life (take up your *cross*)!
    - b. Take up your cross daily – the image is of Jesus carrying His cross to Calvary, knowing he was about to be nailed to it! If there ever was an act that required denial of self, this was it! And Jesus Himself is requiring this of His followers **daily**! This means each & every day we must be willing to die for Christ & His cause! There are no days off! No wonder this decision is voluntary – you can't just command this type of commitment without giving free will!
    - c. And follow Me – You cannot follow Jesus if you haven't first died to yourself! This is why He says to "take up your cross," *then* "follow me." This doesn't mean that we have no individual personality, no desires, no freedoms, etc. It means that wherever we are and whatever we're doing, we are Christ's first and foremost. As Christians we don't have the freedom to remove our Christianity when we want, or to put our own desires ahead of God's. Following Him is a **DAILY** commitment. You can't follow Jesus 5 or 6 days a week & claim to be a true follower! Jesus requires total obedience to His commandments (**John 14:15**).
- B. (v. 24) *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.*
  1. *Whosoever will save his life shall lose it.* Context – whosoever saves his life for himself by **NOT** giving it up, denying himself, & following Jesus. He that loves **anything** in this life (\$, family, friends) more than Jesus, so that he refuses to give up what God requires to be given up, is going to lose his life in the end. "*No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God...*" (v. 61-62).
  2. *But whosoever will lose his life for my sake...shall save it.* There are only 2 options – committed or not! You must lose your life. Has your life changed since becoming a Christian? Have you lost the life you had before? Are you seeing more & more things about your life & how you lived before (things you said, did; people you hung around with, etc.) that you have to change? **Are you changing those things?** This is "losing your life for Jesus' sake" (and it's how you'll save your life).
- C. (v. 25-26) **The Wrong Decision:**
  1. (v. 25) *For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?* No preacher could preach a better sermon with a more timeless question than this! Because since the beginning of time, this has been, to different degrees, the life-goal of humans → to gain the whole world (or at least to control our own corner of it)! So what are *your* goals? How much of the world are you trying to gain? And what happens when you meet that goal? What will you do if your soul is lost and you're a "cast away"?
  2. (v. 26) *For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.*
    - a. Notice the "for" – Jesus is saying that if your goal in life is to gain the world (having any earthly goal as a higher priority than Him), it's the same as being ashamed of Him & His words! Why? Because He (by His words) is telling you not to do this, but instead to get your priorities right. Many claim commitment to Jesus, but are clearly more committed to this world (and it shows)! These are practical atheists (**Titus 1:16** – *They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him*).
    - b. But pursuit of this world's goods as a higher priority is not the only way we can be ashamed of Jesus & His words.
      - Are you ashamed to be seen reading the Bible in public (or praying)? At work?
      - Are you ashamed of His words that command you to evangelize? to be a good example?
      - Are you ashamed to stand up for what's right when you're the only one willing to do so (even in the church)?
      - Are you ashamed of saying things & doing things that you know will single you out & identify you as a Christian?

**CONCLUSION:** Think very seriously about this command of Christ's. He says if you're ashamed of Him and His words (i.e., the Bible), He'll be ashamed of you! Your friends won't be – they'll be proud of you, and consider you to be one of them – just like you're wanting, and you'll receive your reward in *this* life. But you'll be denying Christ, and He, as our only Mediator (**1 Tim 2:5**), will deny you before the Father (**Mt 10:33**). We must always think about our words & actions. Are we confessing or denying Christ? Are we committed followers?