

## Disciples Follow

We return this morning to the Luke's Gospel account of the life and ministry of Jesus – so that we might know Him and properly respond to Him.

But as I said last week as we started, our particular interest is upon Jesus' interaction with His disciples – particularly how He defined discipleship. What it was to be His disciple.

As an introduction last week, we looked at not only how Luke's Gospel writing could be divided into 3 main sections...

Ch. 1-8 – Presentation of Jesus as the God-Man, the Anointed One (Messiah), not just another prophet, rabbi, or philosopher... The very Son of God, born in human flesh to save us from our sin.

Ch. 9-18 – While continuing the Presentation of Jesus, the focus shifts to Jesus' interactions with His Disciples.

Ch. 19-24 – Focus returns to Jesus Himself, and His Death and Resurrection

We are focusing in on the middle section, particularly Ch. 9-14, seeking what it is (by Jesus' own definition) to be Jesus' Disciple.

We saw last week that in that day and age, "Disciple" (Gr., *mathetes*) was a very common term, and a very well defined term – a learner, yes, but a particular

kind of learner – one who attaches himself to a teacher in a formal way to learn from, emulate, obey, honor, and proliferate the master's teaching and way of living.

Jesus willingly used this term as the way in which people appropriately connected to Him. And it was the only way. There is no other kind of connection you might have to Jesus.

You are either a disciple, or not a disciple.

You are either a true disciple, or a false disciple.

You are either a disciple in life, and heart, and action, or you are a disciple in name only (no disciple at all).

And as Jesus teaches both the crowds and interacts personally with His disciples in this middle section of Luke, He is careful to give the defining marks of what a true disciple is. And it is out of these interactions that I want to identify 7 defining marks of what being a true disciple involves.

For some of you, this will be confirming and encouraging, causing your heart to burn within you to be a more faithful disciple in all the ways Jesus requires.

For others of you, it will be disconcerting – for perhaps you will find in the text of Scripture that your whole understanding of Christianity is either false, or truncated in some way – and it will identify for you foundational changes that are necessary for you to be properly attached to Jesus. You will come to a crisis moment in which you will have to do as Jesus says in ch. 14 – "count the cost" of what it will be for

you to be and live as a true disciple.

For some of you, you have no interest in such things, only being here because someone brought you here, or it is your family's tradition to come to church and it is just easiest for you to come along.

OR perhaps you've checked around, and Christianity seems to you to be the best philosophy of how to live a moral, upstanding life. And so, though you have no real personal connection with Jesus, you are here to learn from Him and take what good you can from Him.

I hope if you are in this category, that you will allow yourself to honestly hear the first-hand accounts of Christ Himself on what His "philosophy" really entails for those who would be His disciple.

So, here we go.

What I want to do this morning is first identify a companion word that Jesus uses alongside (and often in place of) the word "disciple," and then lay out these 7 marks in the text.

That companion word... **"Follow"**

A very simple word (both in English and in Gr, *akoloutheo*) – means to go behind someone, going where they go.

We find this kind of general usage in Luke 9:11 with the crowds following Jesus...

They were just following Jesus in a physical sense, trying to get to where He was to get healed and listen to Him speak.

But we also find a more specific use of the word "follow" – to go be with be with a person, but not as a fellow-traveler / fellow-liver of life, but rather as your leader; not just in a physical sense, but in a whole-life kind of sense (you are a "follower" of what they say, do, teach, etc).

What is interesting is the Greek language never developed a noun form of this action word "follow." Like we say "follower." Or like a person who engages in athletics is called an athlete, or a player of music is called a musician.

There is no noun form of *akoloutheo*. And the reason is, that there was no need for a word for a devoted "follower." Because there was already another name for such a one..... "Disciple."

A disciple follows, and one who devotedly follows is called a disciple.

So, let's see this "disciple" usage of "follow" in Luke.

- Turn to Luke 5 – where we have the first instance in Luke of Jesus calling specific disciples to Himself. In this case, Peter, James, & John.

Jesus (4:44) is going around by Himself preaching in the synagogues of Israel. But the crowds quickly became too big for the synagogues, and so as He is teaching by the Sea of Galilee, and

the crowds gets a little pushy... He hops in Peter's boat and teaches (from this secure, mobile platform) the people on the shore.

READ v. 4-11

Theirs was no casual "following" – they left everything and "followed" Him. They became a "disciple."

- Luke 5:27-28 – Matthew (Levi) – READ

Jesus issues an imperative – "Follow Me." And the response is the same – *"left everything behind and got up, and begin to follow Him."*

Already a paradigm is being established in our minds of what it is Jesus requires.

- Luke 9:57-62

- 57 – READ – "following" is the understood relationship
- 59 – READ – a recognition by this man that following Jesus had implications for regular life – he had something that was initially a higher priority – *"permit me first..."*
- 61 – READ – again, a willingness to follow, but *"permit me first..."*

- Luke 18:18-22 – READ

Two things to note

- The same exact calling as before
- But "Follow Me" is in answer to...
  - v. 18 – "obtaining eternal life"
  - v. 24-25 – "entering Kingdom of God"

- v. 26 – "being saved"

- And when Peter asserts in v. 28, *"Behold, we have left our own and followed You,"* Jesus asserts in v. 29-30 that "eternal life" comes to one characterized by such following.

And so what we see here is that "Following Jesus" is the basic relationship to Jesus, and the relationship of those who are given "eternal life."

Thus the action of "Following Jesus" is basic to what it means to be a Disciple, a Christian. And what we learn from this is that being a Disciple is not merely a state you enter into, a club you belong to, a sticker to put on your bumper.

It involves ACTION. A Disciple Follows. If you are not actively following, you may SAY you are a Disciple, but by definition, your actions show differently.

Do you see why both words are so important?

It not only is someone who you ARE / BECOME, but it is also something you DO / HOW YOU LIVE.

And thus the purpose of this whole study – What does it mean to be a Disciple, and what does "Following Jesus" really entail?

But now before we get into looking at these 7 marks (really "personal acts") of Jesus' disciples, I need to make something really clear at the outset – especially on account of this last verse we looked up.

“What is the connection between actively following Jesus and obtaining eternal life?”

Do our actions in following Jesus earn for us eternal life?

Let's be real clear on this question, for we just learned from Galatians and Titus that on our part it is Faith Alone (trusting Jesus' good works for us, credited to our account), not any kind of personal “works of righteousness.” Faith Alone in Jesus Alone reconciles us with God.

Gal 2:16, Titus 3:5 (front of bulletin)

So, if a devoted “following of Jesus” does not earn our place with God, then where does following Jesus fit in the equation?

And this is where we must understand, that every response to Jesus' call to “Follow Me” has two precursors...

**Seeing and Believing** – Perceiving who Jesus is, and Believing He is worthy of you leaving all to follow Him.

It was for Peter, or Matthew, or the rich young ruler, or these guys along the road in ch. 9...

Let's see this in Peter's encounter in 5:1-11...

Not only had he been earlier introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew (John 1:41), but in this very

instance he saw with his own eyes the power of Jesus, perceived His position, and thus when Jesus prophesied that from now on he would be catching men, Peter “Followed.”

This SEE, BELIEVE, FOLLOW is why Luke lays out his gospel the way He does (Presenting the Person of Jesus, 1-4 & then the Power of Jesus, 5-8), and now in 9-18 – the Following of Jesus.

The Gospel of John focuses primarily on the See & Believe part (the word “believe” 100x in John, while only 20x in Luke). Luke's special contribution is on the “Follow” part – which is why we are in Luke's Gospel to look at what it means to be a disciple.

But also why some people read Luke see all of this emphasis on “follow” and not as much on “believe,” and begin to get things out of order...

But even here in Luke, in one of Jesus' main teachings, we see this “See, Believe, Follow” paradigm coming clear in Jesus' parable of the Soils in Ch. 8.

Same seed (representing the word of God, the truth about Jesus) is cast broadly and falls upon 4 types of soil. READ v. 4-8...

- v. 12 – READ – “believe and be saved” (not “follow and be saved”). Believe and be saved! The same thing Paul continuously promotes in Galatians!

And yet, as we continue to listen to Jesus' parable, we come to understand that it is a certain

kind of Believing that Jesus is referring to here. Two other kinds of response to Jesus fail to meet the test of true Faith.

- v. 13 – READ – “believe for a little while...” (initially “believe,” yet then fall away – don’t follow)
- v. 14 – READ – hear, and initially respond – (v. 8) *grow up with the thorns* – seemingly there is some response – they begin to follow... yet bring no fruit to maturity. They don’t continue to follow – they follow for a time, but then fade away as well.
- v. 15 – READ – “heard the word in an honest and good heart”  
[BTW, impossible without an internal change that God alone brings – *for there are none righteous, none who seek after God...*]  
Their hearts having been supernaturally regeneration (made new / born again) by God, *They hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.* Like Peter, like Matthew, they “follow” and continue on following.

What we come to understand by Jesus’ teaching here is that though Salvation comes by Faith Alone (trusting in who Jesus is and what He has done for us), it is not by a kind of Faith that is Alone. Not a mere mental assent to the facts, but rather a wholesale embracing of not only the truth about Jesus, but Jesus Himself, such that you are absolutely overwhelmed by His Person and His gracious work on your behalf, that your priorities and your whole mode of life are radically reoriented.

And you, like Matthew, you get up out of your “place”, and you begin to “Follow Jesus” and you continue to Follow Jesus, no matter what. You become a true Disciple – in the fullest sense of the word.

Following is the unstoppable response of seeing and truly believing.

My friends – we must get and grasp this fundamental point of what it is to be savingly connected to Jesus. Not only for the sake of the eternal condition of our own souls, but also for the sake of all whom we would encourage to come to Jesus. We must tell them what it really means to be a Christian.

Being a Christian is to having your eyes opened by God to see Jesus for who He is (the eternal King and Coming Judge), and your heart opened by God to believe whole-heartedly on Him alone for the saving of your soul, and Seeing and Believing, you now begin to “Follow” Him in the fullest sense of the word “follow.”

Not mere intellectual belief, nor mere momentary emotional or religious fervor to make a change, or just a human trusting in the historical saving act of Jesus, yet doesn’t produce an actual “following” of Jesus in the life, or maybe it just produces a temporary “following” of Jesus.

That is not the kind of Faith that saves.

True Faith, given by God along with a new heart results in a characteristic action: Following Jesus.

And so, it can be simply said – if you are not “Following Jesus,” you have no actual connection with Jesus.

So, it is at this point that we need to understand what Jesus means when Jesus says, “Follow Me.”

Let me give you these 7 Defining Marks of Following Jesus, of being a true Disciple... lifted right out of Luke’s Gospel record of Jesus’ interactions with His disciples and teachings to Disciples in ch. 9-18.

Let me give you these 7 Marks, and then we will consider each of them over the coming weeks.

1. Repent –
2. Worship –
3. Learn –
4. Obey –
5. Trust –
6. Serve –
7. Suffer –

Some of these must happen initially, and yet all must happen continuously.

Some of them go on internally, some externally, most both.

They are not necessarily a sequence of events – it is not as if we move from Repenting, to Worshiping, to Learning, etc.

No – our response to Jesus is a continual response of all of these in a growing, increasing, maturing way.

This is what we see in Jesus’ disciples, is it not?

They were continually learning, continually having to trust, over time being drawn into deeper worship. Though they initially repented, they had to continually change. Though initially serving in small forays of witnessing 2-by-2, they would later devote their lives to being on mission for Jesus.

They thought they were suffering for having to leave their livelihoods behind, but in the book of Acts we find them being continually beaten and berated from town to town, all the while rejoicing to be counted worthy of suffering for the name of Jesus.

Though we now have the complete picture of who Jesus is and all He has done for our salvation, they were getting it in pieces, and responding as it came.

And yet, in many ways, our own initial response to the Good News about Jesus is not always knowing everything there is to know about Jesus and His full glory – we, similar to them, continue to grow in our understanding and our knowledge, and thus our response.

We like them will continue to fail our Lord at times, needing to be reminded of our reasons for leaving all and following Jesus in the first place.

But if our heart has been truly made new by God's Spirit, then our "Following" will be "held fast" and we will "persevere" in following Him in these 7 ways....

Which we will begin to consider one by one next week.