

The Following Formulation

Luke 9:23c

Nutshell: Following Jesus is the act of retaining our self-denial and self-execution in daily life, confessing Jesus' love and lordship in our continual looking to Him, doing as He did.

I. Context: Jesus prophesying His upcoming rejection and death.

II. Text

Luke 9:23 Also He was saying to all *of them*, "If anyone desires to come behind Me, he must deny himself and he must take up his cross, and he must keep on following Me."

Literal Standard Version with modifications

The next four outline items, III. - VI., are based on the 4 uses of Scripture listed in 2 Tim 3:16 AND the 3 depictions of preaching in 2 Tim 4:2.

III. Teaching

A. An outline of Luke to this point

I. About this Letter: So you'll know about this Jesus, 1:1-4

II. Testimonies to Messiah's coming. A boyhood turning point, 1:5-2:52

III. John proclaims repentance for Christ's coming, 3:1 - 20

IV. Messiah's Entry Credentials: Baptism and Genealogy, 3:21-38

V. His Initiation: Fasting and Temptation, 4:1 - 13

VI. His Self-Introduction and Hometown Rejection, 4:14 - 30

VII. Jesus: The FIRST MAN with all authority over demons, sickness, and nature, 4:31 - 5:11

VIII. Turning-Point Healings, 5:12 - 32

A. Repatriating a leper, 5:12 - 16, touching the unclean outcast to preview His taking of our exile/ disease into Himself

B. Forgiving sin, 5:17 - 26, thus declaring His Deity

C. Healing/ renewal of a man's (Matthew's) soul, 5:27 - 32

IX. New and Old Covenants:

A. NC = OC *replacement*, ~~patch-up~~, 5:33-39. NC: Law in ♥.

B. 6:1-11, OC Sabbath *strict*, but intended as a *help*.

X. Picking The 12, 6:12-16; teaching / etc., incl. Tyrites, 6:17-19

XI. Jesus' manifesto: the **SERMON ON THE PLAIN**, 6:20-49

- A. Literal poor vs. rich. Love haters. Give. Be piteous.
 - B. Only right teaching creates right living. Convict *self* 1st. Only building on Christ will survive life's floodplains.
- XII.** Messiah's **MISSION** Portrayed in His Interactions
- A. Forecast: A **Gentile** seeks Jesus for a healing, Lk 7:1-10
 - B. Forecast: Hope still held out to **Israel**: Nain widow, 11-17
 - C. John's Q. A.: 2 diverse comings & an interval, 7:24-30
 - D. John & Jesus differently wise. Both rejected, 7:31-35
 - E. Love for Jesus is tied to forgiveness. The sinful woman had both; Simon the Pharisee lacked both, 7:36-50.
 - F. 8:1-15, 4 Soils = 4 kinds of "hearing" of the **Word**. Only a "virtuous and sound heart" is living and fruit-bearing
 - 1. Hence, take care HOW you hear that Word, 8:16-18
 - 2. Mary as mom not an insider; Word-doers only, 8:19-21
 - G. It is a Word of **power** over nature (8:22-25), demons (8:26-39), sickness (8:40-48), and death (8:49-56)

XIII. Messiah's **COMMISSION**, the first

- A. You 12 preach, heal, and exorcise as I have. Live on what you're given. Where unwelcome, disassociate, 9:1-6
 - B. Guesses given to Herod about Jesus' identity, 9:7-9
 - C. New ministry lesson: *You* 12 feed the crowd, 9:10-17
 - D. Popular opinion vs. truth: Jesus = Messiah, but a work not yet completed, so don't publicize it, 9:18-22
 - E. Messiah will be rejected and killed. Guess what, you have to reject and kill *yourself*! 9:23a
- B. 9:23c, Saying no to self and putting ourselves to death is the only way to follow Jesus.

Kid-speak: Why do we have to say no to ourselves if we want to follow Jesus? So we don't follow our own road.

Outline:

- I. Commands 1 & 2 in Lk 9:23, and the Relationship of 1, 2, & 3
- II. Incentive Break
- III. The Other "Come Behind/ After Me," Lk 14:27
- IV. "Come Behind Me" Synonymous with "Follow Me"
- V. Discipleship in America Today
- VI. Being There vs. Following There, Col 3:1-5

VII. "Follow" Word Study

VIII. Following Ain't Cheap and a Few Closing Details

- C. There are four very important elements we have linked together in the last four messages
1. Jesus gave details on what **Messiah** actually must do (now that they had settled on His identity *as* Messiah)
 - a. Being Messiah included His rejection
 - b. and His death
 2. Now He has linked that to His disciples' proper response in "coming behind" Him: *first* being **self-denial**
 - a. Say no to self
 - b. Our personal agenda is automatically in the way of following Jesus
 - c. We must become servants only. My will is now employed only to direct me in God's service.
 - d. But happy service. What could I do better for *myself* that God is promising to do *for* me as my leader?
 3. *Second*, choosing to put ourselves to death: picking up **our cross**
 - a. Which begins with our connection to *Christ's* cross: What He did for me, to which I can add nothing
 - b. Which provided the nullification of sin's dominion over me (though sin's presence and influence remain in me—the Former Man)

Kid-speak: Why did Jesus say that following Him would be like carrying our own cross? Because it's so hard and painful.

- c. And which enables me to freely choose and embrace the putting to death of:
 - i. the flesh (my sinful inclinations)
 - ii. the *works of* the flesh (Gal 5:19-21)
 - iii. my members (Col 3:5)
 - iv. the world (its ways which are natural to me), Gal 5:14
 - v. Or, the *inner* (i.-iii. above) and *outer* (iv. above)
- d. These executions are obviously not once-for-all in this life
- e. That is why the cross is a fitting image of them: a slow, painful death
- f. So it's *me* who's being put to death, but more

particularly, my sins, Rom 7:18, No good in my flesh
4. And now today, **following Christ**

D. The grammatical relationship of the 3

1. “Deny self” and “Pick up your cross” are both AORIST in Gk.: definitive actions
2. “Follow Me” is PRESENT tense: an ongoing act
3. That is a huge hint as to their combined meanings
4. The *first two* are necessary to accomplish the *third*
 - a. Following Christ is impossible without self-denial and self-execution
 - b. Self-denial and self-execution are for the purpose of following Christ

E. Before we move on, let’s take a quick incentive break

1. Like Jesus’ several ‘incentives’/ *reasons* not to worry in Matthew 6:25 ff
2. NO OBTUDING SELF = no worries. Wanna be worry-free?
3. SELF CRUCIFIED = R. I. P. Rest in Peace. Wanna be at peace?
4. Unquestionably, God is trying to help, not hurt us here

Kid-speak: Is Jesus trying to *help us* or *hurt us* by telling us that following Him is like carrying a cross? Help us.

F. The other “come behind Me” (The only one I can find)

1. “Come behind” is also used in Lk 14:27, where Jesus extends the lesson of our verse
2. Bearing the cross is coupled with “coming behind” Him. The assumption is that one goes with the other.
 - a. The lesson in Lk 14 comes in v 33. If we don’t “forsake all,” we can’t be His disciple.
 - b. Equivalent to “deny self” in our v

 G. How “come behind Me” = “follow Me”

1. In our verse, “come behind” is a synonym introducing the main verb, “follow”
 - a. If anyone wants to _ (syn 1), he must _ and _, and he will then be _ (syn 2)
 - b. The whole verse is really defining “follow”
2. Don’t miss this. “You want to fall in line behind Me? How about if I tell you it involves _ and _? Will you do those to follow Me?”

- a. It is a proposition, “If anyone wishes,” followed by the means to get there,
- b. ending with a restatement of the original proposition in the more exact word, “follow”
- c. It is a gate check. *Are you sure you want in here?*
- d. Lk 14:25 ff makes this abundantly clear. Don’t even *start* without a serious, whole checkup first.

Kid-speak: To follow Jesus, do we need to say no to the way *we* want to do things? Yes.

H. A peek around

1. How is discipleship portrayed today, in America especially (since that’s where we live)?
2. Based on our v, I’d say we get an F
 - a. We assume that *Americanism stays* and discipleship is *added* on to it
 - b. But if I must deny myself, and myself is an American, how can I avoid putting my Americanism to death?
 - c. (So with *anyone* in their own culture)
3. ‘Fortunately’, Christianity is *becoming* more countercultural!
 - a. Our culture is becoming more recognizably pagan
 - b. Christianity’s native distinctness will be easier to discern
4. As a government-disapproved body, the church can function more like her real self
 - a. We saw our new status during lockdowns
 - b. As a side ‘benefit’, we had waves of people fall away during Covid. “Huh, I didn’t really need church!”

I. But our Americanism is *still* a thorn in our side

1. The exact warning of Deut 8:11-17 comes to us
2. Which is a great self-explanation for fasting
 - a. My abundance can hurt me. How can I prevent that?
 - b. Regularly cut off its flow
 - c. Prove to yourself that your plenty doesn’t control you
3. But if you simply insist that it doesn’t, there’s the plainly implied command:
 - a. After Jesus’ departure, His disciples would fast, Lk 5:35
 - b. A simple definition. Like our v.

- J. An internal examination. For the church.
1. We have discovered that self-denial and self-execution are *prerequisites* to following Jesus
 - a. Or do Jesus words need imported meanings here?
 - b. Do we need to add, “Only so far as we don’t impinge on Salvation by Grace”?
 2. Let me call this the Too Luther mentality
 - a. Luther didn’t like James. That says everything you need to know about that.
 - b. I *want* to have Luther’s basic insight into justification apart from works
 - c. But if I can’t speak fluent James language comfortably, I’ve gone Too Luther
 3. Think about it. Who is it you don’t trust if you feel compelled to caveat everything with “not by works”?
 - a. Did James not understand grace?
 - b. **Or** do you mistrust *yourself*? *That’s* a fair mistrust.
 - c. But must you project that onto others? Shouldn’t you wait for them to deny Romans 4 or Galatians 3 in fairly specific terms before you call their stance into question?
 4. Rather, catch *yourself*. If you have to caveat any challenging passage, maybe you’re just afraid of your *own* drift towards works salvation;
 - a. OR it may simply be a laziness-excuse mechanism
 - b. Either way, it is unfair to project your misgivings on those whose only crime is to accept James or our v today
- K. But here’s a good dovetail and alignment. Think Col 3:1-5
1. We’re commanded to follow
 - a. Yet united with His death, *we’re there*- where He is!
 - b. United in His resurrection, we’re where He is now!
 - c. *We can’t follow any closer!*
 - d. But it’s positional (“hidden with Christ in God,” v 3)
 2. But look where Paul *goes* with the positional. v 5. Put self to death. We are ‘already there’ **unto** *that* end.

Kid-speak: God joins us with Jesus’ death on the cross so we can do what? Put our own sins to death.

- L. “And he must be keep on following Me”
1. “Follow,” Gk. *akalutheo*, “on the (same) road”

2. Imperative, “he must [or “let him”] keep following.”
3. *Akalutheo*, 90x
 - a. Only 1x in the epistles, 1 Cor 10:4
 - b. 6x in Revel. Best corollaries, 14:13, 19:14
 - c. Acts, 4x. Personalized, 12:8-9; follow us to follow Christ, 13:43
 - d. The other 79x are in the Gospels. A number of parallels, esp. in Matthew, Mark, and Luke

M. **Luke** has already been a “follow” book

1. ♦ 5:11 (1st in Matt, 4:20), After the miraculous fish haul, they forsook all and _
2. ♦ 5:27-28, Tells Matthew, _, he left all and _
3. 9:11, the crowd _ to the disciples’ resting spot

4. 9:49-62 will be the main _ passage
5. 18:22, to the rich, young ruler
6. ♦ 18:28, Peter’s contrast ↑, and Jesus’ answer
7. 18:43, Blind Bartimaeus, post healing, _ (name in Mark)
8. 23:27, a crowd, mostly women, to Golgotha

N. ♦ As we see, the disciples *have* followed Jesus to this point

1. But things are different with Jesus now having clearly defined the Messiah’s work
2. The true Gospel, including rejection and death, always makes a difference. It’s a strainer.
3. He had chosen 11 of them to stay the course
 - a. ...with detours, before and after the Cross
 - b. As we all stumble in many ways

O. “Follow” ain’t cheap. 9:57-62 will hammer that home.

1. Real following will *filter out many*
2. **Many of whom simply redefine following**
3. But there is a type of following that is *not* following, Jn 6:2

Kid-speak: Did some people follow Jesus who didn’t really believe in Him? Yes. Do some people still do that? Yes.

P. “Follow Me” gives definition to “Believe in Me”

1. To truly believe in Jesus *is* to follow Him
2. To follow Him is to leave self and all behind

Q. Generally speaking, what was Jesus’ path, that we may be on it?

1. *He* did the will of another (denied self)
 - a. He did the *Father’s* will

- b. We do *His* will (and the Father's), Jn 20:21
- 2. We become fill-in-the-blank people. He's Lord. ***Whatever*** He says, that's what I go by. Just fill in the blank.
- R. John is a peculiarly "follow" Gospel. 1 Jn 2:6 encapsulates it. "Ought" there is "debtor" and "bound to" elsewhere. "Owe."
 - 1. It is past tense. We are to walk as He walked on earth.
 - 2. Jesus' mentality as an obedient man, as portrayed in the Gospels, must become our mentality
 - 3. "Do like Me; Be like Me," He's saying. Follow the leader.
- S. Importantly, following, and following the following formulation ☺, is the only way to end up where He is! ***Heaven***

IV. For the Walking Wounded (1 Thess 5:14, "Uphold the strengthless")
 An already wounded self should offer less opposition to the self-denial and self-crucifixion necessary to follow Christ.

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V. Conviction (2 Tim 4:2, "Convince, rebuke"): **What have I done wrong?**  
**How have I lost righteousness?**  
 Have I counted the cost? Does my walk reflect it?

VI. Correction/ Realignment (2 Tim 4:2, "Exhort/encourage"):  
**How will I correct my error? How will I regain uprightness?**  
 I will tie my "already" death *to* my "daily" death.

VII. Schooling in Righteousness: **How do I take this on the road?**  
 Lord Jesus, thank You that love for You is sufficient incentive to follow You, and that Your love for me incites my love for You.

Vision: "I have decided to follow Jesus" is a great, simple response to Jesus' words here. But it is important to realize that "follow Me" cannot be relegated to the realm of "Kumbaya." It is as demanding as the Gospel itself (*and* as healing). Both the Gospel and "follow Me" only make sense if I lean my whole self unto Jesus as Lord and Savior.

*Let us* lean our whole selves onto Jesus as our faithful Lord and great Savior.