

Luke 9:23-26

Who is Jesus issuing His commission to in Acts 1:8?

1. Directly, his disciples and followers who followed Him up on the mount where He ascended.
2. Indirectly, to all of his followers from that day on to today.

The obvious questions follow

1. What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus Christ?
2. How do we know we are one?
3. How do we become one?

We find a concise and clear call by Christ here in Luke 9.

READ/PRAY

From a solely biblical perspective, what does it look like to follow Jesus...to be a follower of Christ?

I. We must Desire Him v23a

And He was saying to them all...First, notice that this applies to everyone. And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me

1. Do we desire the things of the World?
 - a. Are you chasing prosperity, possessions, power, popularity, and pleasure?
 - b. Are you passionate about sports, politics, your family, or your hobbies?
 - c. What is it that excites you? What makes your heart beat faster?
 - d. Is your desire for the things of the world, and in this world, strong?
2. Do we desire the things of God?
 - a. Maybe you love the Bible, prayer, the songs, Sunday school, sermons, and church
 - b. You love the **things** of God and that is good...but we have to remember that all of these things are a means to an end and not the end themselves
 - c. The question we really need to ask is...
3. Do we desire God?
 - a. Do you get past the Bible, your prayer list, your favorite hymn, your SS class, your church?
 - b. Do you get past the things of God and get to God Himself?
 - c. Does Jesus excite you? Does Jesus make your heart beat faster?

Jesus say, that we should come after Him! He should be the object of our desire if we are to be His followers.

1. Mark 12:30 *AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.*
2. Follow Me was His simple command.
3. We must desire Him

II. Deny Self v23b-25

he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

Jesus' call demands that we deny ourselves and bear our cross each day.

1. This was absolutely positively not talking about a piece of jewelry
2. I have heard things like, "this is just my cross to bear" referring to an illness, a grouchy husband, or a mother in law.
3. Christ's original audience knew exactly what he was calling for
 - a. Perhaps some 30,000 were crucified during the lifetime of Christ alone
 - b. The disciples knew exactly what to expect and it was not good
 - d. They immediately pictured a poor, condemned soul walking along the road carrying the instrument of his execution on his own back.
 - d. And one thing about that man, if he was seen leaving town carrying a cross, he was not coming back. *He was as good as dead!*
4. Jesus is saying, this is what you have to be willing to embrace if you will follow me
5. Jesus said, you must willingly and intentionally give up your life

24 For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

1. **Am I characterized by working hard to save my life or to lose my life for Christ's sake?**
2. Am I living in reckless abandon for my Master?
 - a. Somewhere along the way we have missed what is real about our faith and replaced it with what is comfortable.
 - b. We are settling for a Christianity that revolves around catering to ourselves when the central message of Christianity is actually about abandoning ourselves.
3. **There is a warning and a promise here in this text.**
 - a. **You save, you lose**
 - b. **You lose, you save**
4. I know what some of you are thinking, "Jesus didn't literally mean"...And this where we need to stop.
 - a. Because who are we to say that Jesus did not mean what he said?
 - b. Who are we to say that the Bible doesn't mean what it says.
 - c. We are molding Jesus into our image.
 - d. We are interpreting the Bible so that it fits the comfort of our culture.
5. Be careful. I must be careful.

25 For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?

1. Luke 18:18-30
2. We are quick to say, this was not a requirement of everyone.
3. Notice the pattern of Scripture.
4. Luke 14:33 *So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.*
 - a. The original language in verse 33, "give up," apotasso, say good-bye to.
 - b. We must be willing to give up our finances to follow Christ.

We must desire Him and deny ourselves daily even to the point of death.

III. Follow Him without Qualification v23c, 26

Follow Me....For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

1. This absolutely does not mean that you walk down an aisle and turn around to a bunch of smiling supportive faces and wave!
2. What does Jesus mean?
 - a. It means when Nero sends his soldiers to you and says, "Say, Caesar is Lord and live, or refuse and die." What do you do?
 - b. Matthew in Ethiopia was killed by a sword for not being ashamed
 - c. Mark in Egypt was drug to death for not being ashamed
 - d. Luke in Greece was hung
 - e. Peter was crucified upside down
 - f. James in Jerusalem, was thrown over a hundred feet down from the pinnacle of the Temple when he refused to deny his faith in Christ. He survived the fall, and was beaten to death with a club.
 - g. James, the brother of John was beheaded in Jerusalem. His guard was so influenced and convicted that he knelt beside James to accept beheading as a Christian as well.
 - h. Bartholomew in Armenia was beaten to death
 - i. Andrew in Greece was beaten by 7 guards and crucified. He continued to preach to his tormentors for two days until he expired.
 - j. Thomas was stabbed with a spear in India
 - k. Jude, the brother of Jesus was shot with arrows
 - l. Barnabas was stoned
 - m. Paul was beheaded
 - n. And since then 43 million people have taken up their cross and followed Christ in martyrdom and right at half of that number have taken up their cross in the last 100 years.
3. It is no wonder that the word for witness (martyro) in Acts 1:8 has evolved into our word martyr.

We must be willing to follow Jesus without qualification.

Luke 9:57-62

1. What is he doing?
 - a. He should have led them in a sinner's prayer!
 - b. He is saying, are you sure because it will likely mean homelessness?
 - c. Do you mean it? Then, let someone else bury your dad.
 - d. Am I worth it? Then, don't even say good bye to your family.
2. **Jesus requires total, superior, and exclusive devotion.**
3. Jesus does not solicit a hasty, emotional decision.
 - a. Jesus never encouraged an unthinking, impulsive leap of faith into discipleship in hopes that later on they would be willing to pay the price.
 - b. No, he said count the cost.

Luke 14:25-33

V25-27

1. You cannot be my disciple, you cannot be my disciple, you cannot be my disciple!
2. Here is what he is asking.
 - a. If your family was to hate you because you come to me would you come?
 - b. And if you had plans and ambitions and I asked you to do other than that would you be willing to do that?
 - c. And if I asked you to take everything you have, sell it all and give it to the poor, would you be willing to do that?
 - d. And even if I asked you to die in the cause, would you do that?
3. He is asking, am I worth everything to you?

V28-33

1. In the first parable Jesus says, "Before you start to build, sit down and decide whether you can afford to follow me.
2. In the second parable he says, "Sit down and decide whether you can afford not to follow me because I, the King am coming.
3. Talk about being between a rock and a hard place!

Well, that is right where you are right now. **You are going to have to answer 3 questions this morning.**

1. **Are you going to believe Jesus?**
2. **Are you going to obey Jesus?**
 - a. I know the urge is to run back to the Jesus we have created in our own image.
 - b. I know that the urge is to run back to the safety of our cultural Christianity.
 - c. Resist that urge, for while that may ease our minds...the biblical Christ will save our souls!
3. **Are you willing to come to Christ on His terms?**
 - a. I know none of us are fully here yet...I would imagine, and hope, that we are wrestling with these things.
 - b. But are you willing to take a step...are you willing to begin moving in this direction
 - c. Are you willing to make it your goal to
 1. Desire HIM above all else
 2. Deny Self and die to self daily
 3. Follow Him without qualification?

He is worth it.