

Discipleship Lesson-3: Teaching Them How To Follow Christ

John 10:27

As we open to John 10 this morning, we look at the very foundation of Christianity.

Whose birth do we celebrate as God with us, Immanuel? *Jesus Christ the Lord.*

Who lived the only perfect human life ever lived? *Jesus Christ the Lord.*

Who dies a substitutionary, atoning death on the Cross of Calvary? *Jesus Christ the Lord.*

We are to go through life as the Great Commission says, leading people to follow Who?
Jesus Christ the Lord.

Matthew 28:20 (NKJV) **teaching them** to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

Now as we look at John 10:27: who is the Good Shepherd who saves us, in order for us to follow Him forever? *Jesus Christ the Lord.*

Jesus made salvation eternal life and assurance of eternal security so SIMPLE. Please stand with me as we listen to Jesus, as He sums EVERYTHING up with these words in v. 27:

John 10:27 (NKJV) **My** sheep, hear **My** voice, and **I know them**, and **they follow Me**.

Pray

Salvation is so personal: we are His sheep; we can hear His voice; and the way we know we are His comes from following His voice. Think of a shepherd who speaks, and of sheep that turn their heads, listen and then start walking towards him. That is such a picture of true Christianity!

Note how open ended that verse is. When we got saved it was because of hearing, responding to, and starting to follow: Jesus Christ the Lord; and following Christ never ends, as the Book of Revelation reminds us: we are forever His Sheep, following Him (Rev. 7:17).

FOLLOWING JESUS NOW & FOREVER

Following Christ's voice from His Word is how we were saved.

Continuing to follow His Voice heard through His Word is our source of daily assurance.

Jesus said that eternal life is all about following Him; and He summarized His entire plan for the disciples in just two words: "Follow Me" (Matthew 4:19). Those two words were what He

spoke to Peter, Andrew, James and John as they fished and to Matthew as he sat at the tax office (Luke 5:27); and those two words are what He still calls for, as He walks through this world.

Jesus called Himself the "Way"; and described salvation as the beginning of a life-long journey of following Him (John 14:6). This call to a life of following needs to at times be renewed as Jesus demonstrated after His resurrection, when Peter was restored to ministry as Jesus again said: "follow" Me (John 21:19).

DISCIPLES ARE TAUGHT HOW TO FOLLOW

So Christ's plan was to have close, personal "followers" who were also learners and doers of His Way. They listened and followed Him as they learned from Him how to do what He did. The book of Acts repeatedly describes the early believers as those who were "followers" of Christ Jesus, the Way. Open to Acts 9:

Acts 9:2 and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were **of the Way**, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. NKJV

Acts 18:25-26 This man had been instructed in **the way of the Lord**; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him **the way of God** more accurately. NKJV

Acts 19:9, 23 But when some were hardened and did not believe, but **spoke evil of the Way** before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 23 And about that time there arose a great commotion **about the Way**. NKJV

Acts 22:4 "I **persecuted this Way** to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, NKJV

Acts 24:14, 22 "But this I confess to you, that **according to the Way** which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. 22 But when Felix heard these things, **having more accurate knowledge of the Way**, he adjourned the proceedings and said, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case." NKJV

The Church at the beginning was simple, everyone was following Jesus, acting so much like Him they were described by unbelievers as little-Christ-imitators or "CHRIST-ians". As the church gathered, they were taught that every facet of their lives were to be reflective of what they learned while following Jesus personally. Disciplemakers:

WE TEACH HOW TO FOLLOW BY EXAMPLE

The Great Commission described a plan for having each person in Christ's Church actually involved in a life-long learning process of following Jesus Christ.

In fact, believers are called little imitations or "mimics" of Jesus Christ. The Greek word in the Epistles that describes those who "follow" and are "followers" is *mimetes* (literally "mimics").

Listen to the clear call we have all been given by Christ's Apostles to follow or "mimic" Christ:

1 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore I urge you, **imitate me**. NKJV

1 Corinthians 11:1 **Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ**. NKJV [That is the clearest description of what discipleship is all about!]

Ephesians 5:1 Therefore **be imitators of God** as dear children. NKJV

1 Thessalonians 1:6 And you **became followers of us and of the Lord**, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, NKJV

1 Thessalonians 2:14 For you, brethren, **became imitators of the churches of God** which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, NKJV

2 Thessalonians 3:7-9 For you yourselves know **how you ought to follow us**, for we were not disorderly among you; 9 not because we do not have authority, but to **make ourselves an example of how you should follow us**. NKJV

Hebrews 6:12 that you do not become sluggish, but **imitate those who through faith** and patience inherit the promises. NKJV

Hebrews 13:7 Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, **whose faith follow**, considering the outcome of their conduct. NKJV

3 John 11 Beloved, **do not imitate what is evil, but what is good**. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God. NKJV

Today, God is looking for those who will not merely hear God's Word, study God's Word, memorize God's Word, master the content of God's Word-He wants those men and women, and boys and girls, who will follow Christ.

How do we start? After establishing that the person is saved, the very next truth for them to learn is the:

1. FOLLOWING CHRIST IS THE VITAL CONNECTION BETWEEN SALVATION & THE REST OF LIFE

This connection was taught by Paul in Colossians 2:6. Note with them what Paul said:

Colossians 2:6 (NKJV) As you therefore **have received** Christ Jesus the Lord, **so walk** in Him,

The same way God saved us is how we are to follow Christ through life. We hear the Gospel from God's Word, we believe the truth and respond in faith, and God transforms us. That is the pathway of salvation, and the pathway of each day of our life as believers. Taking God at His Word and seeing Him at work in us. That is simple, clear, and easily explained in Scripture.

2. FOLLOWING CHRIST IS COMPLETELY TIED TO GOD'S WORD

Turn to the Romans Road, one of the simplest explanations of salvation, and look at the final stop in Romans 10:13 (see also v. 5,8,11).

Romans 10:13,17 (NKJV) For “**whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.**”¹⁷ **So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

We are saved by hearing, and responding to the truth of the Word of God. The Gospel flows only from God's Word, and no where else. Only by believing the Gospel contained in God's Word the Bible can a person be saved.

Only by believing the Gospel contained in God's Word the Bible can a person be saved. That means:

3. FOLLOWING CHRIST STARTS BY GOD IMPLANTING HIS WORD INSIDE US

Move onward to James 1:21, from what may be the earliest book of the New Testament written by James who was the Pastor of the First Church of Jerusalem. Here is how he explained salvation to his congregation while Paul was still being trained.

James 1:21 (NKJV) Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and **receive** with meekness **the implanted word**, which is able to **save your souls**.

Again we see that receiving God's Word, believing God's Word, and acting upon God's Word are all tied to our salvation.

We hear truth from God.

We believe that truth from God.

We respond to that truth from God

God transforms us.

One of the greatest confirmations of our salvation is seeing this happen each day. That is exactly what we see the Apostles teaching as they planted and established churches in the First Century.

Now move onward to 1 Peter 1:22 to 2:3 and see how Peter describes this exact same process when he explains the relationship between salvation and our daily walk in Christ. Peter reminds us that both are tied to God's Word.

4. FOLLOWING CHRIST MEANS A LIFE OF BELIEVING & OBEYING GOD'S WORD

Peter is near the end of his life, and after walking with Jesus, serving as an Apostle for over 30 years this is his summary of salvation for all the rest of the ages of Christ's Church.

1 Peter 1:22-2:3 (NKJV) Since you have **purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit** in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, ²³ **having been born again**, not of corruptible seed **but through the word of God which lives and abides forever**, ²⁴ because “All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away,

25 But the **word of the Lord** endures forever.” Now this is the **word which by the gospel was preached to you**. 2:1-3 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, 2 as newborn babes, **desire the pure milk of the word**, that you may grow thereby, 3 if indeed **you have tasted** that the Lord is gracious.

Note how simply and clearly Peter also links God’s work of salvation in us, to His Word.

Salvation is regeneration by the Holy Spirit using God's Word: (v. 22 *purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit*).

Salvation is the new birth of coming alive through the power of God's Word (v. 23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God).

Salvation is eternal because the Gospel in God's Word is eternal: (v. 25 the word of the Lord endures forever. Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you).

Then Peter gives the essence of our new life in Christ.

5. THE LIFE OF FOLLOWING CHRIST IS FED BY GOD'S WORD

1 Peter 2:1-3 (NKJV) Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, 2 as newborn babes, **desire the pure milk of the word**, that you may grow thereby, 3 if indeed **you have tasted** that the Lord is gracious.

Born again believers are **only fed** with God's Word: (v. 2a as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word).

Born again believers can **only grow** by God's Word: (v. 2b that you may grow thereby).

Born again believers **can taste God’s grace** in God's Word: (v. 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious).

So Paul, James & Peter all agree about the connection of God's Word to salvation, and the vital role that God's Word has to our continued new walk. The final link comes from the greatest authority of them all: our Jesus Christ. Please turn with me to Matthew 4:4.

Matthew 4:4 (NKJV) But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man **shall not live** by bread alone, **but by every word** that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”

Jesus says God's Word is necessary for spiritual life as vitally as bread was for their survival. So we could apply Mt. 4:4 by saying that:

6. FOLLOWING CHRIST IS HUNGERING AFTER HIS WORD

Jesus compared **God's Word** to food (“man shall not live by bread alone but by every Word of God”). Jesus said we are not really living if we only feed our physical bodies and not our spiritual dimension. Jesus said we need to eat every day; and our spiritual lives are to be as consistent a part of our daily plans as eating.

Jesus goes on to compare **salvation** to food. Those who eat of Him are saved. Look onward at John 6. Jesus said He was the bread of God (Jn. 6:35), those who ate Him live forever.

Jesus says **salvation is eating and drinking Him** by faith through receiving His Word.

John 6:35 (NKJV) And Jesus said to them, “**I am the bread of life**. He who **comes** to Me shall **never hunger**, and he who **believes** in Me shall **never thirst**.”

Then He said that what we eat are His words. Look at this amazing passage.

John 6:63-68 (NKJV) It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. **The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life**. 68 But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have **the words of eternal life**.”

Now turn onward to John 8:31,37,43,51 (NKJV):

v. 31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you **abide in My word**, you are **My disciples indeed**. 32 And you shall **know the truth**, and the **truth shall make you free**.” [*Three elements: believers are those who abide/remain in Christ's words; believers know/experience the truth of Christ's words; believers are set free through believing/acting upon the truth of Christ's words.*]

v. 37 “I know that you are Abraham’s descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because **My word has no place in you**. 43 Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are **not able to listen to My word**. 44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and **does not stand in the truth**, because there is **no truth in him**. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. [*Three elements: Christ's word remains in true believers; true believers desire to hear Christ's words; true believers stand on the truth of Christ's words within them.*]

v. 45 But because I **tell the truth**, you do not believe Me. 46 Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I **tell the truth**, why do you not believe Me? 47 He **who is of God hears God’s words**; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.” 51 Most assuredly, I say to you, if **anyone keeps My word he shall never see death**.” [*Three elements: believers know Christ's words are true; believers hear/respond to Christ's words; believers are eternally saved by clinging to Christ as truth.*]

That is why the early church taught that hearing & believing God's Word leads us to salvation, and to partaking of Christ. As only physical food enters our body and nourishes it, to sustain our lives: *so our souls are only fed by God’s Word entering into our minds.*

How did we believe on Christ? *Through **His Word**.*

How did we receive Christ? *Through **His Word**.*

How do we obey Christ? *Through **His Word**.*

How do we follow Christ? *Through **His Word**.*

How do we please Christ? *Through **His Word**.*

How do we know Christ better and better? *Through **His Word**.*

7. FOLLOWING CHRIST IS THE BEST LIFE POSSIBLE

That is the simple truth.

The place of God's Word in your mind today dictates your spiritual health as Christ's follower.

Everything needed for following Him is contained in God's Word:

Christ's food and drink to **feed us**;

Christ's map to **guide us** in following Him through life;

Christ's light to **guide us** down His pathway;

Christ's sword to **protect us**;

Christ's exercises to **strengthen us**; and

Christ's revelation of God's character to **grow us**.

John 7:37-38 we go through life overflowing with a life that is not our own, it is Christ's life through His Spirit overflowing us and splashing onto all the events and people of our life.

John 7:37-38 (NKJV) On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

One of the most afflicted Old Testament saints was Jeremiah. He was called the weeping prophet for a purpose. Jeremiah's testimony of how he made it through a lifetime of pain, sorrow, loneliness, and discouragement is our closing thought.

Jeremiah 15:16 (NKJV) Your words were **found**, and **I ate them**, And **Your word** was to me **the joy and rejoicing of my heart**; For I am called by **Your name**, O Lord God of hosts.

TEACHING THEM HOW TO FOLLOW CHRIST

1. Following Christ is the Vital Connection Between Salvation & the Rest of Life (Colossians 2:6).
2. Following Christ is Completely tied to God's Word (Romans 10:13,17)
3. Following Christ starts by God Implanting His Word Inside Us (James 1:21)
4. Following Christ Means a Life of Believing & Obeying God's Word (1 Peter 1:22-2:3).
5. The Life of Following Christ is Fed by God's Word (Matthew 4:4).
6. Following Christ is Hungering After His Word (John 6:35, 63-68; 8:31,37,43,51).
7. Following Christ is the Best Life Possible (John 7:37-38; Jeremiah 15:16).