

WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW JESUS

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, *If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow Me*" (Matt. 16:24).

Few passages of Scripture do more to explode "easy beliefism" and apathy than this one. From the mouth of the Master Himself, we hear some "basics" for what it really means to follow Him.

Contemplation - "*If any man will come after me.*" Following Jesus is so serious a matter that it necessitates serious consideration. After all, it involves the willingness to give the Lord our heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30). It involves all of our love. It has to do with the giving of one's self. The evaluation required before the commitment is made is far from merely being an impulse. It is a thoughtfulness that asks, "*Am I willing to count the cost and to gladly pay the price?*" (see Luke 14:25-33).

Renunciation - "*Let him deny himself.*" In saying "yes" to Jesus, we automatically say "no" to something or someone else. Too much confusion exists in the minds of many on this point. In following Jesus, once and for all denial of ourselves must take place. The writer of Hebrews reminds us of this very point when he says, "*By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin*" (Heb. 11:24-25). All that is gained in following Jesus is beyond the ability of our minds to grasp. But let it be understood that gaining Christ also means the renunciation of self and all things that might clamor to be the lord of our lives.

Dedication - "*And take up His cross.*" Crossless discipleship is the Devil's lie. He tempts us to lighten the load, to not really take up what might be viewed by some as cumbersome, painful and ugly. After all, a cross is an instrument of death, cruelty and pain! And that's precisely the point. Jesus died for us. The Son of God knows the cruelty and horrors of sin as does no other, for He bore the pain of all men's sins on the cross (Heb. 2:9; 2 Cor. 5:19-21). And by taking up our crosses and following Him, we show we are unabashedly unashamed of Jesus and all that He is. Taking up our crosses is the ultimate display of our dedication and our love (Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 15:31).

Direction - "*And follow Me.*" Jesus leads. We follow. The sheep know the Shepherd and follow Him wherever he goes (John 10:1-18; Rev. 14:4). To be lost is to not know where we are. It is to lack knowledge of direction and how to get to the proper destination. And the world without Jesus is hopelessly lost. We are as sheep gone astray from the Shepherd. And all of the so-called moral compasses in the world cannot give the rest, satisfaction, sense of purpose and fulfillment that Jesus Christ alone can give. That's why all people need to know what it really means to follow Jesus! (Matt. 11:28-30).

It costs to follow Jesus Christ, but it costs even more not to!

- Mike Vestal, Midland, TX, via *Bulletin Digest*

Our soul is the only thing we have been given which we can keep for eternity.

News & Notes

REMEMBER IN PRAYERS: Helen Hornbeck, Diane Robinson, Ray Brumedge, Ruby Memorial Hospital, Morgantown, WV (friend of the Cyphers Family), Mary Powell (friend of Marlene Reynolds), 2136 Sherwood Ave., East Liverpool, OH 43920.

NEW ADDRESS: Ruby Kenney, Pleasantview North Retirement & Rehabilitation Center, 451 Valley Road, Salem, OH 44460.

CARE & SHARE BEARS: Each Tuesday at 9:00 a.m.

PANTRY: Tuna & noodles.

SICK & SHUT-IN: Weirton Medical Center: Jean Larrimore. AT HOME: Diane Robinson, Elaine McClung, Jackie Parsons, Taylor Heinselmann, Ruth Brewer, Lloyd & Virginia Ferrell, Lloyd Cowdery, Mabel Sprout, Virginia Rickerd, Bette Gentry, Fred Larrimore, Sr., Fred Larrimore, Jr., Cheryl Stackpole, Betty Dunn (Pat Wright's mother). NURSING HOMES: Fox: Ray Baker, Opal Howell (grandmother of Denise Noland). Calcutta Health Care: Virginia Clutter. Weirton Geriatric Center: Edna McKittrick, Ila Plum. Aspen Manor, Wellsburg: Ione Asher.

LIVING IN FEAR

Deuteronomy 31:1-8

Hydrophobia is fear of water. Nyctophobia is the fear of darkness. Acrophobia is fear of high places. Xenophobia is fear of strangers. Claustrophobia is fear of confined places.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, approximately 6.3 million American adults, ages 18 to 54, have some type of specific phobia. That is a large number of people living in fear.

Without God, this world is a frightening place, but there is no need to lead a life of trepidation. We know the One who created the heavens and the earth and told the wind and the waves to obey Him.

If we are faithful children of God, we do not have to fear the things of this world because God tells us that He "hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7). The only fear we need to live in is the fear of the Lord, for He is awesome in might and perfect in holiness.

God is down in front. He is in the tomorrows. It is tomorrow that fills men with dread. God is there already. All the tomorrows of our life have to pass Him before they can get to us.

- Frederick B. Meyer, via *Glad Tidings of Good Things*, Jacksonville, AL

Meeting & Lectures

36th St., Vienna, WV ----- Oct. 14-17 ----- F. Higginbotham
WVSOP Lectures ----- Oct. 21-25 ----- Various Speakers

