

And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

Luke 9:23 ESV

OUR NEW THEME FOR 2021

FOLLOW JESUS



DENY | TAKE | FOLLOW
L U K E 9 : 2 3



BEREAN BIBLE CHURCH

Worship Service

Sunday, January 3, 2021

Morning Worship Live Stream - 9:00am

 <https://www.youtube.com/user/bereanbarbados/live>

 <https://www.facebook.com/BereanBarbados/live>

Midweek Online Service (Wednesday)

7:30 pm | **ZOOM** links provided

 **WhatsApp** 845 - 5752 or Tel: 426 - 4707

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www.bereanbarbados.org

How to Almost Follow Jesus

As the risks rise for us, the once large crowds may disperse, but genuine, joy-filled faith will rise. Those who followed Jesus for the wrong reasons will inevitably fall away, not willing to bear any cross heavier than the one around their neck. But those who were willing to lose everything to gain him, who rejoice at the opportunity to suffer for his name, will experience deeper, fuller intimacy with him than ever before (Philippians 3:8-10).

If we almost follow Jesus, tagging along with Christians as long as it's socially acceptable and psychologically comfortable, we'll come to the end of the benefits of Christianity. If we *truly* follow him — desiring him above all else, embracing trials and opposition for his sake, and leaving whatever necessary behind — we won't need to chase comfort, attention, or happiness here.

If you want to almost follow Jesus, here are three ways from Matthew 8.

1. Follow (without) your heart.

When Jesus finished the Sermon on the Mount, the crowds were amazed and chased after him. Matthew writes, “When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him” (Matthew 8:1). They were in awe of his authority (Matthew 7:29) — his boldness, his insight, his miracles — but not ready to submit to his authority.

As the crowds chased Jesus, he went to Capernaum, where he met a Roman centurion (of all people) who pleaded with him to heal his paralyzed servant. Jesus agrees, but the man replies, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed” (Matthew 8:8). He explains,

“For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” (Matthew 8:9)

Like the crowds, he recognizes Jesus's authority, but unlike the crowds, he seems to understand it. He bows to it. He's not chasing a show; he cancels the show. Don't come. Just say the word. Your command carries all the power necessary.

“When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, ‘Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith’” (Matthew 8:10). Don't miss who he was speaking to: “those who followed him.” He's teaching “followers” what it really means to follow, and he's pointing to their enemy, a Roman officer. True followers do not chase me for my miracles, but follow me because I am worthy of their faith and devotion — of their life.

2. Fall away when following gets hard.

That evening, Jesus healed many more who were sick or under demonic attack, and so the crowds flocked again. But instead of receiving them, Jesus “gave orders to

go over to the other side” (Matthew 8:18) — to flee the crowd, that kind of crowd. And a scribe came up and said to him, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go” (Matthew 8:19). Jesus responded, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Matthew 8:20).

No room in the inn, no room in the caves, no room even in the nests. *You follow me for miracles, for fame, for power and comfort, but I will be despised and rejected by men, as one from whom men hide their faces* (Isaiah 53:3). To follow Christ is not to share in fame, power, or comfort (at least not yet), but first to share in sacrifice, suffering, and hostility.

Jesus says a couple chapters later, “Whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:38). I bore the cross of God’s wrath so that you didn’t have to — but anyone who follows me will bear a cross. True followers do not chase me for earthly comfort or reputation, but embrace the suffering and rejection of being united to a crucified Savior.

3. Hear, “Follow me,” and drag your feet.

Another disciple spoke up, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father” (Matthew 8:21). I will follow you, but I have some other important things to take care of first. Jesus said to him, “Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead” (Matthew 8:22). Really? Anyone with a father can sympathize with the heartbroken son. Was Jesus being insensitive? Did he over-speak?

He was not insensitive about the son’s loss, and he’s not insensitive about the pain or loss in your life. And he did not over-speak. In fact, he says essentially the same thing several chapters later, but with greater clarity,

“Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” (Matthew 19:28-30)

Following Jesus always means leaving something. You can’t continue to be all you were, and simply add him into your routine. But whatever you’re asked to leave behind — even the most precious relationships — will pale next to all that you receive, now and on your thrones forever. True followers do not fit Jesus in and around their other relationships and priorities, but make him their first love and highest priority — and the lens through which they see and enjoy all else.

Are You Following or Chasing?

If we are truly following Jesus, we are not chasing miracles and spectacles like the crowds, but bowing our knees in reverent awe like the Roman centurion. We are not avoiding the costs of following Jesus at all costs, but rejoicing to be rejected, opposed, and afflicted with him. We are not clinging to the loves we had before we met him, but submitting every other love to our first and greatest love.

How do you almost follow Jesus? These three brief scenes in Matthew 8 paint a vivid and sobering picture. Immediately after Jesus says, “Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead,” Matthew writes, “And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him” (Matthew 8:23). He warned them, and they followed — or did they? They rallied to his hard words here in this chapter, which is encouraging, and stepped into the boat with him. But there were plenty of discouraging moments, too. Two verses later, Jesus says to them in the storm, “Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?” (Matthew 8:26).

True followers are made in a moment, but proven over a lifetime. We are matured, emboldened, and tested for as long as we live. If you genuinely treasure Jesus, God’s still working in your following. With his help, we will go wherever he calls whenever he calls, knowing that he knows best, and that anything we lose or leave behind will be repaid a hundredfold and more.

Read the entire article complete with references online.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-to-almost-follow-jesus>

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ITEMS FOR PRAYER

- Give God thanks for bringing us through 2020 to see the new year 2021.
- For our Essential Workers and that their contact tracing efforts be successful.
- Give God thanks for His grace and continual goodness.
- Continue to pray for our sick members, friends and relatives.
- Pray for the ministry and wellbeing of Pastor Paul Garnes, and his family.
- For the care of our elderly, shut-ins, the bereaved.
- For the Berean Church families in The DR Congo as they combat Covid-19 and related challenges.
- For the friends of Berean – The Gilmores, Hulls, Taylors, Haecks, Moores, Portio.
- For our unemployed members to find meaningful employment.
- For the economic recovery of our country Barbados.
- For the peace of Jerusalem.

January Birthdays



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|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| 3 – Leslie Hull | 10 – Danica Knight | 30 – Gregory Douglas |
| – Patricia Welch | 11 – Judane Mitchell | 31 – Doreen Phillips |
| 5 – Bertram Hoyte | 15 – Hilton Piggott | – Joan Shepherd |
| 6 – Christopher Boyce | 19 – Gary Lloyd | |
| – Pauline Williams | 21 – Marion Manning | |
| 8 – Patrick Skeete | 22 – Patricia Springer | |
| 9 – Joy Banfield | 23 – Truneal Kwang | |
| 10 – Joyce Wells | – Leon King | |

February

- 1 – Tony Montague

Anniversaries



- 25 – Tyrone & Julia Lowe