

Steps of a Disciple, part 14

Answering The Call To Discipleship

Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; and Luke 9:23

INTRODUCTION

Imagine that Christianity is illegal in the United States of America. These days, that isn't very hard to imagine, unfortunately. But, imagine that Christianity is illegal and you have been arrested as a suspected Christian. Would there be sufficient evidence the prosecutor could present, for the court to find you guilty of being a follower of Jesus Christ?

This scenario, really isn't fictitious. The night that Jesus was arrested, Peter followed Him from afar. And as Peter kept a covert distant vigil on the trials of Jesus, Peter's cover was blown. Let's take a look at the gospel record found in Matthew chapter 26:69-74.

No matter how discrete Peter was, three different individuals, perceived that he was a follower of Jesus. What's my point? A follower of Jesus Christ stands out in a crowd. Even the Bible itself tells us that God's plan for His children is to shape us into the image of Jesus Christ. You see, years before that horrible night, Peter answered Jesus' call to discipleship. 2,000 years later, Jesus is still calling people to be His disciples.

As we bring this series, Steps of a Disciple to a close, I want to talk to you about Answering The Call To Discipleship. I looked up the word "follow" and there are multiple times recorded for us in the gospels, that Jesus extended the call to individuals and to the crowds to be His disciple with the simple words, "follow me."

If we are to answer the call, we must understand the call! Let's look at our central text for today's message. It's found in all three, of what are sometimes called The Synoptic Gospels: Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; and Luke 9:23.

Key Requirement #1 - Deny Yourself

Pastor and Bible Teacher Warren Wiersbe put it this way: "To deny self does not mean to deny things. It means to give yourself wholly to Christ and share in His shame and death."

To deny self, is to renounce the self as the dominant element in life. It is to replace the self with God-in-Christ as the object of affections. It is to place the divine will before self-will.

Key Requirement #2 - Take Up Your Cross

Positively, one must take up his cross, decisively saying yes to God's will and way.

Cross-bearing was not an established Jewish metaphor. But the figure was appropriate in Roman-occupied Palestine. It brought to mind the sight of a condemned man who was forced to demonstrate his submission to Rome by carrying part of his cross through the city to his place of execution. Thus "to take up one's cross" was to demonstrate publicly one's submission/

obedience to the authority against which he had previously rebelled.

There's a familiar phrase in our world today: "We all have our cross to bear." This phrase has grown too familiar by constant use. It is a mistake to call all our suffering a cross. Jesus was not talking about minor discomforts. The wicked have many sorrows (Ps. 32:10) but no crosses. The cross, is that suffering alone which results from our faithful connection with Christ (6:22).

Key Requirement #3 - Follow Me

In Jesus' words, Follow Me, "follow" is a present imperative: "(So) let him keep following Me" (cf. 1:17–18; 2:14; 10:21, 52b; cf. "daily" in Luke 9:23). Saying no to self and yes to God is to continue all through one's following Jesus (cf. Rom. 13:14; Phil. 3:7–11).

Jesus is talking about a discipleship that is a whole way of life. We must follow Him obediently, wherever He leads.

CONCLUSION

Jesus presented to the those who would be His disciples, two approaches to life:

deny yourself	live for yourself
take up your cross	ignore the cross
follow Christ	follow the world
lose your life for His sake	save your life for your own sake
forsake the world	gain the world
keep your soul	lose your soul
share His reward and glory	lose His reward and glory

Throughout this series, I have sought to bring to you the essential steps or disciplines of a disciple of Jesus Christ.

- Salvation—the portal which makes being a disciple even possible.
- Baptism—the first step of obedience
- Reading, Studying & Incorporating The Bible—it's the food for your spirit
- Prayer—your communication line to God
- The Local Church—living in community
- Stewardship—faithfully giving of your time, talents and treasure
- Evangelism—sharing your faith to the lost

These steps or disciplines are to help the disciple Answer The Call To Discipleship successfully. Through the practice or application of these essential steps/disciplines, we have the ability to meet Jesus' requirements and live as His disciples.