

## Follow Jesus by Obeying Him

February 13-14, 2021

Rev. Brian Bill

Luke 9:23-26

### Video: **That's My King**

I've watched this video many times over the years, and we've played it a couple times in services as well. It's from a sermon by Shadrach Meshach Lockridge (isn't that the best biblical name ever?). Different sections jump out at me each time...

*I wish I could describe Him to you*

*He's indescribable*

*He's incomprehensible*

*He's invincible*

*He's irresistible*

Why wouldn't we want to follow Him? After knowing Jesus through the new birth, why wouldn't we want to be disciples who make disciples by gathering, growing, giving, and going with the gospel, all for the glory of God?

Over the last two weeks, we've looked carefully at each word of Luke 9:23: "***And He said to all, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.'***" We summarized the last two sermons this way: *Salvation is free, but discipleship will cost you your life.*

After the sermon last weekend, an Edgewood member told me about the lead story in the most recent Voice of the Martyrs magazine entitled, "*The Crosses We Must Choose for Ourselves.*" It's a great follow-up to our topic last weekend:

*As Christ's disciples, each of us must "take up our cross daily" (Luke 9:23). Some of these crosses are forced upon us, but most are optional situations in which we must choose to pay a price out of obedience to Christ...we can choose to suffer well as a witness for Christ anytime we suffer...most persecuted Christians can avoid suffering for Christ by simply deciding to stop bearing witness to His truth. They face a daily temptation to avoid suffering through silence and inactivity and it is important to admit that we face the same temptation...cross-bearing is not a discipleship topic for Christians somewhere else.*

BTW, Voice of the Martyrs is one of our Go Team partners and Edgewood is hosting a simulcast VOM Conference here on Friday, March 5, from 6:30-10pm. Three individuals who were imprisoned for Christ will be sharing their stories.

After we considered the call to discipleship, we fleshed out three of the four conditions of discipleship.

- **Desire.** First, a person must *desire* to be a disciple – ***“If anyone would come after me...”***
- **Denial.** The second condition is a call to *deny self*: ***“...let him deny himself...”***
- **Death.** Last week our focus was on the third condition – *death*. We see this in the next phrase: ***“...and take up his cross daily...”***
- **Devotion.** Today we’ll investigate the importance of *devotion*: ***“...and follow me.”***

Listen to [Luke 9:23](#) again: ***“And He said to all, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.’”*** Let’s look at the final condition more closely: ***“...and follow me...”***

Our main idea is this: *A disciple is one who follows Jesus no matter what.*

The word ***“and”*** indicates a continuance from the conditional clauses which we’ve already addressed. It could be translated as *“also.”* After desiring, denying and dying to self, there’s one more condition. Let’s take the words of Jesus, ***“Follow me”*** in reverse order.

While the demands of discipleship are difficult, the key is to focus on the word, ***“me,”*** meaning He, as in Jesus. When we consider the invincibility of Christ, and His irresistible call on our lives, we’ll want our desires to line up with His, we’ll gladly deny ourselves, we’ll joyfully take up our cross daily, and we’ll be intent on following Him.

We begin with the word ***“me”*** because we need to know who is calling us to follow. Here are four pictures of Jesus found in [Matthew 1:1](#): ***“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”***

1. **Jesus.** The name Jesus means, Savior. He’s come to save us from our sins
2. **Christ.** Jesus is the Messiah, the Promised One of the Old Testament.
3. **Son of David.** He’s from the kingly line of David.

4. **Son of Abraham.** His genealogy goes all the way back to Abraham, the father of God's people. We read about Abraham in the Edgewood Bible reading plan this past week.

Other pictures from the first chapters of Matthew include: *Jesus is fully human and fully divine; He is sovereign over the wise and shepherd of the weak; He's the King and the righteous Judge; He is filled by God's Spirit and loved by God the Father; He is the light of the world and the hope for all nations.*

Now, let's go to the last book of the Bible where we find over 35 names and titles of Jesus found in the Book of Revelation alone. Listen to these ten from chapter one.

- Jesus Christ (1:1)
- Faithful witness (1:5)
- Firstborn of the dead (1:5)
- Ruler of the kings on earth (1:5)
- The Alpha and Omega (1:8)
- One who is, and who was, and who is to come (1:8)
- The Almighty (1:8)
- Son of Man (1:13)
- The first and the last (1:17)
- The living one who died (1:18)

When Jesus calls us to follow Him, we must feel the weight and wonder of the One who is speaking. When we do, we will see He is worthy of all glory along with our total abandonment and supreme adoration. We can't be half-hearted or ho-hum about our holiness, when the Holy God in the flesh is saying, "***Follow me.***"

In a very challenging sermon called "Follow Me," David Platt says,

*"Once you come in contact with the God of the universe in the flesh, the Savior King of the nations, the light of the world, and He reaches down into your dead, cold heart and saves you from the clutches of your sin and gives you new life, things are going to look different...when you respond to this "me," when you follow this Christ, everything changes about your life...to leave behind, lay down, abandon everything in your life makes no sense until you realize who Jesus is, but when you realize who He is, when you realize*

*who Christ this King is, laying down, leaving behind, and abandoning everything is the only thing that makes sense.”*

We posted a link to this message on Sermon Extras if you'd like to watch it.

The word **“follow”** comes from the prefix indicating *“union”* and the word meaning *“path, road, or journey.”* It literally means, *“to walk the same road with”* and is in the present imperative, meaning we're to keep on constantly and continually following Him.

When Jesus said, **“Follow me,”** it's an invitation, *“to join me in my path, my journey.”* If we choose to follow, it means we're all about going where He goes because He's the leader and we're all about doing what He does because He's Lord. We could say it like this: *hear and do the will of the One who goes ahead of us.*

One pastor offers this helpful word picture: *“The chart of the true disciple directs him to renounce every path of his own choosing, that he may put his feet into the print of his leader's footsteps.”*

Notice, the personal aspect of this when Jesus said, **“Follow me.”** It's all about a relationship with the Savior, not a system of rules or rituals. Discipleship is relationship where we are invited to be close to Him, to obey His teachings, to take the same path He takes, and to walk the same road He walked.

Interestingly, it was not common for a Rabbi to call people to follow him. Rather, pupils or followers would ask Rabbis if they could hang out with them. With Jesus this is different because His call is to deny self, to take up our cross daily, and follow Him. That's what the disciples did, without hesitation. And it's what we're to do today. Related to this, Jesus never came up to anyone and said, *“accept me,”* rather He said, **“Follow me.”**

Unfortunately, some of us are like the guy described in this poem by Dan Atkins. It's written from the perspective of a man expressing his commitment to a woman.

*I would climb the highest mountain  
Swim the deepest ocean too  
I would crawl the hottest desert  
I'd do anything for you  
I would leap the tallest building*

*I'd bear any trial or pain  
There's no limit to my love  
And I'll be over Friday night  
If it don't rain*

*A disciple is one who follows Jesus no matter what...even if it rains or snows.*

The words we use are important. While there's nothing wrong with saying things like: "I'm a Christian" or "I'm a believer" or "I'm a Baptist," I've been trying to identify myself this way: "I'm a follower of Christ." I've discovered it is not very helpful to ask if someone is a Christian because most people say, "yes." But when I ask someone if they are a Christ-follower, I find I'm able to bridge to the gospel more quickly. When I'm speaking to a true Christ-follower, often I will ask, "How long have you been following Christ?"

A couple months ago, I read the four gospels and discovered the word "**follow**" was used eighteen times. We're going to walk through these passages to see that following Christ was never meant to be casual.

Matthew 4:19-22: After seeing Simon and Andrew fishing, Jesus "...said to them, '**Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.**' **Immediately they left their nets and followed him.** And going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and He called them. **Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed Him.**"

The common command in Jesus' initial encounter with His disciples was, "**Follow me.**" These four fishermen forsook what they had to follow Christ, with James and John leaving a family business to help mend broken lives.

One pastor summarized it this way, "Jesus only asks us to give up one thing to follow him...and that's everything...you cannot be nominally committed to Christ."

Matthew 9:9: "As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and He said to him, '**Follow me.**' And he rose and **followed Him.**"

Matthew 19:21-22: "Jesus said to him, '**If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come,**

*follow me.’ When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.”*

*Matthew 19:27-28: “Then Peter said in reply, ‘See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?’ Jesus said to them, ‘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.’”*

*Mark 6:1: “He went away from there and came to His hometown, and His disciples followed Him.”*

*Mark 10:32: “And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, He began to tell them what was to happen to Him.”*

*Luke 5:11: “And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.”*

*Luke 9:57-62: “As they were going along the road, someone said to him, ‘I will follow you wherever you go.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.’ To another He said, ‘Follow me.’ But he said, ‘Lord, let me first go and bury my father.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.’ Yet another said, ‘I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.’ Jesus said to him, ‘No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.’”*

*John 1:35-37: “The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as He walked by and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God!’ The two disciples heard Him say this, and they followed Jesus.”*

*John 1:43: “The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, ‘Follow me.’” This captures the first half of our definition of discipleship: “A disciple is a believer who lovingly follows Jesus...” Verses 45-46 describe the second half of the definition: “Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found Him of whom Moses and the prophets wrote...come and*

*see.*” Philip followed and then intentionally helped Nathanael to follow: “...and intentionally helps others follow Him.”

If you’re ready to be discipled or sense God calling you to disciple others, I invite you to an exploratory meeting on Thursday, February 25, at 7pm.

John 10:27: “*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*”

John 12:26: “*If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.*”

John 21:15-22: After restoring Peter and explaining how Peter was going to die; Jesus again repeated Peter’s assignment: “**Follow me**.” As Peter looked around, he noticed John and asked Jesus what His plans were for him. Once again, Jesus put Peter in his place: “*If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!*” This is so personal and applicable to each of us. Jesus looks at you today and says, “*Regardless of what anyone else does, you follow me!*”

*A disciple is one who follows Jesus no matter what.*

I appreciate David Platt’s summary of what it means to follow Christ.

- 1. To follow Jesus is to live with radical abandonment for His glory.**
- 2. To follow Jesus is to live with joyful dependance on His grace.**
- 3. To follow Jesus is to live with faithful adherence to His person.**
- 4. To follow Jesus is to live with urgent obedience to His mission.**

It’s easy to add Jesus like we add friends on Facebook; it’s much more difficult to be a full-fledged follower. Jesus is not an app to add to your life. Because He’s Lord, He wants your whole life. Are you willing to renounce every person, every possession and especially yourself in order to follow Christ? Will you put your faith over your family and over anything else that has been first in your life? What is it that is keeping you from following fully? Luke 14:33: “***So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.***”

After the call to discipleship and the four conditions listed in Luke 9:23 – *desire, deny, death* and *devotion*, Jesus concludes with three cautions in verse 24-26.

### **3 Cautions**

**1. If you only focus on your own life, you'll lose it.** We see this in verse 24: ***“For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.”*** If you try to hold on to what you have, you'll miss what Jesus wants to give you. The person who seeks to save his life by not denying self in the short run, will lose his life in the end.

I turn to Platt again: *“So don't buy it. Some of you have bought it. The idea that all you need to do is make a decision and pray a prayer...and you keep your life as you know it. It's not true. You become a follower of Jesus and you lose your life as you know it.”*

When you settle the surrender issue and commit to follow Christ at any cost, you will end up saving your life. We would do well to adopt the Apostle Paul's purpose statement from Acts 20:24: ***“But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”***

C.S. Lewis once said, *“Christ says, ‘Give me all. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want You. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good...I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself: my own will shall become yours.”*

When we lose what has always been so important to us, we end up finding what we've been searching for all along. Speaking of those who are completely committed to Christ, Revelation 12:11 says: ***“...for they loved not their lives even unto death.”*** I'm reminded of the words of Jim Elliot, a missionary who was martyred in Ecuador: *“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”* Incidentally, he wrote these words when he was in his 20s!

**2. If you only lock into your own success, you'll lose your soul.** Jesus asks a probing question in verse 25: ***“For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?”*** Jesus is using economic terms here – profit, gain, loss, and forfeit. You could gain everything and lose your very soul. You could make a lot of money and end up in Hell.

Here's a question to ponder: *Will I spend my life for the Savior, or will I waste my life on this world?*

One time, the evangelist Henry Ironside was interrupted by the shouts of an atheist. The atheist yelled, *“There is no God! Jesus is a myth!”* and finally, *“I challenge you to a debate!”*

Ironside responded, *“I accept your challenge, sir! But on one condition. When you come, bring with you ten men and women whose lives have been changed for the better by the message of atheism. Bring former prostitutes and criminals whose lives have been changed, who are now moral and responsible individuals. Bring outcasts who had no hope and have them tell us how becoming atheists has lifted them out of the pit!”*

*“And sir,”* Ironside concluded, *“if you can find ten such men and woman, I will be happy to debate you. And when I come, I will gladly bring with me two hundred men and women from this very city whose lives have been transformed in just those ways by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ!”*

Jesus Christ changes lives today and He does so through *demanding discipleship*. Remember this: *It’s costly to follow Christ, but the price is worth paying.*

**3. If you’re ashamed of Christ, He’ll be ashamed of you.** Look at verse 26: ***“For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”*** There is a cost to discipleship, but there’s an even greater cost to not following Christ. We’re called to confess Christ and not be ashamed of Him, which will become increasingly difficult in our culture in the months and years to come. One way to confess and profess Christ is through believer’s baptism. Our next opportunity will be March 13-14.

Let’s not shrink back from the Savior or waffle with His words as we live in this adulterous and sinful generation. Don’t bail on the One who will never fail you. It’s time for the church to be the church, to be bold in our witness and loving in our gospel presentations.

*A disciple is one who follows Jesus no matter what.*

I end with Platt’s conclusion...

*I hope it has been clear, that to follow Jesus will cost you everything now. He’s worth it! But it’s death to self. It’s new life in Him. But there is a cost, you can mark it down, there will be costs for all who truly follow after*

*this Christ in this world. It will not be easy. It may cost you your life to live with urgent obedience to this mission.*

*But I want to propose...that the cost of non-discipleship is far, far, far greater. Because for many who sit back in a cultural veneer of Christianity without knowing Christ there will be eternal consequences. Not just then though, but now. To sit back in casual, comfortable, Christianity is to miss out on the joy, and the peace, and the thrill, and the satisfaction that comes from truly knowing the Jesus from the Bible. And following the Jesus of the Bible with all your heart. You lose your life, and you find life. But if we don't, we miss life in Christ.*

*So, the consequences, the cost, will be great for us and the cost will be great for the world. For 6,000+ people groups who will continue without ever hearing the gospel while those who have the gospel sit back and coast it through until they get to Heaven. There is a steep cost to cultural, nominal Christianity in the world.*

*So, I urge you, I urge you to live with radical abandonment for His glory, joyful dependance on His grace, faithful adherence to His person, and urgent obedience to His mission until we see the face of the "Me" we have been beckoned to follow.*

I want to introduce you to Alex Diaz. Alex is a member of Edgewood and has been part of our church for six years. He is married to Mireya and has three children – Crystal, Alex and Anthony. Crystal is joining him today. She's 10 and was baptized three months ago.

### **Interview with Alex and Crystal Diaz**

1. Alex, you take your responsibility to evangelize and disciple your children very seriously. Can you share what recently happened with Crystal when you sat down to share the gospel with her?
2. Why, would you say, is it important for parents to intentionally lead their children to follow Jesus?
3. What are your thoughts about the children's ministry at Edgewood?

God is really at work in families and in our children's ministry! Let me share some more highlights.

1. Ethan and Caleb Erwin chose to follow Christ on Tuesday at the family dinner table! Props to Mark and Sarah for living on mission as they make disciples in their home!
2. Our Awana ministry made 122 Valentines that will be hung up at Hope Creek.
3. 160 cans of soup were collected at Awana and will be given to a local food pantry.
4. The children's ministry will be writing thank you notes for healthcare workers this month.

We're kicking off our "Say Yes to Serving with EdgeKids" campaign this weekend! We currently offer children's programming at 9am on Sundays. We are so thankful for the faithful servants who have made this possible. Sheila and her team have determined we need at least 45 additional servants to serve once a month to add children's programming to our 10:45 service. That is a daunting number for sure, but we would ask you to prayerfully consider "Saying Yes" to serving with EdgeKids! After the service, head out to the south lobby for more information after the service.

### **Video Announcements**

- Business Meeting
- Giving
- Dismissal

### **Benediction**

*"Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."* (Hebrews 13:20-21)