

# The Decision to Follow

When I have come to the point in my life where I know I must follow Jesus because I have heard His call and have counted the cost, I must choose to follow Him.

I received Him as Savior, now I must commit to Him as Lord and Master of my life. There is no greater gift that you can give to Jesus than giving Him the right to your self and follow Him as His disciple.

## The Problems We Face Today

One of the challenges facing the church is the lack of commitment and devotion to Jesus Christ by those who profess to be His. There is a lot of activity for Jesus but there are very few who are following Him as Lord.

- We have nice buildings and good teaching and preaching; but loyalty, devotion, and obedience to Jesus is not taught regularly and consistently.
- We have church programs for just about every age and we try to have programs to please everyone, but personal devotion to Jesus has taken a second seat.
- We have evangelism programs to get people saved and to get them into church, but disciple programs based on the teachings of Jesus are virtually non-existent.
- Many Christians have left the church because they are unable to experience the life that Jesus came to give, the life that is truly life.

These problems are common among believers and they can only be overcome when we follow Jesus the way that Jesus taught.

## Lesson Truth

Following Jesus is a choice. "If any man will come after me..." He said. Choosing to follow Jesus means the whole focus of your life must

evolve toward one goal, just as Paul the Apostle stated: "For me to live is Christ..."

## Lesson Goal

The goal of this lesson is for you to consciously and wholeheartedly choose to follow Jesus as Lord of all in your life and to give up the right to yourself completely to Him forever.

## Lesson Discussion

## I Will Follow You

When you choose to follow Jesus, you must choose by faith. You cannot see what the outcome of your obedience is going to be. The outcome of your decision to follow Jesus will unfold to you as you step out in faith and obedience to follow Him.



Matthew 8:19 ESV "And a scribe came up and said to him, 'Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.'"

The teacher of the law in Matthew 8:19 made a choice to follow Jesus. He was ready to do whatever Jesus showed Him.

Remember that choosing to follow Jesus is not a literal following Him like the early disciples did when they were physically with Him. It simply means that I choose to forsake sin and the World, and devote myself completely to Him in obedience and trust.

Many professed believers are not following Jesus. They may not even be aware they are not following Him. It is common for believers to confuse Christian activities or Christian work with following Jesus. They are not the same. We learned earlier that you cannot serve Jesus unless you are following Him.

When I try to live the Christian life apart from following Jesus Christ, it leads to a rollercoaster life that vacillates between faithfulness to God

and faithfulness to the world. I have split loyalties. If I am not following Jesus and He is not truly Lord of my life, I miss out on God's best for my life and I put aside His will for my life..

### **Forsaking All For Him**

Choosing to follow Jesus is choosing to commit my life to follow Him no matter where it leads and no matter what the cost. Only as I step out in faith and obedience to follow Him will He unfold His purpose, will, and understanding of His kingdom principles clearly to me more and more.

When I commit to follow Him I am choosing to forsake all in exchange for the life that only Jesus can give. I commit to giving up the right to myself to Him so He can help Himself to my life.

### **Love Is the Motivation**

I will only commit to follow Jesus if I truly love Him and trust Him. I cannot love Jesus and not want to follow Him. We are commanded to love the Lord with all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our mind, and all of our strength. If I have no desire to follow Him it is because my love for Him is a sentimental love, not a sacrificing love.



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Matthew 22:37-38 ESV "And he said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment.'"

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To truly know Jesus is to love Him, and to love Him is to want Him in every part of my life. If I do not love Jesus and do not have a passion to follow Him, I must ask the question, what is in the way of loving Him the way He says to love Him?.



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Revelation 2:4 ESV "But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first."

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Jesus must be the first love of my life or else I cannot follow Him. Am I willing to love Jesus above everything else in this life? If so, I am ready to follow Him.

### **Choosing to Follow Him**

Choosing to follow Jesus is not a one time choice. Every morning when I get up I must choose Him first. Every night when I go to bed I choose Him as the last effort in my day.

I begin choosing Jesus in every situation throughout the day until it becomes a habit in my life. I choose to be His disciple each and every day because I know the greatest demonstration of my love for God is to give myself to Him.

I choose for Him to be Teacher, Master, and Lord. Every day I offer myself to Him so He can help Himself to my life. I must read the Gospels regularly because in the Gospels are the Words of Jesus, His life, His teachings, His commands, and what He expects of me as His disciple.

I choose to be obedient to Him more and more; and even though I may fail often, I get right back up and choose Jesus again. Self-dependence will continually and constantly push me to rely on my own means. I must push back and learn to rely only on Jesus more and more.

As I submit to Jesus, the Holy Spirit will begin to do amazing things. The gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit will begin appearing in my life. As I submit my life daily to the Holy Spirit, I will find that I can trust God in every situation in my life and that I can obey everything Jesus commanded.

### **Experiencing Freedom**

When you make the commitment to follow Jesus Christ, you will begin choosing obedience to Him more passionately regardless of the cost and regardless of the outcome.

You will begin to choose Him over the things of this world again and again. You will choose Him over TV, over other entertainment, activities, pursuits, and over your own pleasure, and over others. Your desire and passion for these things will begin to diminish.

You will also experience a newness of freedom that you have never felt before. Doubt, fear, worry, stress, and the desire for things will melt out of your life. The peace that passes all understanding will begin to guard your heart and your mind. As you truly learn to let God be God in your life, you will be able to teach others how to let God be God in their lives.

That is how you begin in discipleship and that is how you will succeed in discipleship. Following Jesus is the only way to spiritual victory. God measures my success by the degree that I am submitted to His Son and doing His will, not by how much I am doing. Apart from following Jesus I am doing my own will.

### Giving Up “My Way”

Disciples of Jesus are simply devoted followers who willingly choose to forsake worldliness and sin by giving up the right to themselves to their Lord.

My natural disposition and tendency is to do things my own way. I do what I want to do, how I want to do it, and when I want to do it. I go where I want to go, and associate with who I want to associate with.

Often I am making the choices and decisions instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to guide and direct my life. I am following my own ideas, convictions, affinities, desires, wants, and needs. Whether these choices are right or wrong or good or bad is not the issue. The issue is that it is “my” way. I want to captain my own ship, call the shots, to use my wits, my intelligence,

my gifts, and my talents to take me through the day.

I want to feel in control and feel empowered. I want the outcome of the moment or the day to be exactly like I want and expect. I want people to act in a certain way toward me and I want circumstances to be like I want them to be. I want to engineer my own life, situations, and circumstances. I want to be God over my own life.



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Romans 12:1-2 ESV “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

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### Letting God Be God

The real issue is whether I am going to be God over my own life or I am going to let God be God over my life. God and self cannot both be God over my life. One has to go. I cannot share my life between myself and God.

Either my life is His and He is in control or my life is my own and I am in control. He cannot and will not share control of my life. When I choose to follow Jesus and commit to be His disciple I must give up control of my life to Him—complete control over every situation and over every part of my life.

I must want and allow God to completely engineer my life and direct my life so that I do what He wants me to do, how He wants me to do it, when He wants me to do it, where He wants me to do it and with whom He wants me to do it.



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Proverbs 16:9 ESV “The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.”

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I consciously choose to give Him my life because I love Him and because His standard dictates that ownership of my life belongs solely to Him if I am truly to be His.

Choosing not to follow Jesus Christ means that I do not intend to give up the right to myself to Him. I am not willing to give up my right over my wife, my husband, my children, my job, my finances, my possessions, my interests, my body, or my mind to Him.

Choosing not to follow Jesus means I want to be in the driver's seat of my life. I want to feel important and in control. Yet how little we realize we are not really in control and that all we are doing is keeping ourselves in bondage to self.

As you choose to follow Jesus you will begin to break free and eventually be completely free from the self-life that wants to dominate and control you. It is through the self-life that Satan is able to manipulate and control us.

As you make the commitment to follow Jesus, God will take care of everything else in your life—your job, your family, your health, and your daily living needs. He will multiply everything back to you a hundredfold in what you give up.

It may be hard for now to understand how all of this will work out as you follow Him. But just remember, God is faithful and He does not go back on His promises. The journey is worth it and He is worth it.

### Things to Watch Out For

It is important that you not allow your human reasoning and loyalty to Jesus to cause you to get ahead of Him. You should not immediately run out and sell or give away everything you have. You should not immediately stop all your activities, interests, or quit your job.

The Holy Spirit has a lot of preparation work to do in your life as He works out His will through you. This will take time. There will be several areas in your personality and character that the

Lord has to work on as He brings you to the end of self.

Do not get in a rush. As you submit, surrender, and abandon yourself completely to Him, start enjoying God and savor how His will is unfolding in your life. Simply focus on being His and His only. You will fall short often, but step by step that will change over time.

Do not let anything convince you that you cannot be His disciple or that you do not have what it takes. Satan will give you a lot of attention and his primary avenue of attack is to put doubt and fear in your mind. He knows he is losing his grip on your life and he will not like it one bit.

The cost is worth the price of admission and the benefits are life changing and eternal. Just tell yourself every day and in every event “Lord you are worth it, you are worthy.”



### One Step for Living This Truth

You only have to do complete the action step to master this lesson. Your focus and effort should be to make sure you consistently and persistently do the one step as directed.

The goal of this lesson is for you to simply choose to follow Jesus and let God truly be God in your life.

### ACTION STEP

*Each day for two weeks you must spend at least twenty minutes alone with God.*

*Acknowledge that you have heard His call to follow Him and you know there can be no other option for your life.*

***Pray the following prayer during your quiet time with God each day:***

***“Lord, today I abandon my life totally into your hands and I choose to follow you. Today I forsake the world and the things in this world that I might be loyal and devoted to you only. I do not know what today is going to bring, but I know you and that you are completely trustworthy, no matter what you bring my way.***

***I choose to trust you at all times and in every situation. I choose obedience to you so that my life can reflect your holiness. Teach me to make other disciples as you commanded, to show others how to trust you and walk in obedience to you. I thank you, praise you and I love you Lord. Amen.”***

***Remember, following Jesus Christ simply means you willingly give up the right to your self to Him in complete surrender and submission. Your life is no longer your own and from now on He is calling the shots and is in the driver’s seat of your life. Live like your life is His and His only.***

As you spend time with God, talk to Him as you would a friend. Pour out your heart to Him and ask Him to make His truth clear to you.

Review the Scriptures in this lesson during your quiet time. Continue to read at least one chapter a day in the Gospels and the Letters. Read whatever else you want in addition to these.

Do not think about how God is going to transition your life as you step out to follow Him. You must trust Him and know that everything He will do in your life as His disciple is the right thing.

All you can know right now is that He will take care of you and everything in your life when you choose to be His by following Him. How He does it is not your concern. Your concern is to trust Him and obey him at all cost.

The above action step is to be done each day for at least two weeks in addition to anything else you might do such as read the Bible, attend a bible study and church, etc. It is best to find a **quiet** place where you can focus on God and God alone.

The key to mastering this step is to be persistent and not let anything rob you of this time with God. God loves you and desires to have time with you each day to show you how much He wants to be a part of your life. When you find thoughts that are not God-focused trying to press in, thrust them out of your mind immediately.



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2 Corinthians 10:4-5 ESV “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,”

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If you suddenly remember something you need to do later in the day, have pen and paper handy to write it down. Then immediately let it go and get back to concentrating on God.

Learning to live this truth is the next important step in a wonderful journey. Step by step you will learn how to be His all the time and to trust Him in each and every situation.

Making the decision to follow Jesus is crucial to living the Christian life and learning how to let God be God in your life.

## Bumper Sticker Summary

The decision to follow Jesus is not a one-time choice, but a daily choice. It is a commitment to submit all of your life to Him continually. It takes a long time, so be patient. The Holy Spirit has a lot of unbelief and wrong attitudes to work out of your life. But over time your life will become like His life as you develop godly character.



## Illustrations for Living This Truth

Paul became a follower of Jesus after he attended a revival. He was sure following Jesus was the way to the abundant life that Jesus mentioned in the Bible. He attended church faithfully, was involved in many activities at his church, and had attended several Bible studies. He believed that by doing these things he was following Jesus Christ.

Yet Paul struggled with doubt and fear in his life. He often found himself worried and fearful about losing his job. He also spent a lot of time in personal pursuits such as watching movies, sports, and computer gaming. Paul sensed that, even though his life was going well, he was not experiencing the abundant life that Jesus came to give.

He wanted a closer and deeper relationship with Jesus, yet he did not know what else he needed to do to get there. He was browsing a Christian bookstore one day and purchased Oswald Chamber's *My Utmost for His Highest*. Through these devotions he came to realize that, to be a true follower of Jesus, he must give up the right to himself completely to Jesus. Paul abandoned himself to Jesus and began to experience a deep relationship with Him. Over time he found true freedom from fear, worry, and doubt. A new sense of peace and joy began to pervade his life as he devoted himself to Jesus.

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Kathleen was a mother of three and had a fulltime job. Her husband had passed away several years earlier and she had not remarried. Her children were in their early teens and they attended church regularly.

Kathleen felt that she had so many responsibilities between work and her family that she could not follow Jesus the way she wanted to. Yet still the desire to follow Jesus persisted. She did not think it was possible to hold a job, raise a family, and still follow Jesus.

As she read the Gospels she realized she would never experience the life that Jesus came to give apart from following Him. She made the choice to devote her life to Jesus and truly make him Lord, even though she did not know how it would work out. She chose to give up the right to herself and trust Him completely. She soon learned that she could be His disciple in her current situation and she began to experience the fruit of the spirit in her life.

It was not long before the Lord called her to begin to minister to the elderly and to teach them how to be followers of Jesus. She found tremendous joy in this ministry. She was soon leading others in discipleship.



## Other Scripture Verses

Romans 15:5-6 ESV "May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

John 12:26 ESV "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 10:27-28 ESV "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give

them eternal life, and they will never perish,  
and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

Luke 18:28 ESV “And Peter said, ‘See, we have  
left our homes and followed you.’”