

SURRENDER AND FOLLOW JESUS

Although sin occurs because of selfishly doing what you desire rather than what God desires, Jesus Christ has provided the opportunity to be saved (Romans 6:23)! To be saved, you must hear God's word, believe in Jesus as the Son of God, repent of your sin, confess Jesus Christ, and be baptized (immersed in water) for the forgiveness of your sins (Romans 10:1-18; Acts 2:21-41; Acts 8:35-39; 1 Peter 3:20-21). This, however, is only the beginning of what God requires. You must live in a new way that is committed and faithful to Him (Romans 6:1-11; Revelation 2:8-11). For salvation through Jesus Christ involves transformation. Therefore, as you recognize these things, you must surrender the life you once lived for sin and follow Jesus.

LUKE 9:23-26

Jesus requires more than just obeying some initial commands. Notice three things from this text. First, you must deny yourself so that your life is not about fulfilling your selfish desires or ambitions any longer. Second, your self-denial must be so complete that you will take up your cross daily, enduring the sufferings and challenges associated with living for Jesus even to the point of giving up your life. Third, rather than living for yourself, you must fully surrender your life to following wherever Jesus leads through His teachings. While you can save your physical life to please yourself, doing so will cost you your spiritual life (soul). Giving your physical life to follow Jesus, though, will result in saving your spiritual life (soul). Ultimately, Jesus wants you to recognize that nothing you could possibly gain in the world is worth more than your soul!

LUKE 9:57-62

People often say they want to follow Jesus. That is a wonderful thing! But we must recognize that doing so will not always be easy. For even Jesus's life was not full of comforts and conveniences. As some considered and desired to follow Jesus in this passage, Jesus demonstrates that following Him was not something that could be done without it being the highest priority. If following Jesus is put behind anything or anyone else, you will not be able to truly follow Him

because there will always be something that will take priority. Saying you will follow Jesus and then not putting Him first is like someone who tries to plow a field but keeps looking back (thereby not being able to plow a straight path). Such a person is not fit for the kingdom of God!

LUKE 14:15-24

Jesus's parable illustrates how many people would be invited into the kingdom of God but would not be willing to take part in it because of their focus on other things. This was true concerning many Jews who refused to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. However, it is also true for many people today who are invited to enter His kingdom through the gospel. Many people make excuses as to why they will not devote their lives to Jesus and live under Jesus's rule and authority. As in the parable, possessions, physical work, and relationships (among many other things) often get in the way of people following Jesus. Instead of being among those who make excuses about what hinders you from following Jesus, you must determine to be among those who gladly respond to Jesus's invitation and prioritize this opportunity above all else!

LUKE 14:25-33

Jesus was not interested in having large crowds who would travel with Him but not truly be devoted to Him. Similarly, Jesus is not interested in having people today who say they believe in Him and call themselves "Christians," but do not truly put their allegiance to Him above everyone and everything else. In fact, Jesus makes it clear that being His disciple requires learning from and following Him in a way that comes before your relationships (even the closest relationships), your physical life and comforts, and all your possessions! If there is anything or anyone you consider to be more important than your commitment to learning from and following Jesus, you cannot be His disciple. As Jesus tells you about what is involved in following Him, He urges you to count the cost to make sure you are willing to surrender everything and follow Him before becoming His disciple. While you may have earthly relationships, comforts, possessions, etc., you cannot love anything or anyone more than Him!

LUKE 18:18-23

Here was a man who wanted eternal life and was even doing many good things in keeping with the commandments of the Old Law he lived under.

However, Jesus challenged him to recognize that having eternal life involved more than just doing some good things and keeping some commandments. It involves surrendering your self-centered life for one that is committed to following Jesus! For this man, that meant selling everything he had and giving it to the poor so he could then follow Jesus as Jesus traveled. Although he had been going through the motions of keeping God's commands, this man was unwilling to surrender his wealth and fully follow Jesus. He was unwilling to trust Jesus enough to surrender what stood between him and full devotion to Christ. So you must also evaluate your life. Is there anything or anyone you are unwilling to surrender to follow where Jesus leads?

LUKE 18:24-30

While there is great cost involved in following Jesus (a full, unconditional surrender) and many will be unwilling to pay that price, this passage encourages you to recognize the blessings involved in doing so. For it is a price that is worth paying to experience the blessings in God's kingdom (Matthew 5:3-12)! For example, Peter and the other disciples had made great sacrifices to follow Jesus (Luke 5:1-11), and they were greatly blessed for doing so. There are two types of blessings in following Jesus. First, there are spiritual blessings you will get to experience during your earthly life (Ephesians 1:3-14). Although Jesus's promises are not to be understood as earthly prosperity, they do point to the way those who follow Jesus will gain access into a much larger spiritual family (Luke 8:19-21) and will be provided for (Matthew 6:25-34). Second, there are the eternal blessings you will get to experience after your earthly life ends (1 Peter 1:3-9). This is ultimately the anticipation of eternal life in Heaven, when you receive the salvation of your soul and get to forever be with the Lord!

CONCLUSION

The gospel of Jesus Christ invites you to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and surrender your life so that you will follow Him. This begins when you hear the gospel, believe in Jesus, repent of your sins, confess Christ, and are baptized. However, it also requires a life that is committed to Jesus for as long as you live. Therefore, as you consider how to respond to the invitation of the gospel, you must count the cost of discipleship and determine whether you will surrender your physical life and follow wherever Jesus leads!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

What kind of self-sacrifice is involved in following Jesus?

What will happen if you save your earthly life versus if you lose it?

Why must following Jesus be your highest priority?

What excuses are commonly made for not following Jesus?

Why can some people not be Jesus's disciple?

What is involved in counting the cost of discipleship?

Why will some want eternal life but not experience it?

What blessings will come to those who surrender and follow Jesus?

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