

I Will Follow You; Matthew 8:18-22

I. Disciples

- A. Do we really understand what it means to “follow Jesus?”
- B. Most often we don’t
 - 1. We want to be a Christian but don’t understand Christianity (as long as I believe then I can do what I want)
 - 2. We want to keep our old lives and Jesus too
- C. Jesus gives us a better understanding on what kind of commitment we must have to follow Him

II. Follow

- A. Matthew 8:18–20 (ESV); ¹⁸ Now when Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. ¹⁹ And a scribe came up and said to him, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.” ²⁰ 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.”
- B. The scribes were part of the ruling elite — a “teacher of the law”
- C. The scribe addresses Him as teacher — a title given to Jesus in Matthew only by those who don’t fully believe in Him ¹
 - 1. Matthew 12:38 (ESV); Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, “Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.”
 - 2. Matthew 19:16 (ESV); And behold, a man came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?”
 - 3. When the Pharisees try to trick Jesus with a question about taxes (Matthew 22:15-22)
 - 4. When the Sadducees try to trick Jesus with a question about marriage (Matthew 22:23-33)
- D. In this text the scribe confesses unwavering allegiance to Jesus — “I will follow you wherever you go”
 - 1. Jesus’ answer is not, “Great, come on, let’s go!”
 - 2. Jesus proceeds to enlighten the scribe — a life of Christianity is one of austerity
 - 3. Did Jesus have a home?
 - 4. I’m sure he did — Jesus had family in Galilee — a home he could use in Capernaum
 - 5. However, Jesus traveled to fulfill his ministry
 - 6. Luke 14:33 (ESV); So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.
 - 7. Renounce — to give up, refuse, or resign usually by formal declaration ²
 - 8. To formally declare one’s abandonment
- E. We must abandon our lives — declare them as dead — and live for Him!
 - 1. Luke 9:23 (ESV); And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.
 - 2. Just what did Jesus mean by “take up his cross daily?”
 - a) The first century occupied nations were very familiar with crosses and crucifixion
 - b) The Romans used crucifixion to kill everyone who opposed their rule
 - (1) In 73 BC, Spartacus, a Roman slave escaped from gladiator training and recruited thousands of slaves — he defied the Roman army for 2 years
 - (2) “Roman General Crassus ended the revolt, which was the setting for one of the most famous cases of mass crucifixion in Roman history. Spartacus was

¹ Craig Blomberg, Matthew, vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 146.

² Inc Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

killed, and his men were defeated. The survivors, more than 6,000 slaves, were crucified along the Via Appia, the road between Rome and Capua.”³

- c) Our commitment must be “unto death,” yes, even death on a cross!
 - 3. Just as Symon of Cyrene took up Jesus’ cross and followed Him, we must too
 - F. When we claim Jesus and let His blood wash us clean we are committing ourselves to a life that no longer belongs to us, but to Jesus
 - G. “At a deeper level Jesus’ disciples must recognize that no location on earth affords a true home. Our citizenship is in heaven, and life on earth is lived as “strangers [sojourners, exiles] in the world.”⁴
- III. Leave the Dead
- A. Matthew 8:21–22 (ESV);²¹ Another of the disciples said to him, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”²² And Jesus said to him, “Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead.”
 - B. In Judaism, taking care of parents was key to an honorable life
 - 1. Ephesians 6:2–3 (ESV);² “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise),³ “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”
 - 2. Indeed, it goes back to the commandments listed in Exodus 20, which is where this quote in Ephesians comes from — almost a direct quote
 - 3. It would seem then that this is a reasonable request
 - 4. Elisha even requests to kiss his father before he follows Elijah in 1 Kings 19:20
 - C. However, this was an age where the religious elite created all kinds of rules designed to circumvent God’s law
 - 1. Mark 7:10–13 (ESV);¹⁰ For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’¹¹ But you say, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, “Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban” ’ (that is, given to God)—¹² then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother,¹³ thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.”
 - 2. A Sabbath day’s walk (Acts 1:12) — how far one could walk on the Sabbath without breaking the Mosaic Law — This was created by the Rabbis and written into the Mishnah (Rabbinical commentary on the Law)
 - 3. In the 1st century they had created a way around the 2000 cubit limit
 - D. It is likely that this man’s request meant something like this — “I will follow you when my parents pass away and I have buried them and the required days of mourning have passed”
 - 1. A Jewish inheritance is at stake
 - 2. Maybe the man fears his family will reject him
 - E. Jesus is the only priority in Christianity!
- IV. I Will Follow You
- A. A statement that is fraught with meaning and intended consequences
 - B. “Little has done more to harm the witness of the Christian church than the practice of filling its ranks with every volunteer who is willing to make a little profession, talk fluently of experience, but display little of perseverance.”⁵

³ Violatti, Cristian. “10 Interesting Facts About Crucifixion.” *Listverse*, 20 Nov. 2016, listverse.com/2016/11/20/10-interesting-facts-about-crucifixion/.

⁴ Craig Blomberg, Matthew, vol. 22, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 146.

⁵ *Ibid*, 148.