

## **WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT FOLLOWING HIM (Matthew 16:24)**

### **I. There is a decision to be made.**

- A. "If any man will come after me..."
- B. The little two-letter word that starts this sentence of Jesus demands a decision to be made.
  - 1. We must decide if we want to follow Jesus or not.
  - 2. No doubt it is the biggest decision a person will ever make.
  - 3. It has the power to effect your eternal destiny.
- C. Life is full of decisions.
  - 1. They range from small things to very large things.
  - 2. What will I eat for breakfast to whom will I marry?
  - 3. Will I wear that shirt with those pants to will I move to another state to work?
- D. Long ago, Joshua challenged the Israelites to make a choice, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve..." (Joshua 24:15).
- E. Notice that this beginning of a sentence destroys Calvinism.
  - 1. Calvinism teaches that we are totally depraved.
  - 2. That is the "T" in TULIP.
  - 3. It teaches that we are born so depraved we can never choose what is right.
  - 4. Jesus said we could.
  - 5. Not only that, Calvinism also teaches unconditional election, which is the false idea that only certain people have been saved and the rest are lost and neither group can do anything about it.
  - 6. Jesus said any man can choose to follow Him.
- F. Someone once said, "It does not take much strength to do things, but it requires a great deal of strength to decide what to do."
- G. It takes a strong person to truly decide to follow Jesus.

### **II. There is denial to be mastered.**

- A. "Let him deny himself..."
- B. Self-denial is the next step in being a follower of Jesus.
- C. We have to make the right decision, but it doesn't stop there.
- D. Many people live in denial, but they often refuse self-denial.
  - 1. "Self-denial is a practice which lies very near to the heart of true religion. Without its exercise there can be no conversion to Christ. Qualities most basic to a Christian frame of heart - notably humility and meekness - would dissolve without its active expression (William Chantry)."
  - 2. If we don't deny self, we will give into temptation every time.
- E. Jesus must be first and He demands first place.
  - 1. We are choosing to follow Him, meaning He is our leader.
  - 2. He is the Head of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23).
  - 3. The church is His bride (Ephesians 5:22-33).
- F. Paul modeled this self-denial for us.

1. Galatians 2:20.
  2. 1 Corinthians 9:27.
- G. It's difficult isn't it?
1. We live in a pampered world.
  2. Everything we want is right at our fingertips.
  3. We carry phones in our pockets that can connect us with anything we want in a matter of seconds.
- H. We don't do self-denial in this world very much.
- I. We must have the attitude of Jesus, when He said, "I must work the works of Him that sent me..."
1. Notice the word must.
  2. Jesus absolutely had to do God's will, that was His mindset.
- J. When we absolutely have to follow Jesus, we will be able to deny self.
- III. There is dedication to be met.**
- A. "Take up his cross..."
- B. After the right decision has been made and one denies himself what the world is offering in order to be faithful, he must be dedicated to the Christian life.
1. Self-denial will only continue as long as one is dedicated.
  2. How many diets have we started only to quit?
  3. We deny ourselves those snacks that we like or milkshakes that taste so good.
  4. We do this for a few weeks and end up gorging on junk.
  5. Only those who are truly dedicated continue on with the diet plan.
  6. The reason is, it has to become a way of life.
  7. Diets don't work, budgets don't work, the Christian life doesn't work, unless it becomes a way of life and we are totally dedicated to it.
- C. When we take up that cross, we are saying that we are dedicating our lives to live for God.
- D. James Burton Coffman, in his comments on this verse, said, "It is the acceptance, for the sake of the will of God, of some burden or burdens, otherwise avoidable, but which are undertaken out of a pure desire to fulfill the Master's purpose."
1. You and I are saying we are willing to take on whatever comes our way in order to be pleasing to God.
  2. We won't do that, unless we are dedicated.
- E. This is not a one-foot in, one-foot out exercise or something we can do half-heartedly.
1. I believe we lose a lot of our young people right here.
  2. They see mom and dad living for God in a half-hearted manner and when they get hit in the face with what the world is offering, they don't say no because dedication to Christ in all things hasn't been modeled for them.
  3. Often times, parents striving to allow their children to be popular or to fit in, end up killing their children.
- F. We are to seek the kingdom first - it takes preeminence over all.

**IV. There is direction to the Master.**

- A. "Follow me."
- B. Jesus is now reigning in heaven and that is where we want to be (Colossians 3:1).
- C. The way there is difficult (Matthew 7:13-14).
  - 1. We have to make a tough decision.
  - 2. We have to deny self.
  - 3. We have to be dedicated.
- D. However, it is well worth it.
  - 1. Matthew 25:23.
  - 2. 1 Peter 1:1-3.
- E. The path is narrow and there is only one (John 14:6).
  - 1. This tells us that if we want to get to heaven, we must be followers of Jesus.
  - 2. Not only that, we must do it His way and not ours, using His truth and not man's lies.
- F. Many of us have run in races for fun in the past.
  - 1. What happens when we start to look at others in the race?
  - 2. Or, when we are driving and looking at something out the side windows, don't we tend to drift that way?
- G. When we are running the Christian race down the strait and narrow road and begin to look around, we begin to drift from the direction we are heading.