

## GOD IS LEADING: ARE YOU FOLLOWING?

Mark Beard 1-07

### Text: Mark 8:34-38 NIV

MK 8:34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. <sup>36</sup> What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? <sup>37</sup> Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? <sup>38</sup> If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

**A. W. Tozer wrote**, "In every Christian's heart there is a cross and a throne, and the Christian is on the throne till he puts himself on the cross; if he refuses the cross, he remains on the throne. Perhaps this is at the bottom of the backsliding and worldliness among gospel believers today. We want to be saved, but we insist that Christ do all the dying. No cross for us, no dethronement, no dying. We remain king within the little kingdom of Mansoul and wear our tinsel crown with all the pride of a Caesar; but we doom ourselves to shadows and weakness and spiritual sterility."

-A. W. Tozer (1897-1963)

When we speak of following God we must ask ourselves, do we want to follow Christ with our life or only in momentary instances where we have an immediate goal in mind?

So many only want to know Christ only as a guide to success, wealth, and personal fulfillment. However, Christ does not merely lead us on a journey of self-realization, but rather He calls us to follow Him beyond ourselves to greater glory than self-glory—to greater purpose than self-aggrandizement—to greater fulfillment than that of earthly purpose.

Christ IS indeed leading, but are we really following? In this passage of scripture I believe that we can see that there are several ways that we can know if we are truly following.

## **I. We are following Christ if we have chosen to be His.**

"If anyone would come after me..."

### **A. A relationship with Christ is a chosen experience.**

Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. Costly grace ... is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble, it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him.

-- Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *The Cost of Discipleship*. Christianity Today, Vol. 38, no. 2.

### **B. A relationship with Christ is a personal investment of one's life in someone other than oneself.**

## **II. We are following if we have embraced a new life (*deny yourself*).**

**Verse 35**, "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it."

### **A. Those who are following have new priorities, other than self.**

"He means to renounce self—to cease to make self the object of one's life and actions. This involves a fundamental reorientation of the principle of life. God, not self, must be at the center of life."  
EBC

### **B. Those who are following see that there is more at stake than the here and now.**

### **III. We are following if we have shouldered the responsibility (*take up their cross*).**

Verse 36-37, "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"

#### **A. Following Christ and craving the substance, approval, and favor of the world are incompatible pursuits.**

"Cross bearing does not refer to some irritation in life. Rather, it involves the way of the cross." EBC

#### **B. Following Christ, inevitably means coming into conflict with the world's values, priorities, ethics and goals.**

### **IV. We are following if we have accepted the challenge (*follow Me*).**

Verse 38, "If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

#### **A. Following Christ means that we are His when it benefits us and when it doesn't.**

#### **B. Following Christ means that we are His when there it isn't glorious.**

Fred Craddock, in an address to ministers, caught the practical implications of consecration. "To give my life for Christ appears glorious," he said. "To pour myself out for others ... to pay the ultimate price of martyrdom—I'll do it. I'm ready, Lord, to go out in a blaze of glory.

"We think giving our all to the Lord is like taking a \$1,000 bill and laying it on the table--'Here's my life, Lord. I'm giving it all.'

"But the reality for most of us is that he sends us to the bank and has us cash in the \$1,000 for quarters. We go through life putting out 25 cents here and 50 cents there. Listen to the neighbor kid's troubles instead of saying, 'Get lost.' Go to a committee meeting. Give up a cup of water to a shaky old man in a nursing home.

"Usually giving our life to Christ isn't glorious. It's done in all those little acts of love, 25 cents at a time. It would be easy to go out in a flash of glory; it's harder to live the Christian life little by little over the long haul."

--Darryl Bell, Maple Grove, Minnesota. Leadership, Vol. 5, no. 4.

## CONCLUSION

**According to Chuck Swindoll**, When Dawson Trotman passed away he probably left a legacy of discipleship on this earth that will never be matched except perhaps in the life of Jesus Christ Himself. **Swindoll writes**, I've become a real student of Dawson Trotman and believe wholeheartedly in the methods of discipleship that he taught and emulated throughout his days. He died in Schroon Lake, New York. He died of all things in the midst of an area that he was expert in--he drowned. He was an expert swimmer. The last few moments he had in the water he lifted one girl out of the water. He went down and got the other girl and lifted her out of the water and then submerged and was not found again until the dragnet found him a few hours later. A man named Larsen was on that boat when Trotman died, and he said, "The entire United States Navy couldn't have saved Trotman that day--it was God's time." Time ran an article on Trotman's life the next week, and they put a caption beneath his name, and it read, "Always Holding Somebody Up." In one sentence, that was Trotman's life—investment in people, in honesty and humility, holding them up. Are you doing that? Who are you holding up?

--James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988), p. 444.

**Following God is about more than just making the right decisions when presented with opportunities.** He calls us to follow Him beyond ourselves to greater glory than self-glory—to a greater purpose, to greater fulfillment than that of earthly purpose. **He calls us to a life of self-sacrifice.**