

Subject: *Marks of a Normal Christian Life – Part 2*

Scripture: *Matthew 16:24-26*

We talk about getting back to “normal.” What does the normal Christian look like?

The first mark of a normal Christian life is...*A Serious Commitment to Scripture*

Last week we looked at Psalm 119 and saw the testimony of a man who is deeply committed to God’s Word. A normal Christian is separated by Scripture, regulated by Scripture, motivated by Scripture, captivated by Scripture, and saturated by Scripture.

The second mark of a normal Christian life is...*A Serious Commitment to Christ*

Making disciples was at the heart of Christ’s ministry. He left us the Great Commission.

***Matthew 28:18-20**¹⁸ And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ¹⁹ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

The phrase “teach all nations” means “make disciples of all nations.” The word “disciple” is found in the New Testament more than 250 times. The challenge we face today is that modern Christianity doesn’t put the same emphasis on discipleship. Some people who call themselves Christians don’t even know what a disciple is.

Jesus made no distinction between “being saved” and being His disciple. Every Christian is a disciple. A disciple is someone who believes in Christ, and whose faith motivates him to do what Christ says. To be saved is to believe in Christ and to be totally committed to Him as a disciple. Through the Book of Acts the word “disciple” is used as a synonym for “believer.”

***Acts 11:26** ...the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.*

A disciple is a follower, a learner. A disciple is someone who learns Christ’s words and example, and strives to live by them every day. That is the normal Christian life.

1. A disciple is committed to Christ (Mt. 16:24-26)

The call to be a disciple is a call to self-denial, self-sacrifice, and obedience. There is no fine print in the contract. He laid out the clear terms of following Him. He demanded total commitment from His followers, even to the point of physical death if necessary. Since crucifixion was a common sight in those days, His reference to the cross would have been clearly understood as a call to suffer and die for His sake. The call to deny self, take up your cross, and follow Him is not a one-time decision, but a lifelong commitment to follow Him without reservation.

Luke 9:57-62 – In this passage we see the demands of discipleship.

In this text Jesus spoke with three would-be disciples, but as it turned out none of the three was ready to follow Christ. He told them what to expect. The first man was impulsive and didn't understand the cost. The second man was insincere and didn't want to follow Jesus at the moment. The third was indecisive and wanted to say goodbye to his family. This shows that many people are unwilling to follow Jesus on His terms.

Being a disciple takes a definite commitment, a total commitment, and a personal commitment. No one becomes a follower of Christ by accident. It takes a real, definite commitment. Like the song says, "I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back. Though none go with me, still I will follow."

We recently heard a song by Mark and David Godsey based on Galatians 2:20, "Crucified with Christ." That is the testimony of a normal Christian. Is that your testimony?

Galatians 2:20 *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

2. A disciple counts the cost to follow Christ (Lk. 14:25-33)

A disciple loves Christ more than anyone or anything else. The Lord says that we must have a higher degree of love and loyalty to Him than anyone else. Why does He say it in such strong terms? He wants us to know what is required. He wants to weed out the uncommitted and draw real followers to Himself. He is not interested in having a large number of half-hearted, casual followers. J. C. Ryle wrote: "Beware of half-hearted religion. Beware of following Christ from any secondary motive, to please relatives and friends, to keep in with the custom of the place or family in which you reside, to appear respectable and have the reputation of being religious. Follow Christ for His own sake, if you follow Him at all. Be thorough, be real, be honest, be sound, and be wholehearted."

To make his point clear, Jesus gave two examples: building a tower (vs. 28-30) and going to battle (vs. 31-32). Following Christ will cost you a lot, but it's worth a lot. Missionary Jim Elliot said, "He is no fool to give up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

Maybe we need to change some of our old songs to reflect what we really believe:

Get rid of "I Surrender All" and start singing, "I Surrender Some."
Throw out "O, How I Love Jesus" and change it to "O, How I Like Him."
Instead of "Take My Life and Let It Be" sing "Take My Life and Let Me Be."
Quit singing "Just As I Am" and start singing "Just As I Pretend to Be."
Change "Wherever He Leads I'll Go" to "Wherever He Leads Me I'll Consider."

3. A disciple continues to follow and obey Christ (Jn. 8:28-32)

A disciple takes up his cross and follows Christ daily.

***Luke 9:23** And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*

4. A disciple follows Christ in spite of failure (Jn. 13:36-38)

The story of Peter's denial is found in all four Gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John made no attempt to hide it. This is strong evidence that the Bible is inspired by God.

John 18:12-18

John 18:25-27

Peter followed Jesus...from a distance, and he warmed himself by the fire. What a picture of us at times. We follow Christ but not too close, and we are more concerned about our comfort than our commitment.

John 21:15-22