

“Follow Me”

I was quite taken by surprise as I began seeking and studying all the current methods being used in “saving souls” for Jesus. First and foremost, I realized that for a vast majority of pastoral leaders, they considered themselves tasked with “winning” souls for Christ, as if it were some type of “gamble,” and it became quite evident that once again, in our “flesh,” we had twisted something meant to further the kingdom of God, and created a man-made doctrine of “*winning* souls for Jesus.” So first and foremost it seemed quite clear that a clarification had to be made for all of those seeking ways to save souls, that NO ONE and NO METHOD, in itself, can “win” a soul for Christ.

In the Christian faith, people are taught that their obligation to God is to witness for Christ and become influential teachers of God’s Word in order to “win” souls into the kingdom of God. The faulty thinking here is that bringing people to salvation has something to do with “winning some and losing some.” It’s not surprising that we apply our principles and ideologies of a fallen world and turn the gift of salvation into something played at a Craps table, implying we could step up to a “hot” or “cold” table. Or maybe if we’re a part of a dynamic church, we could say that its efforts in soul winning, is having a “good run.” Worse yet, it seemed as though soul saving was more like stepping up to the roulette table, betting on the worst odds in the house. Let’s get one thing straight, God owns the “house” and He doesn’t play with “odds.” As I dug deeper into the current methods being used, it went from unbelievable, to laughable, to quite sad, and disappointing.

I found that many pastoral leaders were tasking their *congregation* with the burden of “winning souls,” giving them a long list of actions to take, to work towards some kind of self “perfection.” In these “mainstream” Christian churches that I was studying, the leaders were actually trying to *make* Christians “soul winners,” and insinuated that they were to work to become fully like Christ in order to “win a soul.” It almost seemed humorous to me since I don’t recall the twelve Disciples, EVER being without, or claiming to be without sin. And none of them claimed anything other than it was Christ working in them and through them to accomplish His purposes. The burden of becoming like Christ has either intentionally or non-intentionally, debilitated God’s people in such a way, that it is no surprise that more souls are not being saved! Everyone is left feeling incompetent, without truly understanding that God’s instructions for “saving souls,” is to just LEAD people to Him. He takes care of the rest, **only God can save a soul.**

As I studied further, it was evident that the Body of Christ was broken. First, there is always the great misconception that “Christians” should not be sinners, once converted. We entertain a false belief that Christians should possess some supernatural power to resist temptation completely and NEVER give in to sin. As onlookers view their behaviors and ultimately their sin, “Christians” get a bad rap. All of a sudden they are called “hypocrites, liars, etc.” Everyone seems to forget that the only One that will ever

be upon this earth without sin was Jesus. As people migrate to the Body of Christ, learning the doctrines of Christianity, and the responsibility of “saving souls,” they are then relentlessly petitioned for money, to further the Kingdom of God. Once again, insinuating that maybe since you can’t meet the criteria for being a “soul winner” then at least you can contribute financially to those who can do the job for you. And people walk away feeling satisfied by this, believing at that point, they have completed what God has called them to do. Basically, we can strike a deal with God, entertaining a false belief that somehow more money is going to win souls into God’s Kingdom. I have heard things like “God needs the money to reach people with the Gospel...it will allow us to build a larger facility, send out more tracts, offer more programs within the church...etc.” Although this is true, it does not excuse us from the calling God has given to each one of us, and in ways, “the church” has fostered this false belief. And these methods do not even COMPARE to the solution God has already given to us. It is so disheartening, as I wonder how it is that “money,” can actually “save souls?” As if God isn’t sufficient enough to do so, He actually needs the money to do it. It leaves me thinking, if there isn’t enough money, souls will be lost, as if salvation might depend on the economy. And if the world ended today and the economy was in a state of desperation, that we would have to go before God at judgment and say something like, “Well, we just didn’t have the sufficient funds to save the others.” Quite frankly, I don’t think that’s going to go over well. And I don’t recall Jesus ever collecting funds in order to build the next state of the art facility to draw people to Him. Stay with me here, because I’m going somewhere, no need to get feathers ruffled, yet!

I also ran across pastoral teachings that actually instructed church members how to dress and maintain the proper hygiene that would assist in their “soul winning.” Believe it or not, instructing people to properly comb their hair and brush their teeth. Now while I obviously believe these things are important, it took me back, that they were actually included in on the instructions of how to win souls for Christ. Once again the unbelievable teaching, that somehow your appearance, would make a difference in your “soul winning” success. Some people were told to dress *really* “well” to represent that Christians are “rewarded” financially by God. On the opposite end of the spectrum, there were teachings NOT to dress “too well” because it would create a distraction, between you and the person you were witnessing to, especially if they were less fortunate than you. It can almost lead you to believe that if at any given moment you are led by the Holy Spirit to witness to someone, say at the grocery store, and you’re wearing jeans and a sweatshirt, then keep your mouth shut! You’re not properly representing Christ. Or maybe the person who lives on welfare and can’t afford the luxuries of life has no place in, and no chance of success in, “soul-saving.” As I said, it became quite laughable if not hysterical! I don’t recall Jesus telling His Disciples to put on their “Sunday best” before they went out to preach the Gospel.

As you can see, it became quite humorous, and yet, at the same time, my heart became burdened as I realized that we were failing MISERABLY as the body of Christ. In fact, at times I believe we are doing more harm, than good, as radical Christians walk around with Bibles in their hands ready to beat the next sinner in the head with It. Jesus never FORCED himself on anyone, and He never condemned anyone either. In fact, if you read

throughout the Gospels, He simply went about His daily life “doing good” and people migrated to Him and *willingly* “followed” Him. In understanding the current “soul-winning” methods, I also realized that we were in fact fulfilling our goals, because we *are* in fact, trying to “win souls.” We *are* “loosing some and winning some.” And even those souls that are “won,” end up somehow “losing” in life. The odds *are* against us because we’re trying, in our own abilities as we set out with the belief that there is something WE can do in and of ourselves to save someone! We’re playing by our rules, not God’s.

So, as I try to do with EVERYTHING, I decided to take this task to God himself. And so, I sat down with Him. And I must say, as I spoke with Him about all the things I’ve written here, He wasn’t laughing. And once again, I found myself humbled before Him, asking for His help and guidance, determined to fulfill His purposes, and listening to His voice. (I’ve learned to do a lot less talking, and a lot more listening...it actually brings better results!) In that moment, God shared my disappointment and definitely saw my confusion. Ironically, even through my own ministry, ScriptureNow.com (now that’s a story in itself!), I had never asked myself the question of how I was saving souls, and yet I am, only through being obedient to God’s daily instructions for the ministry and my life. I hadn’t really taken record or been cognoscente of what I was doing, until now. I have found that God’s voice is never unclear about what He says. He means what He says and says what He means, and He is very direct in His commands, which are usually *very* simple. So God in all His awesomeness brought me to one Scripture,

*“And He said to them, Come after Me [as disciples--letting Me be your Guide], **follow Me**, and I will make you **fishers of men!**” Matthew 4:19 (AMP)*

And the words I heard Him speak to me through this passage were, “**Follow Me.**” Now Webster’s Dictionary tells us that “to follow” means, 1: to go, proceed, or come after <followed the guide> 2 a: to engage in as a calling or way of life : 3 a: to be or act in accordance with <follow directions> b: to accept as authority : 4 a: to pursue in an effort to overtake b: to seek to attain <follow knowledge>.

To go after, a way of life, to accept authority, and to pursue, these were the characteristics that Jesus, the Son of God, expected of His Disciples. And the voice of God was loud and clear to me that this is what He expects of us today. This is how *we* are to “save souls”- be fishers of men! As I conversed with God and discussed with Him the concepts behind this contest of how to save more souls through Jesus, I expressed to Him that this was just “too simple.” Although at the same time, not simple at all. Once again, I was faced with a solution that included the difficult goal of “becoming like Christ,” a goal that seemed unattainable for most. *So, in His Fatherly way, He broke it down for me and made it simple. The 2000% solution was MORE than a 2000% solution and the solution came down to one command, “Follow Me.” And its success is PROMISED by God himself in Matthew 13:23. How will it save more souls 20 times more effectively? Because God’s Word, His Truth, His Promises, do not return void.* God cannot lie.

God is not a man, so he does not lie. Numbers 23:19 (NLT)

*“If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for **he cannot deny who he is.**” 2 Timothy 2:13 (NLT)*

It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it. Isaiah 55:11 (NLT)

It is clear, when we follow His Word, it will produce fruit, and a 2000% percent return, is miniscule compared to the Promise that God has made to us when following His methods. Jesus told us in Matthew 13:23,

*“The good soil represents the hearts of those who truly accept God’s message a produce a huge harvest -**thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted.**”*

God spoke to me and said that we, as the body of Christ, are failing miserably in saving souls, because we are coming to a place of accepting Christ and eternal life, but we are not in turn, fulfilling our commitment to Him, we are not “following Him.” Jesus did not pay the price for our sins and give us eternal life, end of story. *He came back.* He gave the Great Commission to “go forth and teach all nations.” He was telling us, accepting Him and having eternal life, was not enough. It did not go without a final calling. So how were we to go forth and teach? Were we to all become pastors, or stand on the street corner professing the Word of God with a megaphone? God at this point led me to Matthew 16:24,

*“Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone desires to be My disciple, let him deny himself [disregard, lose sight of, and forget himself and his own interests] and take up his cross and **follow** cleave steadfastly to **Me**, conform wholly to **My example in living** and, if need be, in dying, also].” (AMP)*

Jesus took it one step further and said in Matthew 10:38,

*“**And he who does not take up his cross and follow Me**, cleave steadfastly to Me, conforming wholly to **My example in living** and, if need be, in dying also] **is not worthy of Me.**”*

Now I have heard many Christians refer to this passage and interpret it as carrying a “burden” and most Christians walk around believing they are certainly carrying their share of “burdens.” Yet, what Jesus was truly referring to here is “your calling.” The Cross was God’s will for the life of His Son. The Cross represented the Sacrifice which was His “calling.” And we too have been given a calling in life, a purpose, and we’re called to walk in God’s will for us. That call is to “Follow Him,” and following Him entails being “fishers of men.”

It’s no mistake that Jesus chose Disciples who were some of the most skilled fisherman. They knew a thing or two about “catching things.” They knew that it was not merely

“luck.” It took skill. Now if you’ve ever been fishing, first and foremost you’re going to use a lure. A lure is something that is an enticement, something that is attractive and appealing, and specifically for fishing, it is a decoy for attracting fish and catching them. So it was also no mistake that Jesus said, “I will make you fishers of men.” Now when you go fishing, you don’t take a net and in one fatal swoop under the water, catch fish. You also don’t take your fishing pole and beat them on top of the head to catch them either! If you really want to catch fish, you must choose the correct lure for that particular body of water, whether it be salt water or fresh water.

*“Some are weak. I have become weak so I might **lead them to Christ**. I have become like every person so in every way I **might lead some to Christ**.” 1 Corinthians 9:22 (NLV)*

When you’re fishing, you’ll soon find out what it is the fish are, or are not, biting on. In fresh water fishing, you’re going to choose a lure that seems to be working at that time of year, and you have to be ready to switch lures, if the fish aren’t biting. The most important thing about fishing is being patient. On many outings, I’ve fished all day with nothing to show for it. It can be disappointing, but there is something within you that calls you out early the next morning, more determined than ever to catch something. Jesus knew the skill of fishing and its traits that bore resemblance to the way in which to save souls. It was going to entail living in a way that was “appealing.” People followed Jesus not because He “dragged” them around with Him. They followed Him and migrated to Him because there was something about Him that they wanted. They saw God. And that is what people must see, when they look at us. Once again, we come back to the burden of responsibility and the excuse of “it’s just too difficult.” Yet, Jesus told us in John 12:32,

“But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” (NIV)

The only way to save souls is to lift up Christ. To lift up Christ in our lives, we must commit our ways to Him and “Follow Him.” Now, there are many people who believe they are “lifting up Christ.” They talk about Him all the time, they use His name in every prayer, they Praise Him, slap on the Jesus bumper sticker, etc.” But these ways of lifting up Christ, doesn’t necessarily cut it. When you go to Matthew 7:21, Jesus said,

*“Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. **Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter.** On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’”*

Christ made it clear, following Him, meant lifting Him up, and it was dependent on our actions, in fulfilling the will of God in our individual lives. And we learn that it is God who will do a work in us and through us. There is nothing *we* can do to save souls, we merely lead people to Him. God’s desire is to work His way in us, so that we might be used to serve His purposes. It takes a COMPLETELY surrendered life, the life that Jesus lived.

*Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in Me? What I am telling you **I do not say on My own authority and of My own accord; but the Father Who lives continually in Me does the (His) works (His own miracles, deeds of power).*** John 14:10 (AMP)

*Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, **but my Father who lives in me does his work through me.*** John 14:10 (NLT)

*For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the **power** to do what pleases him.* Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

Even Jesus did nothing in His own power. He made it clear that it was the Father that worked in Him and through Him by the authority that only God could possess. God makes us willing by washing, immersing, surrounding, and consuming us in His boundless love and grace. He draws the “unwilling” to Him through the love, grace, and mercy that are in Christ. So it is in surrendering our lives to the will of our Heavenly Father, and in lifting Christ up, by walking in His ways, that He will draw all men unto Him. We are the vessels in which God uses to serve His purposes, just as Christ was the vessel in which to serve the purpose of the sacrifice for our sins, ultimately offering us eternal life.

The other important part of John 14:10 is that Jesus talks about the “works.” 1 Peter 2:11-12 tells us,

*“Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, **by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.**”* (NKJV)

Ephesians 2:10 tells us,

*For we are God's [own] handiwork (His workmanship), recreated in Christ Jesus, **[born anew] that we may do those good works** which God predestined (planned beforehand) for us [taking paths which He prepared ahead of time], that we should walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us to live].* (AMP)

Good works. At this point in my talk with God, He led me to another Scripture regarding “following” Christ. He took me to Acts 10:38,

*“And you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then **Jesus went around doing good** and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.”*

Jesus WENT AROUND doing good. He didn't wait inside the tabernacle or His home, for people to arrive for His next teaching and miracle healing session. And He didn't

limit His “works” for particular days. In fact He raised eyebrows when He healed on the Sabbath. (Matthew 12:9-14) And He told us in this same time, *“I want you to be merciful; I don’t want your sacrifices.”* (Matthew 12:7) Being “fishers of men,” “saving souls,” means “walking in the light as He is in the Light.” (1 John 1:7)

So with the same amount of time we are given in any day and with the “claimed” Christians we have today, God has a calling for each one of us, and as He has taught me, He is not interested in excuses, “stalled thinking.” You know the typical excuses like, “I’m just a mother, housewife, businessman, father, I don’t have enough time, I’m not educated through theological seminary, I don’t have enough money, I’m too introverted, I don’t have a personality for standing in front of people, and the list goes on and on.” Do you know what Jesus had to say about “stalled thinking?” In Matthew 8:21-22 :

“Another of his disciples said, ‘Lord, let me return home and bury my father.’ But Jesus told him, ‘Follow me now!’ ‘Let those who are spiritually dead care for their own dead.’” (NLT)

Even Moses protested to his own calling by God in Exodus 3:11 (NLT), *“Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?”* Just think, he would have deprived us all of the parting of the Red Sea! This “stalled thinking” must be overcome by one thing, Christ in us. Realizing through our Truth, that “we are alive in Christ (Ephesians 2:5), we have the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5), greater is the One living in us than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4), we have the gift of righteousness (Romans 5:17), we have received the spirit of wisdom and revelation (Ephesians 1:17-18), we can do all things through Christ (Philippians 4:13), we shall do even greater works than Christ (John 14:12), we are a doer of the Word and we are blessed by our actions (James 1:22,25), we are more than conquerors through Christ (Romans 8:37), we are partakers in His divine nature (2 Peter 1:3,4), we are ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20), we are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14), **and it is not we who live but Christ who lives in us** (Galatians 2:20).

Here is the calling, here is the solution, from God Himself, He says, “Follow Me.” The only resource needed is Him and His instructions for life, His Word. There is NOTHING that each Christian is lacking, because Christ lives in us, and He offers everything that He has access to, as He sits at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us. Here is the challenge that God spoke into my heart in speaking to the Churches and leaders in Christianity, “Empower My people.” The only offering God is longing for, is an offering of ourselves, and believe it or not, that is why we are lacking fulfillment in our lives.

If I were to implement this specifically, as God has instructed me, I would take this solution to Church Leaders’ Conventions, the North American Christian Convention, Baptist Convention, etc. ask that they join forces in a **Revival of “The Great Commission”** to “save souls,” whereby those in their congregations, would be given a “Commitment” Card where they would choose ONE of the several ways they will allow Christ to live through them that week. All of which are the teachings and principles that Jesus taught in order to “follow Him.” (these cards should have a carbon copy, one to be placed in the offering plate, and one to be taken home....another idea is that a wooden

cross be place at the front of the church in which people should take their Commitment card and nail it to the cross.) They should be told they are making a commitment to God. (Some may not be willing to make the commitment and therefore will need to reevaluate their walk with Christ. Also, explaining that not fulfilling the commitment could result in guilt.) This is a directive from God and should NOT be taken lightly.

The card would read as follows (or similar):

I commit my life to Christ and choose to “Follow Him,” fulfilling God’s call on my life as a witness to His grace, mercy, and love in this way:

___ ***This week I will forgive someone who has betrayed me.***

___ ***This week I will show love to someone who shows hatred toward me.***

___ ***This week I will pray for someone who has hurt me.***

___ ***This week I will help someone in need.***

___ ***This week I will be peaceful around someone who is confrontational.***

Weekly, Christians should be asked to add to their offering, a “Commitment” of themselves. (On the copy in which the person takes home, they should write down on the back, the act in which they fulfilled their commitment to God and keep them.) For every act they have done, they have planted a “seed” and God has Promised us the return would be a ***“harvest -thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times.”*** ANY individual can start this solution and begin saving souls by implementing this commitment. And the commitment should eventually become a daily commitment. ANYONE who is not willing to make these commitments is not worthy of calling Christ “Lord,” as He told us in Matthew 7:21. God has called each one of us, and it is time we committed our ways to Him.

The wonderful thing about this solution is that when a commitment is fulfilled, something amazing inside that person happens, they will feel Christ within them, and they will long to do His works MORE, which in turn will produce more and more seeds. We are mistaken because we believe WE are the harvesters.....God has said He is in need of “workers.”

These were his instructions to them: “The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields.” Luke 10:2 (NLT)

This solution takes virtually NO money and NO added resources than what God has already given to us. We are simply failing to implement what we’ve already been given

because we are not “following Him.” We simply have no excuses for God, He was loud and clear when He said,

“Anyone who isn’t with me opposes me, and anyone who isn’t working with me is actually working against me.” Luke 11:23 (NLT)

I believe that we have come into a time such as in John 21:4 when Jesus appeared to His Disciples after His ascension when they had fished all night and caught nothing,

*“At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn’t see who he was. He called out, ‘**Fellows have you caught any fish?**’ ‘No,’ they replied. Then he said, ‘**Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you’ll get some!**’ So they did, and they couldn’t haul in the net because there were so many fish in it..... There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn’t torn.”*

I truly believe that God spoke to Mr. Mitchell, just as He spoke to me in this essay. And God sees clearly, that we are not catching many fish. He is telling us that if we will be obedient and do what He has commanded, “Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat,” then we will catch more than we can imagine. Proof that the solution works has been shown through Christ himself. I don’t believe there is any other proof that is needed. Throughout Jesus’ ministry He demonstrated time and time again through His **works** that He and the Father were One. And we too, must become One with the Father, in all we say and do.

*And you yourself must **be an example to them by doing good works of every kind.** Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching. Titus 2:7 (NLT)*

*Let us think of ways to motivate one another to **acts of love and good works.** Hebrews 10:24 (NLT)*

*If you are wise and understand God’s ways, **prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works** with the humility that comes from wisdom. James 3:13 (NLT)*

*Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and **do the works** you did at first. If you don’t repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches. Revelation 2:5 (NLT)*

The call is simple, “**Follow Me.**” The command could not be more clear, and the story of our lives, should end no different than that of Christ according to John,

“And I suppose that if all the other things Jesus [put your name here] did were written down, the whole world could not contain the books.” John 21:25 (NLT)

