



**Sermon Series:** All Signs Point to Jesus

**To be used with Session 4:** The Sign of His Provision

**Sermon Title:** Following Jesus

**Scripture:** Luke 9:23-26

**Connection with Unit Theme:** To complement the Bible study “The Sign of His Provision,” this sermon builds upon today’s Bible study by actively contrasting those who followed Jesus for the signs He performed versus the calling to sacrificially follow Jesus.

**Introduction:** We learned in Bible study this morning that “A huge crowd was following Jesus because they saw the signs that He was performing by healing the sick” (John 6:2). We will learn from today’s sermon, Jesus invites us to follow Him. Period. We will also see that following Him means denying self, a life of sacrifice, and a continual journey. While the journey may be difficult, it is worth it.

**1. Following Jesus means denying self (v. 23-24).**

A number of years ago, Kyle Idleman wrote a book entitled *Not A Fan*. In his book he defined a fan as an enthusiastic admirer. Idleman pointed out that Jesus did not call us to be fans, but rather followers. We can see the truth of this claim in this set of verses. We can also see from this passage what it means to be a follower.

According to Jesus, to follow Jesus means to deny ourselves. We need to look at a couple of things in the original language to fully understand what Jesus said. First, we need to understand that denying self is a verb, which is an action word. Second, this verb was written in the present tense. This means that we are to embrace this action in the immediate. If any of us came to church today wondering what God’s will may be for our lives, we have found at least one thing. He wants us to deny ourselves in the now. This is not something for us to pray about to determine if this is God’s will or not. Instead, we should actively pray as we also actively deny ourselves in following Jesus.

The final question for us in this section is: What does it look like to deny ourselves? When we deny ourselves, we are willing to lose our lives for the sake of the gospel. According to Jesus, when we lose our lives, we actually save it. Jesus modeled this on the cross and He invites His followers to lose their lives and thereby save it.

**2. Following Jesus means sacrifice (vv. 23,25).**

We are also called to a life of sacrifice by daily taking up our cross. The text shows us that the cross is extremely personal as Jesus said that a follower is to take up their cross. This

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language shows that each follower has a cross and we are to carry it daily. My daily cross is different from yours and we each have to carry our own cross.

It is important to recognize the cross in the context of the original audience. We use crosses as jewelry and decorations in our homes. A cross during the time of Jesus was an instrument of extremely cruelty. All desired to avoid a cross at all cost and Jesus called His followers to take up said instrument of sacrifice and to do so daily.

Jesus went on to pose a question. “What does it benefit someone if he gains the whole world, and yet loses or forfeits himself” (v. 25). When someone is actively embracing a life of sacrifice, it becomes extremely difficult to feel concerned about the things of the world. The things of the world offer momentary pleasure. The sacrificial crosses that we have offers temporary pain but will prove worth it in the end.

### **3. Following Jesus is continual & public (vv. 23,26)**

We find at least two points in verse twenty-three to show the continual nature of following Jesus. As we have already pointed out, we are to take up our cross daily. This means we are to carry our cross on Sunday while at church. We are also called to carry our cross at school on Monday, in the board room on Wednesday and while staying at home on Friday.

We also see the continual nature of carrying our cross in the command at the end of the verse when Jesus said, “Follow me.” This too is a verb written in the present tense. Therefore, obedience to the command is lived out in the now. If we were to look at this verse again next week, obedience would be found in living out the verse then. If we were to look at it again in six months, obedience would be found in living it out then as well. Following Jesus is a lifestyle; it is continuous and not simply a one-time event.

We can also see that following Jesus is not a private matter. Many of us here today are either married or have been married. When we said yes to our spouse, we did not merely celebrate this in private, hoping no one found out. Instead, we had a big celebration and invited friends and family to celebrate with us. We looked forward to sharing the love we have for our spouse with others. In a similar manner, we should be excited to share with others our love for Jesus. We need not be ashamed to state that we actively follow Him. While the text shows that this is not always easy, we still should not shy away from this truth either.

**Conclusion:** The difference between what the crowds did in following Jesus and the calling Jesus gave His disciples could not be starker. The question for us becomes: Which group best describes us? Are we merely following Jesus for the signs and wonders or are we taking up our cross and following Him daily? The call is one of continual sacrifice and denying self. If you have not decided to truly follow Jesus, please do not leave here today without saying yes to the invitation that He is offering you. You will not be disappointed.

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