

## Follow Christ's Example

1 Peter 2:21-25

Verse 21: *"To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps"* (1 Peter 2:21).

1 John 2:6, *"Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did."*

### Intro

What factors help Christian youth maintain their faith into adulthood? A major research project called the *National Study of Youth and Religion* found the following three factors:

- The young person's parents practiced the faith in the home and in daily life, not just in public-church settings.
- The young person had at least one significant adult mentor or friend, other than parents, who practiced the faith seriously.
- The young person had at least one significant spiritual experience before the age of 17.

In other words, teenagers are most likely to retain their Christian faith into adulthood if they have had a meaningful and healthy relationship with their parents, a faithful Christian mentor outside of the family, and with God himself. (Source: Seraphim Danckaert, "Losing our Religion," *Orthodox Heterodoxy*, Oct. 2014)

From this research project we can learn that young people need good role models in their lives. Who do you look up to? Who has influenced your life so much so that you want to follow their example?

We all had role models when we were growing up, heroes to who we aspired our hopes and dreams. Think back, who did you "idolize" when you were growing up? I remember myself liking TV characters and trying to be just like movie stars I saw on the big screen.

But when I became a Christian I was enthralled with Christ. When I understood what Christ did for me and why He did it for me I was blown away. I fell in love with Christ and He became my hero, my role model, my superstar and the one I truly looked up to.

I say to you that the easiest way to understand Christ at first is to treat him as the ultimate role model of your life. Study him, follow his ways and emulate him.

As believers we are all called to follow and emulate Christ. Christ is our perfect example of what it means to live the life of faith and devotion to God. It can be difficult at times to follow Christ as our perfect example.

I'm reminded of the story of two boys at breakfast who were fighting over the first pancake. Mother asked little Ryan W.W.J.D.? He said, "He wouldn't take the first one!" – Then Ryan said to his brother, "Bobby you be Jesus!"

Yes, it is difficult to follow Jesus' example but we can, with the Holy Spirit's help and power to live the Christ-like life. It is challenging but it can be done. The Holy Spirit's main objective in our lives is to empower us to live our lives for Christ.

The Spirit's main purpose is to glorify Jesus Christ and to reveal his will for our lives.

In John 16:14 Jesus said, *"He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you."*

Let me clarify one thing. We can be like Christ in his character: to love, to be meek, exercise self control, resist temptation, forgive those who have wronged us, etc. But we can't be like him in his nature, All-knowing, Omnipresent, All-powerful etc.

### **The Goal of the Christian Life is to become like Jesus**

- It is God's plan for each of us that we "*For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son*" (Romans 8:29).
- In 2 Corinthians we read, "*And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit*" (2 Corinthians 3:18).
- Paul laboured with the Galatians "*until Christ is formed in you*" (Galatians 4:19).
- Paul told the Ephesians that "*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ*" (Ephesians 4:11-13).

Our goal and objective is "*attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*"

In Christ, we have a new identity and a new purpose for living. The new self is "*to be like God in true righteousness and holiness*" (Ephesians 4:22-24). What a concept! We are to be like God in this life. We are to become like Jesus, who showed us what God is like when living in the flesh. We are not just hoping to be like him in the next life—we are already to be like him in this life.

1 John 2:6, "*Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did.*"

This verse tells us that every person ought to walk like Jesus. He is to be the standard for which we are to all reach. Every step we take should be patterned after Him and after His walk.

John says that if we are living or abiding in Christ, we will walk as He walked. This means that He is our supreme example for living. Jesus showed us how we should live in total dependence on the Father and in complete submission to His will, no matter how difficult.

Also, John's words show us that the Christian life is a *walk*. That is a helpful metaphor that the apostle Paul also used (Eph. 2:10; 4:1, 17; 5:1, 8, 15; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12).

Walking is not as spectacular or swift as running, leaping, or flying, but it is a steady, sure movement in one direction. **It implies progress toward a destination or goal.** A walk is made up of many specific steps, but it points to the overall tenor or general quality of a life, not to any one step.

"Must walk" – it is a continuous walk (present infinitive).

A. T. Robertson: "*A continuous performance, not a spasmodic spurt.*"

If we say that we're still connected to Jesus, then we ought to be acting more and more like Him. What John is saying here is on a daily basis, on a consistent basis, there is something in me as a believer that makes me sense the duty of walking as He wants me to walk as He walked.

How did Jesus walk? A few examples from His life may answer this question and teach us how we need to live. Our walk with God should be modeled after Jesus' walk.

## **The Jesus Walk**

### **1. He Was Always Conscious & Determined in Doing the Father's Will**

Christ was always aware of the Father's presence even at the age of 12 while in the temple he said he was going about his Father's business (Luke 2:49).

Jesus said in John 5:19, *"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."*

He also said in John 8:29, *"The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him."*

John 6:38 *"For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me."*

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed in great agony, *"...not my will but yours be done"* (Luke 22:42).

### **2. He Always Sought Private Audience with the Father - Prayer**

As we strive to imitate our Saviour and Teacher, Jesus Christ, we need to look especially at his relationship with the Father. His relationship with the Father was characterized by prayer. As Jesus left heaven, that place of intimacy with the Father, he knew that the closest that he could be with the Father, while on earth, was through prayer.

Luke 4:42 *"Jesus went to a solitary place."*

Luke 5:15 *"Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed"*.

Luke 6:12 *"Jesus went into the hills to pray, and spent the night praying to God."*

Jesus' communion with his Father is reflected in his prayer life. Luke records that 'Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed'. Luke's Gospel contains no less than 17 references to Jesus' prayer life. He spent time in prayer early in the morning and at significant life events such as his baptism, which inaugurated his public ministry. He spent a whole night in prayer before choosing his disciples, reminding us of the importance of prayer before making import decisions.

Prayer has for millennia formed the core of Christian spiritual growth. It is important! Why? Because it is the best way of being with God so that we can hear his voice in our lives and be reminded of our true condition: That we are redeemed from sin, we belong to him, our salvation is secure in him, he loves us infinitely, he is our ever-present Helper and he will never leave nor forsake us.

### **3. He Walked in the Fullness of the Holy Spirit**

Luke 4:1-2 *"Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry."*

Acts 10:38 *"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him."*

We too need to walk in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who gives us strength and power to live this Christian life before God and the world.

### **4. His Walk Always Brought Glory & Honour to the Father**

Jesus never discredited the Father but faithfully glorified him in all that he said and did.

We read in John 13:31, *"Now is the Son of Man glorified and God glorified in him"*.

To glorify God is to give Him all the credit and honour that is due Him. It also means to please God, to put a smile upon His face in that He well pleased with us.

### **5. He Was Humble in His Walk**

In Philippians 2:5-8 we read, “*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!*”

Look at the pattern of Jesus. Never did anyone of such high position stoop to such a low position. Jesus is the greatest illustration of humility there ever was. He even lowered Himself to point of death.

In John 13:1-17 we read that Jesus washed the disciples’ feet. Jesus said, “*I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you*” (verse 15).

### **6. He Was Compassionate Toward Others**

In Matthew we read, “*When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd*” (Matt. 9:36).

We are to emulate Christ. In Ephesians 4:32 it says, “*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*”

We too need to be compassionate and forgive those who have offended us.

### **7. He Loved All Equally**

Jesus never turned anyone away. In Marks gospel we read of the rich young man who wanted to follow Jesus. It says, “*Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”*”

Also in John 13 we find Jesus washing his disciple’s feet. I like what it says at the beginning of verse one, “*It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.*”

Jesus was committed to people—he loved the lost. He was committed to a close relationship among believers—his disciples related not just individually to him as students to their teacher, but also to one another. Jesus formed them into a group, a body that would in time give itself mutual support, a community that would reach out to others and invite them in.

### **Conclusion**

To walk as Jesus walked means that our lives should be characterized by daily dependence on God, submission to Him, and obedience to His will. Our overall aim in life will be to seek first His kingdom and righteousness. We will seek to please Him by our thoughts, words, and deeds. While we will never perfectly walk as Jesus walked, it should be our constant aim and effort to do so.

Just as Jesus was the manifestation of God to the world. We are to be the manifestation of Jesus to this world. When they see us, they should see Him. When we walk as He walked, they will!

We ought to live like He lived. As a Christian who shares Christ's eternal life, you can live like Christ because the same Holy Spirit that empowered Him lives in you and me.

God knows that we can't do this perfectly. Even the holiest person can sin. Peter, the greatest of Christ's apostles sinned by denying he knew Christ. We can't get it perfectly right, and believe me when I say God knows this! He still loves us anyways, even when we mess up. It's also worth saying that it's not a contest as to see who is most like Christ. Some will be given more aptitude to receive Christ's teachings and more is expected of them. God will recognize even the smallest of your efforts and bless you immensely for trying as hard as you can to emulate Him by emulating Christ as your ultimate Role Model.