# Follow Me



## Introduction

The words "**Follow me**," spoken by Jesus Christ, are among the clearest and most repeated calls in the New Testament. They are not a gentle invitation to admire Him from a distance. They are a direct command to leave one's old way of life and begin a new one with Him.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus speaks these words to different people—fishermen, a tax collector, a rich young man, and the crowds. The full meaning of this call becomes clear only when we let the rest of Scripture explain it: the call begins with God's initiative, requires a personal response, demands ongoing **self-sacrifice**, and leads to a life that **bears fruit** and **glorifies the Father**.

### The Biblical Meaning of "Follow Me"

In the Gospels, the phrase is both literal and theological. Jesus says to Simon and Andrew, "**Follow me**, and I will make you fishers of men" (**Matthew 4:19**). He says the same to Levi: "Follow me" (**Matthew 9:9**). The immediate result is that they leave nets, tax booth, and former occupations. Yet Jesus himself defines the deeper content of the command: "If anyone would come after me, let him **deny himself** and **take up his cross** and follow me" (**Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23**). To follow is to walk the path Jesus walks, to accept his teaching as final authority, and to share in his mission and destiny. It is not intellectual agreement or emotional attraction; it is a decisive reorientation of one's entire existence toward him.

### God's Drawing Precedes His Calling

The initiative belongs to God, not to us. Jesus says, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (**John 6:44**). He repeats the same truth: "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father" (**John 6:65**).

We see this clearly in how Jesus called the disciples. He went looking for them; they did not come looking for Him first. He said to Philip, "Follow me" (**John 1:43**). Later He told the

Twelve, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit” (**John 15:16**). **The Father draws, the Son calls, and the Spirit enables**. We do not start the relationship. We respond to a summons that begins in the heart of God.

**This drawing is not weak or passive**. It is strong and effective. **People are trapped in sin**—dead in their trespasses and sins (**Ephesians 2:1**) and unable, on their own, to understand or respond to spiritual truth (**1 Corinthians 2:14**). Because of this, the Father’s drawing must be powerful enough to free a will that is bound by sin. It brings a person into a place where a real, free choice is possible. Without this work of God, a person stays captive to self and darkness and cannot come to Jesus. The same God who draws also gives the ability to respond, so that the choice that follows is both free and made possible by His grace.

## The Response of Acceptance

Acceptance is the human answer to God’s call, and **true acceptance is surrender**. Those who receive Jesus are given the right to become children of God (**John 1:12**). The first disciples show what this looks like. When Jesus called them, “Immediately they left their nets and followed him” (**Matthew 4:20**). Matthew simply “rose and followed him” (**Matthew 9:9).** Jesus describes the same reality when He says, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (**John 10:27**).

Acceptance is therefore faith shown in obedience. It is not a one-time decision alone. It is an ongoing posture of listening and submitting. The rich young ruler was invited to sell his possessions, give to the poor, and then “come, follow me” (**Matthew 19:21**). His refusal shows that genuine acceptance requires a willingness to surrender control and reorder one’s loves and priorities. **Without surrender, there is no real acceptance**.

This initial act of surrender begins a lifelong process of sanctification in which the follower is gradually shaped into the image of Christ (**Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18)**. Sanctification is not instant perfection. It is a slow, Spirit-enabled transformation that continues until the day of Christ Jesus (**Philippians 1:6**). Along the way, failures happen. Believers still stumble, sin, and fall short (**1 John 1:8–10; Romans 7:15–25**). Yet these failures do not end the relationship. Jesus intercedes for His own, and the same grace that first drew and enabled the response continues to restore, cleanse, and keep pressing the disciple toward Christlikeness. **True acceptance is therefore both a decisive beginning of surrender and the entrance into an ongoing journey of becoming more like the One who is followed**.

## The Necessity of Sacrifice

**Following Jesus is costly by design**. He does not hide the price. He says, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple” (**Luke 14:26–27**). In this context, “hate” means loving Jesus more than anyone or anything else, even one’s own life. Counting the cost is required (**Luke 14:28–33**).

**Sacrifice means giving up control of one's own life**. Jesus says, "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (**Matthew 10:39**). It may mean leaving possessions, as the disciples did (**Luke 5:11; 18:28**), and it includes a willingness to suffer for Christ's sake (**Mark 8:35**). Yet the sacrifice is not empty. Jesus promises that those who leave houses, family, or fields for His sake will receive a hundredfold in this life and eternal life in the age to come (**Mark 10:29–30**).

## Without Sacrifice One Follows Self, Not Christ

Scripture is clear: **without sacrifice, there is self-rule**. Jesus states the choice plainly: "Whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" (**Matthew 10:38**). To refuse the cross is to refuse Christ. The person who insists on keeping control of his own life, his own plans, his own rights, and his own comforts is not following Jesus. **He is following himself.**

**Jesus warns that many will call Him "Lord"** yet remain outside the kingdom because they have not done the will of the Father (**Matthew 7:21–23**). The rich young ruler shows the same truth. He wanted eternal life while keeping his self-life intact. Jesus did not lower the demand. He let him go.

**A person who will not deny himself, who will not take up the cross, and who will not lose his life for Christ's sake is still the master of his own life.** He may admire Jesus, attend services, and use the language of faith, yet he remains a follower of self. The New Testament has no category of "follower of Christ" that leaves out self-denial. The call is not "admire Me while you keep your life." It is "deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me."

## Bearing Fruit as the Evidence of True Following

True following of Christ produces fruit. Jesus chose and appointed His disciples "that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide" (**John 15:16**). He teaches that the branch that stays connected to Him "bears much fruit," while the branch that does not stay connected is cut off and withers (**John 15:4–6**). Fruit is the natural and necessary result of a living connection to the Vine.

This fruit shows itself in both character and mission. It includes the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (**Galatians 5:22–23**)—and the fruit of people coming to faith and lives being changed through the gospel. Jesus says, "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples" (**John 15:8**). Bearing fruit is therefore the proof of discipleship. A tree is known by its fruit (**Matthew 7:16–20**). Where there is no lasting fruit, there is no real connection to Christ, and where there is no real connection, there is no true following. The life of self produces only the works of the flesh. **The life that has denied self and taken up the cross produces fruit that remains and brings glory to God**.

## Conclusion

The meaning of "**Follow me**," as spoken by Jesus Christ, includes several connected parts. It begins with God's powerful and personal call, which frees a will that is trapped in sin so a real choice becomes possible. It requires true acceptance, which is surrender—an ongoing willingness to give up control and submit to Him. This surrender starts a lifelong process of sanctification, in which the follower is slowly shaped into the image of Christ, even though failures and growth both occur along the way. It also demands the continued sacrifice of self-will. The result is lasting fruit that shows the relationship is real.

Where surrender and sacrifice are refused, the claim to follow Christ is empty. The person is simply continuing to follow self, and no lasting fruit appears. Scripture presents the call not as an optional addition to ordinary life, but as the way into true discipleship.

Those who hear the voice of the Shepherd and follow Him—surrendering themselves, denying themselves, taking up the cross, and remaining in Him—are assured of His presence, His provision, the gift of eternal life, and the privilege of bearing fruit that remains to the glory of the Father. **The invitation remains open: to receive the call, to surrender in acceptance, and to walk the way of the cross that leads to life and fruitfulness**.