

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FOLLOW JESUS?

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

Many people live their lives confused or disillusioned about what it means to follow Jesus. For those who are new to faith, understanding how to be a part of the church, how to grow in a relationship with Jesus, and how to tell others about your faith can be daunting. However, Jesus made it very clear what being his follower looks like. It's simple, but not easy. He said,

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34–35)

In these few short sentences, Jesus defined what it means to be his follower. Clear, uncomplicated, but certainly not easy. Love one another. Our love for one another will not only help us grow in our love for God, it will also help others see him in us. Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost, author and professor, describes what this statement meant to Jesus's followers and still means for us today. He says,

Each movement in Israel historically had had its peculiar identifying sign. The sign that was one was related to Abraham and the Abrahamic covenant was circumcision. The sign that one was related to Moses and the Mosaic law was the observance of the Sabbath. The sign that one was related to John the Baptist and his message concerning the coming Messiah was water baptism. The sign that one was a Pharisee was that he wore a phylactery either on his forehead or upper arm. These external signs all indicated a relationship to a particular movement in Israel. Christ gave his disciples a new kind of identifying sign. It was not an external sign that could be easily imposed but an inner sign that required a transformation. The sign was mutual love.

(Pentecost The Words & Works of Jesus Christ, A Study of the Life of Christ pg. 435)

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THINK ABOUT IT

1. How do you think most Americans would respond if they were asked to describe Christians? Why do you think that particular impression exists?
2. In what area of your life have you overcomplicated what it means to follow Jesus? What would change about your mindset if you were to accept his “new command” as your north star to aim at as you follow him?
3. Dr. Pentecost says that Jesus’ new command was “an inner sign that required a transformation.” Do you know anyone who embodies the kind of transformative mutual love that he describes? What do you notice about the way that they live? What do you know about their relationship with Jesus?

APPLY IT

Jesus asked his disciples to love one another as he had loved them. For these followers who had spent time living and working with Jesus, they could easily recall the ways that he had loved them. He had provided for them, served them, listening patiently to their questions, forgiven them when they failed, and provided loving wisdom in difficult times. For followers of Jesus today, we have the same task in front of us. Love others as he has loved us. On your phone, make a note of three ways Jesus has shown his love to you. Can you think of one practical way for you to show that kind of love to someone in your life.

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION (IF DESIRED)

1. Is there anything in your life from your past or present that makes it difficult for you to love others in the way Jesus described?
2. Were you raised to lean more towards laws and rules or towards love when it comes to your faith? How does that background impact the way you follow Jesus day to day?