



THE LORD'S FLOCK GROWTH DIGEST

PASTORAL GROWTH SERIES

COMMITMENT: THE FOUNDATION OF BECOMING A GOOD FOLLOWER

Part 1

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In Luke 9:57-62, it is written, *"As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' Jesus replied, 'Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.' He said to another man, 'Follow me.' But he replied, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.' Still another said, 'I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.' Jesus replied, 'No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.'"*

These verses speak about the cost of following Jesus. What does Jesus want from us? Total, wholehearted dedication, not half-hearted commitment. Commitment means a vow or a promise. When we decide to follow Jesus, we must count the cost and be willing to abandon everything else that may distract us. Jesus set an example when He came to save us; He finished the mission that He committed to do regardless of what it cost Him. As servants of the Lord, we too must be committed to serve the Lord till our last breath. Following Jesus is not always easy and comfortable. Often, it means great cost and sacrifice.

The following verses talk about the conditions of being a disciple of our Lord: Luke 9:23-26, *"Then he said to them all: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. 'Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.'"*

The above verses clearly reflect the kind of commitment that Jesus demands from His followers. Jesus was always direct with those who wanted to follow Him. He made sure that they counted the cost and they were willing to pay the price of being His disciples. A great number of people who call themselves Christians prefer to be served than to serve. There are many who aspire to be leaders, but very few are willing to be servants.

In Timothy 3:1, it is written, *"Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task."* It is good to want to be a spiritual leader, but the cost is high. Leadership is not just about having titles and occupying high positions in the church. The Lord is not looking at titles. The Lord looks at our hearts. We must aspire to selflessly serve the Lord and that is a very honorable ambition.

To be a good leader, one must first learn to be a good follower. We cannot lead if we do not know how to follow.

In the Scriptures, many people were attracted to follow Jesus because He performed great miracles. Jesus enabled the blind to see, the lame to walk, and casted out demons. Those who experienced the miracle of our Lord Jesus Christ perhaps thought that, if Jesus was able to do all these things, then surely He can meet all their other needs. Many people followed Jesus because they saw how He multiplied bread and fish. They sought only

the miracles of the Lord. They were not really seeking God. They were not seeking the Healer and the Provider. They sought only material things -- mammon.

The Lord wants His followers to serve. When we were baptized in the Spirit, we had the Pentecostal experience. We experienced the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit and we received the gifts of the Holy Spirit to equip us in building up the Body of Christ. It is written in Eph. 4:11-13, *“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his 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.”*

The Lord is looking for committed followers. It is not easy to follow Jesus, but, by God’s grace, we can do so.

Matthew 16:24, *“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”* There are three conditions that must be met by those who want to be Jesus’ disciples: (1) Deny self, (2) Take up cross and (3) Follow Jesus.

There is a song that goes, *“I have decided to follow Jesus. No turning back, no turning back... The world behind me, the Cross before me. No turning back, no turning back...”* Following Jesus, therefore, meant genuine, deeply rooted commitment – no turning back.

The first thing that needed to be done is to deny self. If we still have pride, we cannot really deny ourselves. A proud person always wants to be the first. He feels that he has to be exalted, that he has to be approved and that he is the best. The Lord wants us to deny ourselves and forget about ourselves and we cannot do this if we are filled with pride. We must learn to forsake our selfish desires.

It is written, in Luke 14:28-33, *“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.’ Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.”*

When a builder doesn’t count the cost or estimates inaccurately, his building may be left uncompleted. In the same way, we must carefully count the cost of becoming Christ’s disciples so that we will know what we are getting into and won’t be tempted later to turn back.

Three Important Points in Committing Our Lives to Follow Jesus

1. We must be willing to sacrifice for Jesus

- According to Luke 9:57, the man promised, *“I will follow you wherever you go.”* This sounded very good. However, what did he really mean when he said this? Perhaps, he was thinking more about the glory of being a follower of Christ. Maybe, he was thinking of how glorious it would be to be closely associated with such a great person.