

21T16e Now What? (Part 5) Follow

Hello my friends. Thanks for joining me @ the PUNLA coffee table.

Now What? We have been asking this question. Once you are a Christian, Now What? What should I do? How should I do it? How do I act? and on and on and on. I know the questions because I have asked these questions myself over and over during my life. But honestly, did you ever get an answer to those questions?

Well, the short answer to all these questions is the Bible. But I know that is not very specific. Today we are going to ask the Now What question. What does it mean to be a Christian? How do I follow Jesus?

I'm a Christian. But I know many of us struggle with what does that really mean. What is a Christian? And you hear a lot of different messages out there. But like most of these questions, the answers are truly found in the Bible. I have another video on What is a Christian that addresses this question in more detail.

Once we understand what being a Christian means, then we can begin to answer the Now What question, How do we follow Jesus? Of course, the Bible answers this question too.

But I want to be clear a "Christian" is a "Follower of Christ"? Follow is an action word. The word follow means to "go or come after; move or travel behind, or more specifically to "strive after", to "act according to", "conform to", or "practice". This is not just an intellectual thing. You can't just think about it. It's more than spiritual. You have to do something and take action to be a follower.

Another word for this is disciple. A disciple is a follower or student of a teacher or leader or master. When we say we are disciples of Jesus, what we are really saying is we are a student of Jesus, and we try to be like Him. We work all day, all the time, continually to be like Jesus, to learn from Jesus, to follow Jesus. This is not a part-time job. You can't follow only when it is convenient. If I say, come follow me, and you say sure. Then you never move, you are not following. Even if in your mind you mean to. Follow requires physical action.

So, What does this mean. How do we follow Jesus? We don't have to guess because Jesus told us.

I want to start with these words from Jesus from Matthew chapter 6, *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."* (Matthew 6:33-44 NKJV)

Jesus is talking about worrying in this text, but it is equally about following Him and trusting in God. Follow means you follow a leader. Jesus tells us to seek first the

Kingdom of God. Seek to know Him first. Seek to have a relationship with Him first, then all these other things will be given to you. Daily provisions, peace, joy, etc. Trust your leader and follow Him. Once our focus is on Jesus then we learn what following Him is all about.

The Great Commission in Matthew Chapter 28, Jesus said, *“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* (Matthew 28:18-20 NJKV)

Jesus told us that if we are to follow Him, then we must GO, MAKE & TEACH. Be on God’s Mission. Many have asked, why did I get started doing missions. The answer is simply because that is what Jesus told me to do, go, make and teach them to observe all the things that I have taught you.

I believe God has given each of us a specific and purposeful mission as a citizen of the Kingdom of God. We just need to say, “YES & then DO SOMETHING”. Jesus has given us a commission as Christians. I like how the Amplified version puts it in Acts when Jesus tells his disciples, *“But you will receive power and ability when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be My witnesses [to tell people about Me] both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the ends of the earth.”* (Acts 1:8 AMP)

Tell people and show people about Me, Jesus. But Where? Jesus told us, “in Jerusalem”, that is right here where we live. Our families, our friends, at work and at the store. “in all Judea”, or here in our community, our town, our country through actions that reveals Jesus to them. “in Samaria”, in places we are hated. Samaritans and Jews did not even speak or look at each other. They hated each other because of racial ancestry. Jesus is telling us to engage with those who hate us. Let Jesus worry about the outcome. We just need to “follow” and do as our “Leader” leads. He tells us what to do. And lastly “even to the ends of the earth”. This is getting way out of our comfort zone. God wants us to be more than we think we can be. For me the ends of the earth is the Bicol region of Philippines. For you it might be closer to home, but it must be inconvenient to be sacrificial to reap the benefits Jesus promises.

But before you get to overwhelmed by this read Jesus words from Matthew Chapter 11, *Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”* (Matthew 11:28-30 NLT)

We all have burdens and worries. Things that keep us up at night. Jesus is telling us He will give us rest from these burdens and worries. We just need to rely on Him. Jesus promises to teach us how to handle our burdens. He says His yoke is easy. Everyone has a yoke. But having someone to help you carry it and guide you removes

worries from these activities. We just need to trust Jesus to lead us where we need to be. And lastly, the burden Jesus gives us in return is light and easy to manage.

Let me say it this way, Sleep like a baby. Did you know Jesus promised this? I can paraphrase it this way. Give your troubles to Jesus and trust Him with the outcome. Then sleep like a baby. Yes, following Jesus means you can rely on Him to take care for you, so you don't need to worry.

The apostle John makes clear in his letter 1st John, that following Jesus is more than a thought. John writes, *“Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him”* (1 John 2:3-4 NKJV)

We can only be a follower and we can only know Jesus if we do what he has told us to do. John goes further to say, *“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”* (1 John 3:18 NKJV). John means we can't follow Jesus sitting down. We can't love people by talking about it or planning to do it. We have to do something. Following Jesus requires action.

In his Gospel, John tells a parable of Jesus often referred to as the Vine Dresser Parable. Jesus says, *“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”* (John 15:1-8 NKJV)

Pay careful attention to how Jesus describes following. There is an expectation of His followers. We are to bear fruit. If we are not fruitful, then we are a risk of being cut off and cast into the fire. This is a warning to followers of Jesus, if we don't follow Jesus and do what He has commanded us to do, then there will be consequences. Very grave consequences. Even fruiting branches will be pruned to produce more fruit. This means we will face hardships to grow our character, so we can reach more people for Christ through our actions and testimonies. But to be a follower, we must continue to abide. This is we must continually be focused on growing our relationship with Jesus.

The last scripture I want to look at today is from the gospel of Luke. Here Jesus says, *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”* (Luke 14:26-27 NKJV). This seems harsh to us, but we need to understand what Jesus means. Other

scriptures tell us to honor our mother and father, so Jesus does not mean ignore them or literally hate them. Jesus is explaining that He must be the most important relationship we have. We must be willing to leave everything and everyone behind and follow Him. Our love for Jesus must be so great that in comparison to it, it appears as though we hate everyone else. We don't really hate them this is just a comparison for contrast purposes. And truthfully, Jesus has us exactly where He wants us in most cases. We just have to be willing and obedient as followers to do whatever Jesus asks us to do.

I want to leave you with a story I heard from Bill Weiss. He was explaining the importance of following Jesus. He said, if I'm giving directions to my remote mountain cabin and I tell you there is only one way to get there. You might want to listen to me. If you say I know a better way and ignore the directions what will be the outcome. What are the odds to find your way without following the path I tell you? Don't you think the owner knows the way to their house. In the same way, if you don't follow Jesus, then how can you imagine finding His home, heaven.

We are called to follow Jesus. We are not called to be leaders for or to Jesus. If you want to be a leader, then you need to humble yourself. There can be only one leader and that is our master and our Lord King Jesus. All Christians are followers. We lead others by our example on how we follow King Jesus.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father. Thank you for leading me. I know I need your guidance and direction. Help me to stay focused on you, so I can keep my selfish nature from interfering in your plans for me.

And I pray all these things to the Father in your name Jesus. Amen.

Thank you for joining me @ the PUNLA Coffee Table today, I hope you'll join us for the rest of the series "Now What?"

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See you next time @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. God Bless.