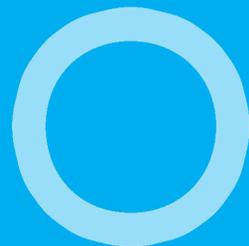




THE BRIDGE

How do we follow Jesus'
teaching



How do we follow Jesus' teaching?

Before we decide on a course of action, we usually have a reason why; a motive; an expected outcome. So, before we can follow Jesus' teachings, we must identify our reasons for wanting to do so by asking ourselves the following questions:

- **What reason, what motive(s) do I have for following these teachings or not?**
- **What will following them do for me?**
- **Should I follow because He is the Son of Man whose teachings are morally good and cannot hurt? or**
- **Should I follow because He gave His life for me and I should get to know Him and love him as the Son of God, my Saviour?**

The first thing to say is that you cannot get to know someone or learn from them unless you spend time with them, seeing what they do, listening to what they say and how they deal with situations. When you get to know someone, you are more inclined to understand, trust and believe them. With Jesus consider how you got to know a person in your life. Who is important to you. Apply this to knowing Jesus.

4 steps to getting to know Jesus

- Step 1: Reading Jesus' words in the New Testament is essential to understanding his heart, ideas, love and teachings. From the books of Matthew to John, we're told about Jesus in detail and this is how we learn about him.
- Step 2: Get a more modern version of the Bible i.e. NIV, which will translate his words into modern English. Remember the scriptures were written thousands of years ago and some of the things mentioned are different now with regards to culture, language, etc.
- Step 3: Choose a quiet time and place to read and always ask questions to gain understanding.
- Step 4: Think about who was involved, when it was happening, what was happening and why. When doing this keep thinking about what picture is forming in your mind, and make notes. What particular significance does what we have just learned, discovered or remembered hold?

Pray continually

Prayer is a key component to following Jesus' teachings. Jesus taught his disciples to pray or to speak with our heavenly father. At every turn or action, morning, noon and night, Jesus prayed to keep close to his heavenly father.

Prayers

- of thanks,
- of request for himself, his disciples and for all people,
- of worship,
- of and for faith,
- for protection and guidance,
- for God's continued closeness, etc.

Prayer is our most important communication channel with God. Not only can we talk to Him - telling him our heart and feelings, we also hear from Him, His heart and love.

We can pray at anytime, anywhere and any place. Prayers can be long, short, formal, informal, done alone or as part of a group.

God hears us

God has proven through the Bible that he hears and answers prayers from a sincere heart. If what you are asking is within His will and He knows it will be good for us.

It may not be given in the way you expect, but it will still be the outcome you wanted. We do not know what is around the corner, but He knows all so He can know now what is best for us weeks, months, years down the line. Do not put a limit on prayer requests, perhaps use a prayer journal so you can look back over time to see how your prayers were answered so strengthening your faith.

Forgive and Forget?

Following Jesus' teachings also means showing mercy and compassion, not only to friends and family, but to our enemies. It is only mercy and compassion when these are extended whilst unmerited and undeserved. So, no matter what evil or hurt is dealt you, we must, as Jesus said, forgive 70 x 70 meaning unlimited forgiveness. This is by no means easy, it's a choice.

Forgiveness does not mean forgetting or condoning, but committing to work to let the hurt and need for vengeance go. If you cannot forgive others, how do you expect forgiveness from God. Forgiveness is not just a spiritual tool, but also a useful tool for healing the body of stress, negativity and is of “great benefit to the health”. Jesus lived a life of mercy and compassion and forgiveness to the ultimate. He did this by leaving His relationship with God in heaven, suffering on the Cross and dying for our sins, just to bring us back into a relationship with God.

What is Love?

The way to show our love for God is to keep His commandments. Love is not just a word, an expression of feeling, it is an action. Loving God is founded on obedience to his commands of what to do and what not to do. It was the lack of obedience in the garden of Eden that caused man’s close relationship with God to be severed.

We must aspire to show love to everyone and be concerned about our neighbour - that means all people and not just those who love us or act lovingly. We must love our enemies and exclude no one because of race, social status, ethnicity, sexual orientation, economic standing etc. It’s not easy, it’s very hard, but remember... Jesus asked for God to forgive us while we were killing him on the cross. God sends the sun and the rain on all of us bad or good, and we must love the same.

What makes it easier to follow Jesus' teachings?

The Holy Spirit. This is whom/what we depend on to help us through the natural inclination of our human nature (sin), to transform us into Jesus' followers. The Holy Spirit was sent to us after Jesus was resurrected and went back to His Father, in heaven. Jesus knowing that it would be impossible for us to follow His radical teachings, sent His disciples (and us) a **Comforter** to replace His physical presence. This **Comforter** (which is the spirit of God) lives in us and is the promised divine helper, the power and presence of God in us. The Holy Spirit inspires and shows us when we go wrong. It will bring to mind relevant words from the Bible that will help us in certain situations. It convicts us of our wrongdoing so we can repent and move on. It teaches us, it guides us, it comforts just as a friend would, it empowers those in service to Him (ministers etc). **Only Faith in Jesus** brings the Holy Spirit into our lives (John 14:15-18 & 26 and <https://bibleproject.com/explore/holy-spirit/>) We need the Holy Spirit to give us the strength to disregard our natural sin nature in our daily lives.

Simple acts of kindness

There is also a social expectation when following Jesus' teachings. We must help the needy, the socially discarded, the poor and marginalised, in whatever ways we can. Give unselfishly. God has given us various means and talents to utilise - some will earn money to give, some will give time, some will give food, etc. We must learn to, "**do unto others as you would have them do to you**" (Matthew 7:12).

Speak kindly to others, avoid hurtful gossip, don't judge harshly etc. as long as we have our own faults and sinfulness.

Being human we always will have our faults so we don't have the right to criticise others. See Matthew 5:44-45. If we want to reap the rewards of our heavenly Father, then we too must love as he loves.

Don't worry if you don't get it right the first time...

We are all imperfect humans and we are all sinners (Romans 3:21-24, Romans 5:12 and 1 John 1:18). As disciples we are called to comply with the high ethical standards Jesus set. If we fail, we can take comfort in knowing that God is merciful and is always willing to give us another chance when we sincerely repent (Matthew 25:24-30 & Romans 2:1-4)





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