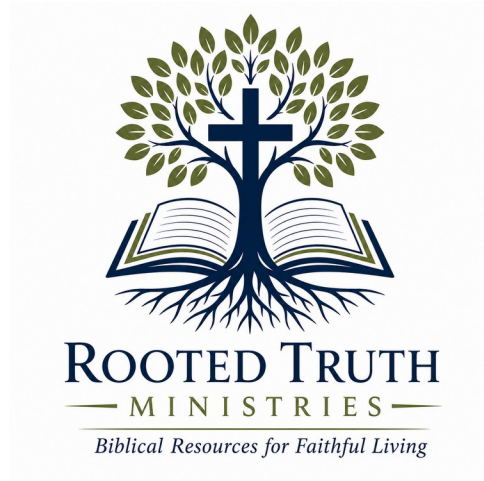




THE ROOTED WAY • EPISODE 2

# What It Actually Means to Follow Jesus

*“Jesus describes discipleship as a complete reorientation of life.”*

## EPISODE STUDY & SHOW NOTES

Designed for listening, personal study, small-group discussion, and use inside Rooted Word.



# Episode Overview

**Key question:** Can someone believe in Jesus, attend church, call themselves a Christian - and still not actually be following Him?

**Big idea:** Following Jesus is not merely admiring Him, believing He exists, agreeing with Christian beliefs, or adding religion to our lives. It is a grace-enabled life of repentance, faith, self-denial, obedience, and continuing dependence on Christ.

**Primary passage:** Luke 9:23-26

**Supporting passages:** Mark 1:14-20; John 8:31-32; John 14:15; Ephesians 2:8-10; James 1:22-25; Hebrews 10:24-25; Matthew 28:18-20

## WHY THIS MATTERS

### Discipleship is not an accessory to Christianity.

Jesus did not merely call people to acknowledge Him. He called them to follow Him. The episode keeps grace and obedience in their proper order: we do not obey so Christ will save us; obedience is the fruit of a life He has saved and is transforming.

## 1. Read

Read Luke 9:23-26 slowly. Pay attention to Jesus' verbs: deny, take up, follow, lose, save.

### Consider

- What does Jesus place at the center of discipleship?
- Why do you think Jesus says to take up the cross daily?
- What do these verses challenge about a merely cultural or comfortable Christianity?

## 2. Understand

### Following Jesus Begins With Repentance and Faith

The episode connects Jesus' call to follow Him with His proclamation in Mark 1: repent and believe the gospel. Following Jesus begins when a sinner turns from sin and self-rule and places trust in Christ.

## THEOLOGICAL GUARDRAIL

### Obedience is fruit, not the price of justification.

Ephesians 2:8-10 keeps the order clear: saved by grace, through faith, not by works, and then created in Christ for good works.

### Questions

- What is the difference between believing facts about Jesus and actually trusting Him?
- Why are repentance and faith inseparable in the episode's presentation?
- Why is following Jesus not the same as trying to become a better person?

### 3. Deny Yourself

Self-denial does not mean self-hatred, neglecting legitimate responsibilities, refusing every pleasure, or earning spiritual credit through suffering. It means surrendering the right to rule your own life.

- Christ's will is higher than my preference.
- Christ's Word is more authoritative than my feelings.
- Christ's glory matters more than my reputation.
- Obedience matters more than comfort.
- I no longer belong to myself.

*“Self-denial is not the destruction of the person God made. It is the death of our claim to be our own master.”*

#### Reflect

- What happens when Jesus' commands conflict with our desires?
- Where are you most tempted to treat Christ's Word as advice rather than authority?
- What area of life is hardest for you to surrender?

### 4. Take Up the Cross

The cross was an instrument of shame and death. Jesus' audience would not have heard “take up your cross” as a vague metaphor for inconvenience. The episode defines cross-bearing as accepting the cost of belonging to Jesus.

#### Possible costs of allegiance

- Losing approval or being misunderstood.
- Rejecting sinful opportunity.
- Confessing wrongdoing.
- Forgiving someone who hurt you.
- Remaining faithful when obedience is costly.
- Refusing to compromise truth.
- Enduring rejection or persecution.

#### IMPORTANT BALANCE

#### **Not every hardship is cross-bearing.**

Some suffering results from foolishness, sin, or harshness. The episode's point is not that Christians should seek suffering, but that they must remain faithful when obedience to Christ becomes costly.

### 5. Following Jesus Produces Obedience

The source distinguishes legalism from gospel obedience. Obedience does not earn salvation, but it is presented as the necessary fruit of genuine faith.

- Legalism: I obey so God will accept me.
- Gospel obedience: God has accepted me in Christ, so I desire to obey Him.
- Antinomian error: Since salvation is by grace, obedience does not matter.
- Biblical discipleship: Grace forgives and trains us to live under Christ's rule.

## Questions

- What does imperfect but genuine obedience look like?
- How should believers respond when they fail?
- What is the difference between struggling with a command and rejecting its authority?

## 6. Following Jesus Happens in Community

Jesus calls individual people, but the episode insists He does not form isolated disciples. Following Christ includes meaningful participation in the life of the church.

- Belonging to a local church.
- Sitting under biblical teaching.
- Worshiping with believers.
- Receiving correction.
- Bearing burdens.
- Serving others.
- Making disciples.
- Participating in baptism and the Lord's Supper.

*“Brotherhood matters because discipleship was never meant to be practiced alone.”*

## 7. Apply

### Five questions for self-examination

1. What am I trusting - Christ alone, or my morality, church involvement, baptism, prayer, or experience?
2. Who is ruling my life - do I treat Christ's Word as authority or advice?
3. What am I refusing to surrender - a relationship, habit, ambition, bitterness, or secret sin?
4. Where is obedience currently costing me something - and am I willing to remain faithful?
5. Who is helping me follow Jesus - am I meaningfully connected to a faithful local church and honest Christian relationships?

#### THIS WEEK

**Read Luke 9:23-26 each morning for seven days.**

Ask, "What would denying myself, taking up my cross, and following Jesus look like today?" Write down one concrete act of obedience and follow through.

## 8. Pray

Pray for men and women to take up their cross daily and follow Jesus. Ask God for opportunities to obey Him faithfully, for courage where obedience is costly, and for everything in your life to bring Him glory.

## 9. Further Scripture for Study

**Mark 1:14-20** - Repent, believe the gospel, and follow Christ.

**Ephesians 2:8-10** - Grace, faith, and good works in their proper order.

**John 14:15** - The relationship between love for Christ and obedience.

**James 1:22-25** - Hearing the Word and doing it.

**Matthew 28:18-20** - Discipleship, baptism, teaching, and obedience.

#### CLOSING TAKEAWAY

**Following Jesus is continuing allegiance.**

To follow Jesus is to receive Him by faith, surrender our self-rule, obey His Word, endure the cost of allegiance, and continue depending on His grace.

## Listen & Continue

**Podcast:** The Rooted Way - What It Actually Means to Follow Jesus

**Episode resources:** [rootedtruthministries.org/podcasts](https://rootedtruthministries.org/podcasts)

**Study collection:** The Rooted Way Studies in Rooted Word

**Rooted in Scripture. Growing in truth. Living faithfully.**