

Casual Christian

It is such a fight in the, American Church to live the life of a Disciple. To be a Christ Follower, and just to take the obvious words of Jesus and take them literally and live them out. The American Church has tried to mix itself with the American Dream! In the church today many, if not all, of us battle with living a life that is self gratifying, self indulgent, and comfortable. We want to say that we are following Christ, but truly, Christ would scarcely walk into some of the places, thoughts and emotions that we do. I'm not saying that I roll out of bed rip raring and ready to sacrifice and give myself totally away. But I want to, want too! I am working this whole pursuit of Christ, and devoted follower, right along with you!

The Church has miraculously found in scripture, a secret hidden, deep, deep, deep in some ancient Hebrew texts, this secret is called the "MIDDLE ROAD"!

Have you ever heard of it!?

This middle road is the highway of life that, you don't have to be this sold out, radical, self sacrificing type of person to follow Christ. You can be a good person who professes Christ and does some good things!

Did you all know that there is a "narrow road" = that leads to life!
"wide road" = that leads to destruction!
"new middle road" = a car pool Lane!

Remember the game "Follow The Leader" Very simple game, isn't it!

You just did what the leader did... In the church we've twisted this and made following Jesus is a different game!

You don't have to really follow him... you can just do it your heart or I've thought about it and it's right.

Actions must match our profession.

John 14:15 If you love me, you will obey what I command.

1 John 2:3-4 We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. 4 The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Matthew 16:24-26 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Luke 14:31-35 "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not 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. 33 In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple. "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out.

James 2:19-20 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that — and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless

Luke 18:18-27 A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good — except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.'" "All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said. When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth. 24 Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus replied, "What is impossible with men is possible with God."

Casual Christians... attend church fairly regularly. It is what is expected of them, what they believe "good Christians" do, so they go.

Casual Christians... give money to charity and to the church ... as long as it doesn't impinge on their standard of living. If they have a little extra and it is easy and safe to give, they do so. After all, God loves a cheerful giver, right?

Casual Christians... tend to choose what is popular over what is right when they are in conflict. They desire to fit in both at church and outside of church; they care more about what people think of their actions (like church attendance and giving) than what God thinks of their hearts and lives.

Casual Christians... don't really want to be saved from their sin; they want only to be saved from the penalty of their sin. They don't genuinely hate sin and aren't truly sorry for it; they're merely sorry because God is going to punish them. **Casual Christians...** don't really believe that this new life Jesus offers is better than the old sinful one.

Casual Christians... are moved by stories about people who do radical things for Christ, yet they do not act. They assume such action is for "extreme" Christians, not average ones. **Casual Christians...** call "radical", what Jesus expected out of all of His followers. Not just a few!

Casual Christians... rarely share their faith with their neighbors, coworkers, or friends. They do not want to be rejected, nor do they want to make people uncomfortable by talking about private issues like religion.

Casual Christians... gauge their morality or "goodness" by comparing themselves to the secular world. They feel satisfied that while they aren't as hard-core for Jesus as so-and-so, they are nowhere as horrible as so-and-so down the street.

Casual Christians... say they love Jesus, and He is, indeed, a part of their lives. But only a part. They give Him a section of their time, their money, and their thoughts, but He isn't allowed to be Lord of their lives.

Casual Christians... love God, but they do not love Him with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength. They would be quick to assure you that they try to love God that much, but that sort of total devotion isn't really possible for the average person; it's only for pastors and missionaries and radicals.

Casual Christians... love others but do not seek to love others as much as they love themselves. Their love of others is typically focused on those who love them in return, like family, friends, and other people they know and connect with. There is little love left over for those who cannot love them back, much less for those who intentionally slight them, whose kids are better athletes than theirs, or with whom conversations are awkward or uncomfortable. Their love is highly conditional and very selective, and generally comes with strings attached.

Casual Christians... will serve God and others, but there are limits to how far they will go or how much time, money and energy they are willing to give.

Casual Christians... think about life on earth much more often than eternity in heaven. Daily life is mostly focused on today's to-do list, this week's schedule, and next month's vacation. Rarely, if ever, do they intently consider the life to come. Regarding this, C.S. Lewis writes, "If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this one."

Casual Christians... are thankful for their luxuries and comforts, and rarely consider trying to give as much as possible to the poor. They are quick to point out, "Jesus never said money is the root of all evil, only that the love of money is." Untold numbers of **Casual Christians...** feel "called" to minister to the rich; very few feel "called" to minister to the poor.

Casual Christians... do whatever is necessary to keep themselves from feeling too guilty. They want to do the bare minimum, to be "good enough" without it requiring too much of them.

Casual Christians... are continually concerned with playing it safe; they are slaves to the god of control. This focus on safe living keeps them from sacrificing and risking for God.

Casual Christians... feel secure because they attend church, made a profession of faith at age twelve, were baptized, come from a Christian family, vote Republican, or live in America. Just as the prophets in the Old Testament warned Israel that they were not safe just they lived in the land of Israel, so we are not safe because we wear the label *Christian* or because some people persist in calling us a "Christian nation."

Casual Christians... do not live by faith; their lives are structured so they never have to. They don't have to trust God if something unexpected happens – they have their savings account. They don't need God to help them – they have their retirement plan in place. They don't genuinely seek out what life God would have them live – they have life figured and mapped out. They don't depend on God on a daily basis – their refrigerators are full and, for the most part, they are in good health. The truth is, their lives wouldn't look much different if they suddenly stopped believing in God.

Casual Christians... probably drink and swear less than average person, but besides that, they really aren't very different from your typical unbeliever. They equate their partially sanitized lives with holiness, but they couldn't be more wrong.

Luke 18:27 says... Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus replied, "What is impossible with men is possible with God."

Who then can be a Christ Follower!?

Who then can be the Church!?

You & I CAN..... With GODAll Things Are Possible!

SO if you and I are to truly be the type of people & the type of Church that would Honor Christ...

What would it look like?

Let's turn to Acts 2 and find out!

Acts 2:42-27 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

- 1.) They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship
 - ... They were under a shepherd and devoted to the application of the Apostle's message!
 - ... They were consistent, committed and called to the church. e.g. (fellowship)
- 2.) ...To the breaking of Bread and to Prayer.
 - ... They Broke Bread e.g. (communion)
 - 1 Corinthians 11:26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes
 - ... They were dedicated to a life of prayer. (1st heathen, 2nd church, 3rd personal needs)
- 3.) AS A RESULT OF THESE THINGS WHAT HAPPENED!?!?
 - ... Everyone was filled with awe
 - ... Many signs and wonders followed those who believed

As a result of what was happening in the church, the Followers Of Christ were compelled to follow their Leader. The great example that was set before them! The calling of Christ!

- 4.) All Together.... Having Everything In Common!
 - ... Unity in the Body of Christ
 - ... Together all were pointed in the same direction, towards the same goal, having the same mission
 - ... "Common" "*Koinonia*" = to share w/ others or partner with. Participation in the lives of others!
- 5.) Selling their possessions / goods, they gave to **ALL** who had need
 - ... Not just those worthy of a blessing
 - ... Not just those who earned it or offered to pay them back w/interest
 - ... But rather **EVERYONE / ALL** they knew... in the circle and out of it
 - ... Does The Word **ALL**... have an alternate meaning, I know nothing about?
- 6.) Every day they met together at church. (Temple)
 - ... This was more than just a watering hole kind of thing.... Their life revolved around Christ... they were the body of Christ, they were the bride of Christ. We who are many make up 1!
- 7.) Following Christ Started in the church and continued into the home.
 - ... Again with the Communion, Again with the eating (no wonder)
 - ... Filled with Glad & sincere hearts... Hospitality is to be the characteristic of all Believers
 - ... 1 Peter 4:9 Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling
- 8.) They praised God and enjoyed the favor of all people.
 - ... Why were they Praising? Their guests were gone!
 - You don't gotta go home but you gotta git the heck out of here! (IT'S GETTING DARK OUT!)
 - ... The favor of all people, means that they were being effective servants, devoted to all, showing charity, being cheerful in serving God. These are the things that will show Jesus to **ALL!**
- 9.) Daily, The Lord added to their numbers those that were being saved!