

If you want to know how to follow Christ in 2026 you have to know...

What your purpose is

Purpose

- What will be noticed most is not the words you say but your actions and what you live for
- This should come out of your purpose in life
- I have seen people that lack drive and clear direction
- I am talking physical direction and spiritual direction
- **Physical direction** —You should know where you're going and have goals and plans with your career, with your family, with relationships, boundaries, hobbies, financially, ect...
- Physical plans drive your life and the actions you take
- We often operate out of physical events
- Our experiences shape who we are and our responses to things
- But it's good to have a plan physically
- You will miss the target 100% of the time if you don't aim
- To make a physical plan a Christian must ask themselves "what spiritual direction is God leading me?"
- **Spiritual direction** – Because if you don't have direction, you will be an easy target for the enemy
- To figure this out you must be willing to listen for the leading of the Holy Spirit
- Also submitting to whatever God wants to do
- Both your physical goals and spiritual goals should align to make up your core values
- Thinking of a core values you must ask yourself...
- What would you call your purpose in life?
- Does your life reflect what you believe?
- What influences your decision making?

Here are some things to think about as you think of what you want your purpose in life to be?

A. How should a believer act

- **1 Corinthians 2:14-15**
- You should act different because you have the Holy Spirit living in you
- This means what you believe should be filtered through the lens of scripture
- If I believe something to be true but it contradicts what the Bible says I change my thinking
- You cannot form the Bible your opinions
- The Bible is the unchanging Word of God – **2 Timothy 3:16-17**
- If the bible impacts your decisions and your purpose you must know what it says – **Romans 10:17**
- You can't be content with letting everyone else interpret scripture for you
- This involves getting into it everyday

To figure out your purpose you must also?

B. Walk like a believer

- **Romans 12:1-2**
- The world will transform you into it if you let it
- Your goal is not to be more worldly but Christ like
- This happens through the sanctification process
- But the world has its own sanctification process
- This verse says we must discern the will of God
- He doesn't write a book of exactly what you need to do
- A DTS professor said if the Bible is an instruction manual for your life it's the worst instruction manual ever written. It seems to be missing a lot of details
- He followed it up by saying "Yet the Bible has everything you need for this life"
- God hasn't given you every little detail, but he has given you what you need to follow him
- When it comes to purpose it's not what is my purpose in life but what is Gods purpose in my life

- When it comes to your specific purpose, may you consider how God designed you and the opportunities he has given you
- We often want to have some drawn out detailed plan
- Yet God has provided opportunities in your life
- I believe the situations your put in everyday are not by accident
- God can use you in them for his glory
- Or we can choose to enact our own will and desire upon them
- God has also made us all differently
- You have been created differently for different things
- Your passions and interests are different
- You might be more mathematically focused and good with numbers
- You may be better at building things
- You may be a better leader
- God has not designed two people the same – Psalm 139:14
- I don't believe he made a mistake when you were created
- Maybe you are the way the you are because he wants to use the gifts he has given you

3 Purposes God has for every believer

1. Your purpose is to Grow in your faith

- 1 Peter 2:2

- This sounds like an obvious statement
- But we all need to grow up at times
- In Christ we should want to grow up
- Unlike life we don't naturally become spiritually mature
- You have to strive every day for it
- The word Christian means "Little Christ"
- You can be a walking billboard proclaiming Christ or a turn off for people
- Don't be the Christian that says they are a Christian by word and not deed

2. Your purpose is to connect with others who are following Jesus

- Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

- We often undermine the influence that people have on us
- Good Godly council is exactly what we need
- To rub shoulders with other Christians
- To bounce ideas off of them

- Proverbs 27:17

- The reality is they might have walked through a struggle you are currently in
- They should be helping you navigate life through the ups and downs
- You were not made to be a Christian in a vacuum
- If that is not happening the like a kid on the playground, change your playmates
- You should surround yourself with people who have the same goals
- You will slowly become like your 5 closest friends
- You will talk and act more and more like them
- If these people are not God fearing then they will hinder and possibly derail you
- Make sure your connected to the right people

3. Your purpose is to tell people about Jesus

- 1 Peter 2:9

- We are Christs walking ambassadors
 - News flash the great commission was not meant just for you
 - If you get excited about a new movie coming out you tell people about it and invite them to come with you
 - So you're not good sharing
 - Try and turn the conversation from physical things to spiritual things
 - You may not have the right words or all the answers
 - Keep trying and don't get defeated
 - It can take years of conversations for someone to come to Christ
 - Think of the parable of the seed
 - Sometimes all you are doing a lot of watering
 - Don't get discouraged and keep going
- I would encourage you to think what is God's purpose for your life?

- Are you currently fulfilling it?
- What could you do better?
- What things could you change?

What Does It Look Like To Follow Jesus

- Last week we talked about your purpose in Life.
- I believe that this is the foundation on which you should build upon
- These are like presuppositions, we all know we have them, and we bring them to the table
- To accomplish something you must first know the target and where you are aiming
- But now that we have moved past that what does it look like to follow Jesus today
- We don't have a physical rabbi to follow like the disciples did
- Things today look differently than it did in the gospels
- So how do we follow someone we cannot physically see or touch?

1. The Invitation: Follow Me

- When Jesus called His disciples, He didn't give them a system He gave them Himself.
- **John 1:43**
- **Matthew 4:18-22**
- "Follow Me" was more than an invitation to walk behind a teacher.
- When Jesus called His first disciples, He didn't hand them a checklist He gave them an invitation into a relationship: "Follow me."
- In the first century, this meant more than walking behind a teacher.
- A disciple would adopt the rabbi's teaching, lifestyle, priorities their entire way of life.
- Think about it, they followed Jesus day in and day out
- They ate the food that he ate
- They hiked the same mountains he hiked
- They stood by and watched miracles take place
- They saw opposition and rejection up close
- We don't have that physical experience today, but Jesus has not left us without direction or help.
- God has given us 2 tools that the disciples didn't have to help us today
- **1. The Holy Spirit**
- The Holy Spirit is a helper to you
- **John 16:13-14**
- The Holy Spirit leads us, convicts us of sin, helps us produce spiritual growth
- **Romans 8:14**

- To be a disciple means you must have the Holy Spirit
- This is a tool for your benefit that we now have
- **2. The Church**
- The Church is not a physical building, if it was then we would worship the Church building and be similar to Catholics
- The Church is the church because of the believers that gather there
- There can be house churches in Asia because it is gathering of the children of God

- The Greek word is “ekklesia” this means “a called-out assembly or congregation”

- Paul says that he has persecuted the Ekklesia of God

- **1 Corinthians 15:9**

- Out of this we get the word ecclesiology (Study of the doctrine concerning the Church)
- The Church for us today is meant to be a blessing because we don’t have the physical Jesus
- When your spiritual battery is getting drained it is meant to recharge it
- Often times we treat church like a chore as a kid
- We don’t want to do it but we do it because we feel like we have too
- Often times I would drag my feet and do chores as slowly as possible to be dramatic. Other times I would see how many corners I could cut before I was caught
- Church shouldn’t be a chore for the believer but a place where we can learn, grow and fellowship with other Christians
- Think about it: when you’re drained spiritually, the Church is meant to help recharge you not burden you.
- Today we think following Jesus is just going to church on Sunday or reading the Bible
- It’s not just adding Jesus to your life it’s making Him the center of it.
- Think of following GPS directions. You can agree with the route, but if you don’t actually turn the wheel, you’re not following. Many people “agree” with Jesus but don’t align their lives.
- He has given us the steps we need today to follow him, His Word, the Holy Spirit and the Church

- To make him the center of your life means there is nothing in my life that is off limits to Jesus
- We often like to be in control of everything, we like to play backseat driver with God
- Telling him exactly how we want everything to work
- You may let God into 99% of your life. Over most of what you do
- But of there is anything that God is not in the center of aka that 1% of that secret sin that you won't let go
- To be 1% unknown by God is to be fully unknown
- He knows everything, nothing is hidden from him and he wants to be the center of your life
- Your life should be so consumed by Christ that of a mosquito bites you it fly's away singing there is power in the blood

2. Deny Yourself (The Hard Part)

- "Deny yourself" does not mean self-hatred.
- Jesus makes it clear: following Him involves sacrifice.
- How has your life changed since accepting Christ
- I can tell you today if I was not a follower of Christ, my relationship with Karly would look different. What I do for work would look different. My hobbies would look different. The way I spend money would look different. The way I interact with people would look different
- Following after Christ now becomes more of a chore

- Luke 9:23

- This is where following Jesus becomes costly.
- "Deny yourself" doesn't mean self-hatred, it means rejecting the idea that you are the ultimate authority in your life.
- It take humility not pride
- Jesus willingly went to the cross
- The disciples though we don't know how most of them died
- Church tradition teaches of persecution for the majority of them
- **Peter:** Crucified upside down in Rome (ca. 64-67 AD).
- **Andrew:** Crucified on an X-shaped cross in Greece.
- **James (son of Zebedee):** Beheaded with a sword in Jerusalem (ca. 44 AD).
- **John:** Died of old age in Ephesus, survived being boiled in oil.
- **Philip:** Crucified or stoned in Hierapolis, Asia Minor.
- **Bartholomew (Nathanael):** Flayed to death or beaten in Armenia.

- **Thomas:** Speared to death (stabbed) in India.
- **Matthew:** Killed by a sword in Ethiopia.
- **James (son of Alphaeus):** Stoned or beaten to death in Jerusalem.
- **Jude (Thaddaeus):** Killed with arrows or an axe.
- **Simon the Zealot:** Crucified, sawed in half, or martyred in Persia.
- **Judas Iscariot:** Committed suicide by hanging.
- **Matthias (replaced Judas):** Stoned and beheaded in Jerusalem.
- I am not saying you have to die
- But I am saying if God calls you to something would you be willing to take the step no matter the cost
- It takes us to stop asking, “What do I want?” and start asking, “What does God want?”
- To be a disciple means to surrender your rights, preferences, and control
- **Matthew 10:38-39**
- “Take up your cross daily” meant something very real to Jesus audience it symbolized death. Not comfort. Not convenience
- This goes against the culture that says follow your heart and do whatever makes you happy
- If you want to be self-centered then that’s a perfect way to do things
- If you want to be a disciple it means following Jesus through thick and thin
- **2 Timothy 2:11-13**
- Paul holds himself to a high standard throughout scripture
- Paul says that because of his pride he must die everyday
- **1 Corinthians 15:31**
- This is like dethroning yourself as king and letting Jesus take the throne. Most people don’t mind Jesus being important they struggle with Him being in charge.
- Denying yourself can be answered in one question: Can you humble yourself enough to give up control?

3. Abide in Jesus (Stay Connected)

- To “abide” is to live, continue, or remain; so, to abide in Christ is to live in Him or remain in Him
- When we get saved we are described as being in Christ
- **Romans 8:1**
- How can you stay connected if you find yourself apart

- A relationship will not last if the couple does not spend time together
- You can not live 2 separate lives and go in 2 separate directions and expect to be one flesh
- To abide in Jesus means to stay connected and to seek after
- **John 15:4-5**
- Jesus shifts the focus here from effort to connection. A branch doesn't *try* to produce fruit it simply stays connected to the vine.
- By staying connected to the vine you produce fruit
- If the branch is not producing fruit then you prune it and trim it

- Abide means Remaining in close relationship with Jesus

- Depending on Him moment-by-moment
- Letting His Word shape your thinking

- You can know of Jesus but not abide in him
- I can know of someone without knowing them personally
- This takes time and for a Christian is like recharging
- A phone can have amazing features but if it's not charged, it's useless.
- Abiding is your spiritual power source.
- Abiding in Christ is also taught in **1 John 2:5-6**
- This description leads me to believe, abiding is not optional is essential for anyone who calls themselves a follower of Christ
- Another word for this could be dwell
- We dwell and stew on big decisions or hard situations
- Dwelling in Christ is how we today don't get disconnected from the father
- To drift away, may be easier then you might think
- To abide is like being tethered to Christ, connected to him
- **John 8:31**
- If anyone calls themselves his disciple then they will abide
- Does that mean if we don't abide, we are not truly his disciples
- Because what purpose would you have if you didn't abide?
- You wouldn't have a purpose because you wouldn't bear any fruit
- What purpose does a fruit tree serve if it doesn't produce fruit

- Abiding, something we all could do better if we are honest
- The question has to be asked what does it look like to abide in Jesus today? In 2026?
- This is a very loaded question that could be taken in many different directions

- We live in a culture that actively works against abiding

We are always:

- Scrolling
- Listening
- Consuming

But rarely:

- Sitting
 - Meditating
 - reflecting
- Its hard keep focus when everything is set up to distract you and take your attention
 - Our culture is designed to entertain you and steal your attention
 - You have to be busy doing something at all times
 - We don't know what it is like to be bored anymore
 - Sometimes we must slow down and eliminate distractions
 - Set up your life so that you can abide, that may mean cutting things out so you can breath and think
 - In a culture that is designed to take your attention, you must actively fight to unhurry your life
 - You can't abide if you don't make time for God
 - Another thing that we do is Performance based Christianity
 - You cant abide if your competing
 - I don't see it a ton a church here but there are many churches where you privately compete to be the best
 - You cant abide if your too busy trying to best your neighbor
 - It's the idea that ore equals better
 - The more you do the faster burnout can creep in
 - How about independence and self sufficiency
 - It's the "I got this mindset"
 - You cant abide if you are not dependent on Christ
 - You need him like you need to breath

Abiding requires humility:

- Admitting need
- Rejecting self-reliance
- Depending daily on Christ
- Abiding is not about adding more to your life.
- It's about centering your life on one thing: Jesus.
- You don't need more strategies.
You need deeper connection.
- The branch doesn't worry about fruit.
It stays connected to the vine.
- And the fruit comes.

4. Obey His Words

- Obedience requires you action
- We obey because he is the way the truth and the life
- We would not follow if he was the way the fake and a lie
- Obedience requires commitment
- Commitment both in good and bad and the ugly
- **John 14:15**
- Obedience is where faith becomes visible in the believers day to day life
- Obedience isn't about earning God's love it's responding to it
- Partial obedience is still disobedience
- To obey you must know, you cant follow what you don't understand

- **James 1:22**

- Knowledge without obedience leads to spiritual stagnation.
- Obedience is not won by one decision
- Obedience is won by many daily decisions over a lifetime
- We follow in obedience out of love

- **1 John 5:3**

- Out of love for God we keep his commandments
- This is not walking blindly but trusting and walking forward

- This of people in the Bible that model obedience
- **Abraham** – was told a land I will show you – **Gen. 12:1**
- Being will to sacrifice Issac and having enough faith that even if god killed his son he could raise him up again
- **Noah** – Build an ark – **Gen. 6:13-14**
- **Moses** – Obedience led him to talk to Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of Egypt – **Exodus 3:10**
- **Gideon** – He is was told to shrink his army – out oof obedience he did
- **Joshua** – told to walk around the walls of Jericho and they would fall
- **Acts** – They were told to go - by faith and in obedience they did
- Every one of them had the free will and ability to say no, yet they operated in obedience and said yes
- Today we are told to act and do things as Christians
- We have the free will to say no and go our own ways
- God doesn't want just part of us, he wants all of us
- God can do amazing things with a heart fully surrendered to him and his will
- It takes many daily actions to follow him

- Read scripture and ask yourself, “What will I do differently because of this?”
- Pray and ask, What truth do I already know but haven’t acted on?

5. Live on Mission

- To follow Jesus in 2026, you have to live on mission
- If you are in the military, you signed up and everything you do gets rewired
- They want someone to live on mission, to be willing to obey anything
- The difference Is off of deployment they can relax
- There is no home life break for Christians
- Your life should reflect what you say

- Matthew 28:18-20

- Following Jesus always leads outward. You’re not just saved from something you’re saved for something.
- You don’t need a platform you need intentionality
- your life should reflect what you believe and what you do
- Who hides thee light under a basket
- The light should spread and be seen by others

- Matthew 5:14-16

- Shining happens when you have the Holy Spirit and are following God wherever he leads

- Practical Ways to Live This Out:

- Pray for specific people regularly
- Follow Jesus even when it’s not convenient
- Invite people into your life (meals, church, conversations)
- Don’t change who you are based on the context and circumstance

- Galatians 2:20

- Let Christ Guide and lead your life
- To do that we must make the choice to pick up our cross and follow him daily

- Luke 9:23

- This links well back to obedience and they go hand and hand

6. Count the Cost

- To follow Jesus today must count the cost
- We talked about the commitment that comes with that
- Its not the altar call or praying a prayer, its living this out afterwords

- **Luke 14:27-28**

- You don't start building the house until you know you have all the money to buy the material
- Why would you follow Jesus if your not willing to put in the effort
- You have to make the choice and put in the effort
- He may ask you to give up bad habits that are holding you back
- He may ask you to go somewhere or do something that is inconvenient
- Its not popular to follow Jesus, people may think your weird
- It cost Jesus his life to pay for your sins and we question giving up something small in our lives
- The disciples left there entire lives behind
- Really, You're not just giving things up, you're gaining something greater.
- What you gain far outweighs the cost
- The downside to not following Jesus is warm and unpleasant forever
- That's not our motivation, our motivation should be because we see who he is and we want to because of God character
- Because we get to have a relationship with the God of the universe

- **Romans 12:1**

- We give up control to gain God

- The flip side is – **Mark 8:36**

- Jesus never hid the difficulty

- **2 Timothy 3:12**

- There is a reason why people never followed him
- Think of the rich man that would not give up his wealth
- He counted the cost and said it wasn't worth it
- Jesus is not looking for impulsive decisions but surrendered disciples.

- **Matthew 13:44-46**

- Its like finding treasure in the field and then buying the whole field
- Its like the best pearl that any merchant could ever find, you would sell all that you have to gain it
- Jesus did not call us merely to believe facts about Him. He called us to follow Him completely.
- The real question is not:
“Is Christianity worth it?”
- The real question is:
“Is Jesus worthy?”
- And Scripture answers with a resounding yes.
- Ask yourself, If following Jesus became more difficult tomorrow, would I still follow?

7. Walk by the Spirit

- How should you follow Jesus if you don't walk in the spirit

- Galatians 5:16

- You cannot live the Christian life through willpower alone. God doesn't just give commands, He gives His Spirit.
- If it was up to us alone to follow Jesus we would fail every time
- We would get sidetracked
- We would end early
- God giving us a list of commands never worked, that's why the law never worked
- We have 2 commandments now and we can't follow them
- Who does good at loving their God with all their heart soul mind and strength?
- How about loving your neighbor as yourself
- We would fail 100% of the time, instead he has given us the Holy Spirit and encouraged us to walk in the spirit
- This means not walking in the flesh
- Putting off the old things in what we once did
- Again following Jesus makes us not be bench warmers but active participants and do something

- Romans 8:1-6

- Set your mind on the spirit
- If you're in Christ, don't just say it but think like it. Act like it
- Your mind should be focusing on him, going back toward God because that should be our focus

- John 16:13-14

- There are things today that we can only bear because of the Spirit
- Walking in the spirit and being led by the Holy Spirit are closely tied together yet are slightly different

- Galatians 5:22-23

- Think of the fruit of the spirit, everyone of them is needed
- Why is it called fruit of the spirit, because someone desiring the flesh will not put these on
- But if you are walking in the spirit you should be walking toward these things
- Fruit grows naturally when it is connected to the source

- Galatians 5:25-26

- Keeping in step with the spirit means not lagging behind
- Means you have a marching order

- Means if God has a plan for your life then maybe we need to be seeking that out
- Question: What causes believers to get out of step with the Spirit?
- How we can check ourselves today to make sure we are in step with the spirit

- Wrapping it all up
- Following Jesus today doesn't look much different then it did in years past
- Why because the gospel Transends culture and generation
- The gospel is everyone biggest need
- So following Jesus may look a little different, with different culture and context
- Phones add a new problem, tv and technology add their own issues
- Yet the same message applies today regardless of what happens in the world
- Here are some of the topics we talked about
 1. Purpose
 2. The Invitation: Follow Me
 3. Deny Yourself (The Hard Part)
 4. Abide in Jesus (Stay Connected)
 5. Obey His Words
 6. Live on Mission
 7. Count the cost
 8. Walk by the Spirit
- Following Jesus is a requirement for anyone who wants to call themselves a Christian
- My encouragement is your doing this walk along side of other believers and rubbing shoulders with them
- Don't think you're in the fight alone