

Who Are You Following – Part 3

We've been speaking to you about what it takes to "follow" God. Today, I want to switch gears and discuss the other side of the coin. I want to discuss what causes a person to "stop following" God?

John 6:66

*⁶⁶ From that time many of his disciples **WENT BACK**, and **WALKED NO MORE WITH HIM**.*

Here we have an example of individuals (disciples) who stopped walking or stopped following Him. Why did they stop following?

John 6:57, 59-61

*⁵⁷ As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that **EATETH ME**, even he shall live by me. ⁵⁹ These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. ⁶⁰ Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, this is an **HARD** saying; who can hear it? ⁶¹ When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this **OFFEND** you?*

The reason these disciples stopped following Jesus was because they were offended at the things they heard. They complained that some of the things Jesus said were "hard" to hear.

We tend to stop following God when we get offended. Moreover, we get offended when we hear or experience something hard!

Matthew 13:20–21

*²⁰ But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; ²¹ Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for **WHEN TRIBULATION OR PERSECUTION ARISETH** because of the word, by and by **HE IS OFFENDED**.*

This parable is describing individuals who, at one time, were excited to follow God. However, when they began to experience hardships (tribulation and persecution), they became offended and eventually stopped following. Moreover, the reason people become offended when they see or experience something hard is usually because they are dissatisfied (i.e. things aren't meeting their expectation).

John 6:61

*⁶¹ When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples **MURMURED** at it, he said unto them, Doth this **OFFEND** you?*

The reason Jesus suspected that these disciples were offended is because they were “murmuring” at Him. To murmur means to express one’s dissatisfaction; to grumble or complain.

Sometimes it’s not people that causes us to become offended (to quit and stop following). Sometimes it’s life! Life can become so difficult and hard that it causes us throw up our hands and quit.

How do we overcome this?

John 6:67–69

*67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? 68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. 69 And **WE BELIEVE** and are **SURE** that **THOU ART THAT CHRIST**, the Son of the living God.*

Notice why Peter and the rest of the disciples continued to follow Jesus—because they were SURE (believed) who He was! Even when we’re not sure about what God says, or sure about what He’s doing, we can always believe and be sure about Him.

2 Timothy 1:12

*12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know **WHOM** I have **BELIEVED**, and am **PERSUADED** that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*

Paul was persuaded and sure in WHOM he believed. Meaning, He was sure about God and His ability to perform what He promised!

Romans 4:20–21

*20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21 And being **FULLY PERSUADED** that, what he had promised, **HE WAS ABLE** also to perform.*

We follow because we believe the PROMISER and not just the promises. Moreover, people stumble because they are following an idea rather than an INDIVIDUAL. Also, we must understand that some things won’t be understood until we believe them first. Sometimes we must believe to understand, and we must believe in order to see!

Hebrews 11:3

*3 **THROUGH FAITH WE UNDERSTAND** that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

Psalms 27:13

*13 I had fainted, unless I had **BELIEVED TO SEE** the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*

2 Timothy 4:10

¹⁰ For Demas hath **FORSAKEN ME**, having **LOVED THIS PRESENT WORLD**, and is **DEPARTED** unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

Some people stop following or walking with God because they “love this present world” (i.e. they are trying to enjoy life).

2 Timothy 3:1–2, 4

¹ This know also, that in the last days **PERILOUS** times shall come. ² For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ⁴ Traitors, heady, highminded, **LOVERS OF PLEASURES MORE THAN LOVERS OF GOD;**

In the last days, people will forsake God, not just because things are perilous (or hard), but because they “love this world MORE than they love God.” When things become hard, we tend to quit people or things we don’t truly love. Therefore, we might say that perilous or hard times help to reveal where our loyalty truly lies!

1 John 2:15

¹⁵ Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man **LOVE THE WORLD**, the **LOVE OF THE FATHER IS NOT IN HIM.**

You cannot love the world AND love God at the same time. In fact, anyone who loves the world will eventually stop following God!

1 John 2:18–19

¹⁸ Little children, it is the **LAST TIME**: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. ¹⁹ **THEY WENT OUT FROM US**, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that **THEY WERE NOT AT ALL OF US.**

Notice, he said that those who do not continue with us were never truly with us. This sounds eerily similar to **Matthew 7**.

Matthew 7:21–23

²¹ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³ And then will I profess unto them, **I NEVER KNEW YOU:**

Jesus is using the word “know” in a relational sense, and not in a literal sense. He’s saying, “I never knew you relationally. Sure, you may serve Me, and you may

have spoken (prophesied) for Me. But, we were never in a real relationship.” In other words, you never truly loved God. If you had, then you would not have given up so easily!

Anyone who gives up (stops following the Lord) never truly loved Him. Either that, or they became distracted by other things!

Mark 4:18–19

*¹⁸ And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, ¹⁹ And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and **THE LUST OF OTHER THINGS** entering in, **CHOKE** the word, and it becometh unfruitful.*

The word “choke” means to crowd. Crowding occurs whenever you fill a space and leave little to no room for movement or to function.

Ever been in traffic? It’s difficult, if not impossible, to progress or move in heavy traffic. In fact, if traffic gets too bad, we will go in a different direction or stop following altogether!

Whenever we allow other things into our heart, we’re potentially creating traffic in our heart. Moreover, this “crowding” will limit our movement and make it difficult to follow God. In fact, if things become too crowded, we may be tempted to start looking for an alternative route. (The problem with this is that when it comes to following God, there are NO alternative routes!)

We should mention that this “choking” or crowding effect doesn’t happen all at once. It’s gradual.

Mark 4:7

*⁷ And some fell among thorns, and the thorns **GREW UP**, and **CHOKED IT**, and it yielded no fruit.*

Notice that it says, “The thorns GREW UP, and CHOKED [the seed].” In other words, distractions (the “lust for other things”) might start out small, but they will keep growing until they eventually start to limit our movement and progress! (Be careful of the “little foxes,” because they will eventually “spoil the vine.”)

Song of Solomon 2:15

*¹⁵ Take us the foxes, The **LITTLE FOXES**, that **SPOIL THE VINES**:*