



## Is Following Christ the Same as Following Christianity? (Part II)

**1 Corinthians 4:16-17:** (NASB) *<sup>16</sup>Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me. <sup>17</sup>For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.*



It seems like it would be a no-brainer to say that following Christ and following Christianity are synonymous. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Imperfect human beings have always been very adept at creating alternative interpretations and approaches to most everything. Christianity is no exception. In Part I of our two-part series, we began looking at some specific teachings of Jesus. We began holding Christianity up to the light of Jesus' words and asked, "How are we doing here?" In this episode we continue the process. Even though we are asking about Christianity, the resounding question that begs for an answer is this: Am I personally choosing to

follow Christ and his original teaching or am I personally settling for some form of altered or watered-down Christianity instead?

We are dropping in on specific teachings of Jesus and asking how churches in general apply these teachings. We are big supporters of topical Bible study and are not looking to "cherry pick" scriptures to fit a specific theology. We have scripturally explored all of these topics in depth in other podcast episodes, but here we are looking at the words of Jesus and the apostles as a high-level overview. Again, our main question to consider on all of these points will be:

*Is following Christ the same as following Christianity?*

**recap  
recap  
Part I**

**Jesus taught that humanity was doomed to death because of Adam's sin. He proclaimed death as the absence of life as taught in Genesis:**

**John 5:25:** (NASB) *Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the **dead** **<3498>** will hear the voice of the son of God, and those who hear will live.*

**Dead:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3498 *nekros*; (a corpse); dead (literally or figuratively; also as noun)

**Romans 6:23:** (NASB) *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

The mortal nature of humanity is consistently defined throughout all of the Bible. Jesus assured us that he did, in fact, come to save every man, woman and child from death in Adam. This is a basic foundation of Jesus' teachings found throughout all of Scripture.



*Is following Christ the same as following Christianity?*

Jesus did not teach the gospel would bring earthly abundance to his followers. On the contrary, he taught the very opposite.



### Jesus responded to Peter's question about Jesus' Messiahship:

**Luke 9:22-23:**(NASB) <sup>22</sup>...*The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day.* <sup>23</sup>*And he was saying to them all, if anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.*

The whole point of discipleship is NOT to be given physical abundance. On the contrary, it is to follow Jesus, who lived nowhere, had nothing and only focused on the fulfilling of God's will. He was an itinerant preacher (he traveled from place to place).

His modeling is of the highest form of dedication to God through Christ, and we want to follow in those footsteps.



### Is following Christ the same as following Christianity?

Jesus taught us that the sacredness of godly reverence should never be mixed with that which is common. He set this standard when he drove the moneychangers from the Temple:

**John 2:15-16:** (NASB) <sup>15</sup>*And he... drove them all out of the Temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; <sup>16</sup>and to those who were selling the doves he said, Take these things away; stop making my Father's house a place of business.*

Jesus laid out the foundation for what Christianity would look like by continually stepping above and beyond all other worldly systems. This was to be a holy church set up and governed in a higher way.



We were never to make God's work the work of normal business. It is spiritually driven with spiritual objectives, and we have to always be clear about that.

### Is following Christ the same as following Christianity?

Jesus stood for the highest standards of behavior on every level. The Sermon on the Mount is filled with examples of his raising of the bar.

**The fifth chapter of Ephesians does a wonderful job of summing up much of what Jesus taught:**

**Ephesians 5:3-4:** (NASB) <sup>3</sup>*But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; <sup>4</sup>and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.*

The formula for true Christian morality and ethics is simple. Hear the words of Jesus, accept the words of Jesus, apply the words of Jesus and thoroughly live the words of Jesus. No exceptions! Live differently than everyone around you.

It is so important to leave ourselves out of that equation. It is all about the words of Jesus. We looked at those four basic teachings of Jesus in Part I of our series. Now we move on to some new material with the same approach in mind.

*End recap*



## Is following Christ the same as following Christianity?

Jesus made it plain to his disciples that what they were given to know and follow would not be common. The high standard he gave them was not an option; it was a command. Keep the words of Jesus without compromise.

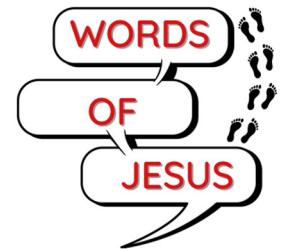
### The context is the night before his crucifixion:

**John 14:22-24:** (NASB) <sup>22</sup>Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, Lord, what then has happened that you are going to disclose yourself to us and not to the world? <sup>23</sup>Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to Him and make our abode with Him. <sup>24</sup>He who does not love me does not keep my words; and the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me.

Judas (not Iscariot) asks him: "How is it you are going to *disclose yourself to us and not to the world* - not everybody else?" To answer this perceptive question, Jesus goes on to say: "That is exactly what I am going to do. And not only that, but I need you to respond with this incredible loyalty. Love me. How do I know you love me? You follow my words."

We can feign love. We cannot feign loyalty. That is what Jesus is asking for here because he is treating Christians differently than he is treating the rest of the world.

It comes down to our personal loyalty to Jesus' words, no matter what our personal consequences may be, even if our church affiliation belittles us or persecutes us.



### IMPORTANT POINT

Am I going to stand for just the words of Jesus, even if it is not popular or accepted? Will I stand if people encourage us to relax our standards? We need to be clear to ourselves and to others that Jesus gave us a higher standard based on his words.

### The words of Jesus were the words of his Father; and therefore they were words of profound truth:

**John 17:17-19:** (NASB) <sup>17</sup>Sanctify (set apart for a holy purpose) them in the truth; Your word is truth. <sup>18</sup>As You sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup>For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

In John 14:15, we are instructed to keep the words of Jesus. Here we are assured the words are ultimately from the Father. We see the strong connectivity - the Father and Jesus are one in focus and in truth. Jesus set himself apart but also develops his disciples to do the same. As the conduit for the Father's truth, we trust Jesus to precisely represent God.

The Apostle Paul took this command - *If you love me, you will keep my commandments* - VERY seriously, as evidenced when he parted from the Ephesians for the last time.

## Paul had just told them that severe persecution was coming his way:

**Acts 20:24-27:** (NASB) <sup>24</sup>*But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. <sup>25</sup>And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face. (Such emotional distress they must have felt when he said this!) <sup>26</sup>Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. <sup>27</sup>For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.*

Paul completed his mission and was telling the brethren they were now equipped and accountable to uphold this high standard of truth. We are also.

Paul's message was simple: "You are not going to see me again. As I walk away from you for the very last time in this physical life, I have fully delivered to you all that I was commissioned to deliver. You now must use what you have been given to thrive in this life-changing gospel! Use what I have given you because there is nothing lacking."

**Q.** What did Paul mean by saying, *I am innocent of the blood of all men*?



In other words, it was up to them now. They had been given all the tools necessary. They would be ready for every circumstance they would come across. "I am innocent if you do not use those tools. I cannot be held responsible." This is an important point and recognize we also have the tools to equip ourselves with the gospel.

**Our thriving in the gospel requires us to learn and know the gospel. It also requires us to also be aware of when we might stand in the way of our own understanding of this gospel:**

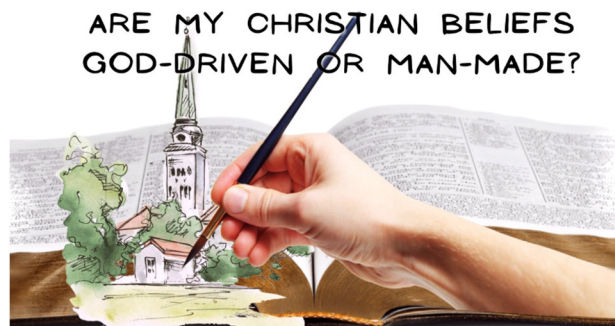
**2 Timothy 2:14-15:** (NASB) <sup>14</sup>*Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers.*

Why would we *wrangle about words*? Could this be happening because we are confusing our own preconceived ideas and "truth" with God's truth?

**We want to make sure there is purity in what we are seeking:**

<sup>15</sup>*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.*

We are to *be diligent* to accurately handle the words of God through Christ, as well as the rest of the Bible.



Jesus made the necessity to follow him abundantly clear. He taught God's truth and he specifically called 12 apostles to take that truth to whomever would listen. This tells us that this one uncompromising truth should not be diluted.



AM I WILLING TO COMPLETELY FOLLOW JESUS' WORDS,  
EVEN IF IT MEANS I MUST LET GO OF A HUMANLY  
COMFORTABLE AND COMPROMISED BELIEF SYSTEM FOR  
THE SAKE OF WHAT I SPIRITUALLY NEED?



The call of Christianity is a call to a unique present and an indescribable future. We need to pay close attention to this amazing privilege.

**Now that Jesus' words should have our undivided attention,  
what did he say about how we are to support one another?**

As we continue to meditate upon the words of Jesus, we also need to meditate on the actions of Jesus. It can be easy to forget that what Jesus spoke, Jesus did. Keeping this in mind will help us see his words in an even more powerful light. It will also help us focus on not only hearing his words but also following his actions.

*The words of Jesus and actions of Jesus  
are synonymous with following the  
truth of Scripture.*



**Is following Christ the same as following Christianity?**

Jesus instructed us regarding giving to others, though his instruction often did not seem to have the same kind of authority the teachings of the Pharisees had. Jesus showed us the differences!

**Here Jesus is teaching in the Temple:**



**Mark 12:38-44: (NASB)** <sup>38</sup>In his teaching he was saying: *Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and like respectful greetings in the market places, <sup>39</sup>and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, <sup>40</sup>who devour widows' houses and for appearance's sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation.*

Jesus sets the stage for some deep lessons by highlighting the respect and honor the Pharisees and scribes seek among men, as well as revealing how they *devour widow's houses* - how they take the little that widows have and essentially strip them of it.

**This is a big accusation:**

<sup>41</sup>And he sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. <sup>42</sup>A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent.

We can picture the scene. This is the busy time of Passover with locals and people from out of town - holiday traffic in the streets. This treasury obviously wasn't a private area if people could see how much was being donated by each person. This inherently brings public scrutiny, judgment and trying to impress others.

"Did you see how much so-and-so gave?" It is a little like passing the collection plate and being under pressure from what everyone else is giving.





We get the sense that everyone is watching and they are quiet and some rich person comes by and he pours out his bag of gold or silver coins. We hear them all clinking into the jar. And then this widow comes by and she puts in two cents - a little, tiny “clink, clink.” Then the next person comes in and *whoosh* - another big lot of coins. There is an incredible difference in the sound of the rich men’s wealth of coins compared to the widow’s “mite” of two tiny coins.



Jesus is observing this with his disciples, and after this happens, he pulls them in close, “Come here. I need to tell you what is happening.”

### He will teach a lesson most would miss:

<sup>43</sup>Calling his disciples to him, he said to them, Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; <sup>44</sup>for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.

Jesus is not focusing on an amount of giving; he is focusing on the motivation for giving. It is about the heart and having a proper humble attitude. The very small sacrifices and self-denials in the Master’s sight will be great, if they denote love to the LORD and His cause.

This is a tricky passage. Some churches twist this and say their parishioners should follow her example and give, give, give large offerings, even if they are in a precarious financial position. But we know Jesus was not teaching that, as he was accusing the Pharisees of *devouring widows’ houses*.

(Source: Wikipedia) “The same religious leaders who would reduce widows to poverty also encourage them to make pious donations beyond their means.”



I actually knew a widow who went to one of those churches. She lived on just her Social Security, and it was tiny. She was determined she was going to give what she was supposed to give. And she was promised manifold blessings, big blessings. This went on for years and years and years. Then we studied it together and she said, “I was looking for the wrong thing.” It was a dramatic change of heart for her to understand what Jesus really wants us to focus on.



Many Christian churches have a significant focus on “tithes and offerings.” As we will see, Jesus NEVER instructed his followers to tithe.

First, a quick review of Old Testament tithing:

There is a LOT to study on this topic. For a more detailed scriptural walkthrough, we recommend listening to Episode #1040 - “Do Tithes and Offerings Belong in Christianity?” See the Bonus Material for recommendations on each of these mini topics.



Some churches pattern tithing based on Old Testament scriptures. The Old Testament Law included three kinds of tithes:



 Levitical Tithe - a tenth of a person’s annual harvest paid to the Levites

 Feast Tithe - a tenth set aside for the person themselves to take to Jerusalem for religious festivals





Poor Tithe - every third year, Jews were to set aside a further tenth of food for visitors, orphans and widows

Regarding the Levitical Tithe:

- ✦ The first tithe was Abram paying a one-time offering of a tenth of goods he won in battle to the priest Melchizedek, but *it did not involve Abram's own possessions* (Genesis 14:16-23).
- ✦ In Leviticus, God announced a tenth part from the land would belong to Him of flocks and herds. They were to simply count and the random tenth animal was separated (Leviticus 27:30-33). *Tithes were never money.*
- ✦ In Numbers 18:8,9, we learn that Aaron the high priest and his family of Levites were to receive what was called *a perpetual allotment* of those offerings including grain and other food. Sounds like a huge windfall! Serve God and get stuff!

**But there was a catch:**

Numbers 18:8-9: (NASB) <sup>8</sup>Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, Now behold, I Myself have given you charge of My offerings, even all the holy gifts of the sons of Israel I have given them to you as a portion and to your sons as a perpetual allotment. <sup>9</sup>This shall be yours from the most holy gifts reserved from the fire; every offering of theirs, even every grain offering and every sin offering and every guilt offering, which they shall render to Me, shall be most holy for you and for your sons.

The catch was that Aaron *received no inheritance of the land*. They were completely dependent on the people supporting them so they could focus on their activities for God.

Numbers 18:20: (NASB) Then the LORD said to Aaron, You shall have no inheritance in their land nor own any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the sons of Israel.

- ✦ But not only did the Levites not get land, but *they themselves had to tithe* a tenth of what they were given - but not just a random tenth. *They had to give the BEST* of what they received.

Numbers 18:25-26,29: <sup>25</sup>Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>26</sup>...speak to the Levites and say to them, When you take from the sons of Israel the tithe which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then you shall present an offering from it to the LORD, a tithe of the tithe... <sup>29</sup>Out of all your gifts you shall present every offering due to the LORD, from all the best of them, the sacred part from them.

This does not look like today's tithing at all!



**IN THE NEW TESTAMENT "TITHE, TITHES AND TITHING" ARE ONLY MENTIONED BY JESUS RELATING TO JEWISH PEOPLE AND THE LAW, AND IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS RECOUNTING THE SAME. TITHING IS NEVER MENTIONED ANYWHERE ELSE!**



For Christian churches to have this as a centerpiece when Jesus and the apostles never taught us to do it - takes out the sincerity and resembles the giving at the Temple treasury that Jesus criticized.

It is also interesting that of the estimated 613 Levitical Laws, some modern-day churches only expect their congregations to continue to comply with one of them - the law of tithing. They don't ask their followers to circumcise their children, refrain from eating pork or shellfish or avoid wearing mixed fabrics. The **ONLY** one they require is the law that they misinterpret as giving a tenth of your income to the church.

What did Jesus teach us, and what didn't Jesus teach us? We need to take each with the same seriousness - what he did NOT tell us to do from the Old Testament as well as what he DID tell us to do in principle from the Old Testament.

**In principle, Jesus taught us to give of our time, talent and opportunities in a magnanimous way:**

**Matthew 10:7-8:** (NASB) <sup>7</sup>And as you go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. <sup>8</sup>Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.

Jesus said to preach free of charge.

**Matthew 7:12:** (NASB) *In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

*Freely you received, freely give...Treat people the same way you want them to treat you.* These are strong teachings. Jesus takes these principles as if to say: "We are not bound by a number like 10 percent. We are bound by the responsibility of giving from our hearts in a way that we would want to be given to if we were in need." This is really wonderful but different from what many churches teach.

**Jesus mentioned tithing, but only in relation to the Jews who were bound to the Jewish Law. Remember, this is a teaching moment through a parable:**

**Luke 18:10-14:** (NASB) <sup>10</sup>Two men went up into the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup>The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: (count how many times he uses "I" in this prayer) God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup>I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.





*Praying to himself* makes it sound like God was not even listening! The Pharisee was just talking to the air!

The focus was on himself - NOT on God. He boasted about his fasting, his tithing and his morality over others. Since Jesus can read the heart, he gave us insight on how some of the Pharisees were thinking.

**Jesus begins by describing the Pharisee. Now he contrasts with the sinner:**

<sup>13</sup>But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me, the sinner! <sup>14</sup>I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other...

Notice in this parable how few words the sinner says versus the little mini speech of the Pharisee in his prayer. We hear the authenticity from the sinner, the reality of saying: "I am not good; I need help. LORD, please *be merciful to me.*" This is the kind of attitude Jesus is teaching us to have.

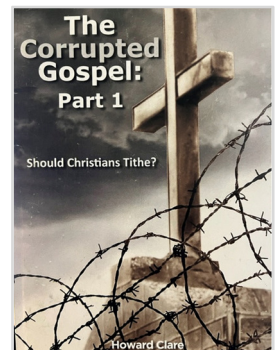


**Jesus expands on this towards the end of his ministry:**

Matthew 23:23-24: (NASB) <sup>23</sup>Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. <sup>24</sup>You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

Can you just see them meticulously and pompously counting out a tiny tenth of even their spices to show the people around them their extreme holiness?

(Source: The Corrupted Gospel: Part 1 - Should Christians Tithe? By Howard Clare) "Jesus wasn't telling them to tithe - they were already doing so as part of the old Law Covenant. The point Jesus was making was about arrogance and hypocrisy. He was pointing out to the Pharisees that although they were so proud and self-righteous about their tithing, they were ignoring the need to show justice, mercy and faith...(which was)...more important than tithing."



This book gives a lot of great points on the topic.

For a free PDF copy of this book, please write us at [inspiration@christianquestions.com](mailto:inspiration@christianquestions.com).

Jesus compares the "spirit of the Law" (what it really means) with the "letter of the Law" (what it says) and how easy it is to get tied up in the letter and forget what the Law is there for. We need to listen to what Jesus is telling us. He is helping us understand what giving should look like.

**Let's go to the Apostle Paul and his very straight-forward view:**

1 Timothy 6:3-5: (NASB) <sup>3</sup>If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, <sup>4</sup>he is conceited and understands nothing... <sup>5</sup>(These are) men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.

What a dramatic verse! *Men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.* Making money is not what the gospel is about! Getting rich off the congregation is evil which is encouraged by some. This has destroyed lives and is a gross misrepresentation of God's character and His truth.





This is not to say you cannot or should not give to your church. We ARE saying that not one verse in the New Testament **REQUIRES** Christians to give a mandatory tithe. Giving is to be done voluntarily and cheerfully. Modern tithing has little to do with the Old Testament pattern. Unfortunately, many suffer unnecessarily under the weight of guilt of not being able to tithe 10 percent.

How about this as an idea: put a box in the back of the room and people can give what they want and when they want in a quiet, anonymous way. Ideas like this are significant! It takes all of the public pressure off and puts it back on the heart of the individual.



Sometimes there is even greater anonymity in giving. I've had the experience of someone being in need and someone else seeing the need. They came up to me as a third party and said, "Rick, look, they're in need. Can you give them this \$2,000 or whatever the amount is, but do not tell them where it came from." I get to be the delivery person to take care of that person's need and say to them, "Somebody really cares about you. They've noticed; they handed this to me so I could hand it to you. God bless you." That to me is the giving that Jesus taught us.

### ARE MY CHRISTIAN BELIEFS GOD-DRIVEN OR MAN-MADE?



Jesus showed us and taught us that all of our giving has its greatest value when it comes from a pure and willing heart. The idea of levying tithes and offerings as a fee for entrance or respect has no foundation in Christianity's original form.

AM I WILLING TO SEE BEYOND WHAT I MAY HAVE  
PREVIOUSLY BOUGHT INTO AND INSTEAD FOCUS ON  
THE PURITY OF GIVING FROM THE HEART?



Again, a hard question on an important teaching: What DID Jesus tell us to do and what did he NOT tell us to do?

One of the startling things about the original gospel is its simplicity and its uncontaminated spirituality. Believers, take note!



## With giving from a pure heart as a basis, what did Jesus teach us about being involved in the lives of our brotherhood?

This kind of engagement is a next step, as involvement in the lives of others has an entirely different cost basis. Personally investing time, effort, talent and opportunities into our brotherhood can be consuming and challenging. As with everything else we are talking about, Jesus demonstrated the standard for this blessed experience. He showed us how to do this in a way that only Jesus could show us.



### Is following Christ the same as following Christianity?

Jesus taught us and showed us what it means to enter into the experiences of our brotherhood.

#### First, his simple and powerful words:

John 15:12-13: (NASB) <sup>12</sup>*This is my commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.* <sup>13</sup>*Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.*

Jesus lived these words! This is the standard of being involved in the brotherhood: *That one lay down his life for his friends.*



#### Our next scripture takes place shortly after Jesus spent the whole night in prayer and then named his apostles:

Luke 6:17-19: (NASB) <sup>17</sup>*Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place; and there was a large crowd of his disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon (that's a BIG crowd),* <sup>18</sup>*who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured.* <sup>19</sup>*And all the people were trying to touch him, for power was coming from him and healing them all.*

Jesus did not stop until he was done. When was he done? When the last person who needed his help and assistance got his help and assistance. It was not when he was tired. It was not when the sun went down. It was when the job was complete. Jesus treated his Jewish nation with utmost compassion and respect. He continued to give and give until it was done.

What better example could there be? We read his words, *Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.* And then we saw his actions - he gave of his own vitality and healed them all. We see the example in word and action, and now it is our turn.



AGAPE LOVE

When it comes to our turn to be invested in the experiences of our brotherhood, let us remember, we cannot heal them. We cannot read their hearts and we cannot have perfect understanding. While we can't be Jesus, we can do God's will in accordance with His way.



## The Apostle Paul has much to say about how this works:

**Romans 12:9-13:** (NASB) <sup>9</sup>Let love (this is the selfless kind of *agape* love) be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup>Be devoted to one another in brotherly love (a family kind of love); give preference to one another in honor; <sup>11</sup>not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; <sup>12</sup>rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, <sup>13</sup>contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

That is quite a list! If we want to know if we are doing well, we can take a look at this list and compare ourselves to it:

- ✓ summon the purest love we can
- ✓ cling to good
- ✓ be devoted to our spiritual family
- ✓ be diligent, fervent, perseverant, prayerful and hospitable

This is how we should approach those around us.



Something that my wife, Jewel, and I try to work on is hospitality. When we invite families over, we are letting them know they are important to us, and we value their love for the LORD. Being in a new area over the last two years, we wanted to get to know each individual from our Bible group. We received so many blessings in doing so. There are other ways to be hospitable; we can be welcoming, kind and generous to others every day wherever we are.

This is a big way for us to have that spirit of hospitality - as a kind of badge to our character. When people are around somebody who is hospitable, kind and courteous, they are happier. This is a wonderful way to witness to Christ. These scriptures show us very specific things about love being without hypocrisy.

## A few chapters later, Paul gets more specific about two ways to actually help others:

**Romans 15:1-3,5-6:** (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. <sup>2</sup>Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. <sup>3</sup>For even Christ did not please himself; but as it is written, **THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME.**

The strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those who are weak.



In these verses, the apostle is talking about those who are strong and bearing up those who do not have that same strength. It is a matter of capacity. Are we strong enough to help others? Do others need helping? This is strength helping weakness.

<sup>5</sup>Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What happens when the strong bear up the weak? We now have one voice because we are working together - that is how these verses end, *that with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

We cannot be Jesus, but we can imitate him to the best of our ability! How? If we have strength, give it to those who don't. Be encouraging and hold up those who need it.



There is a biblical expression to *stand in the gap* that comes from Ezekiel 22:30 when the LORD was looking for someone to stand between Him and the Israelites.

Moses is said to have “stood in the gap” to save Israel when they made the golden calf (Psalm 106:23 and Exodus 32:9-14). The expression means to intercede with God on someone else’s behalf.



Through God’s grace, we might be given strength that we can use on behalf of someone else. It is important to recognize when we have the privilege of strength. We must be willing to share it, to reach out from ourselves and give it to others. That is what Jesus did.



A few years ago my sister went through a very painful divorce. She had no idea her husband had clearly been unfaithful, and the long divorce process left her in a constant broken, weak, devastated, zombie-like state. She says she was “living hour to hour, in despair, in a helpless fog.” She let our church family know what had happened. I describe it as she was broken into a million little pieces, but those friends came holding a million little bottles of glue. We’ll add her full comments to the Bonus Material.

Some made it their mission to build her up weekly with pep talks. Others continuously sent cards and emails filled with scriptures and encouragement. Rick, you jumped in with scriptural counseling and helped manage her finances. I navigated the legal process and she and I started a Blessings List to make sure we noticed the Lord’s many gracious overrulings through this tough experience. My parents were in shock but never stopped helping in a ton of ways.

The love and support from all ends kept coming. When it came time to the final court date, she says, “It felt like I was going into the courthouse not only with the Lord but with an army of praying warriors.” This was “standing in the gap” to help her keep glorifying God during a time when it was hard for her to function, let alone look up and count her blessings.

This is an amazing testimony and significant example of what happens when those who are strong bear the infirmities of those who are weak. Sometimes we are weak, not because we just don’t have strength, but because something happens and we are debilitated by it. This is the body of Christ working together.



Let's move on to something a little different.

You who are spiritual should aid in recovering the transgression of another.

2

**Not only should the capability of one support the feeble condition of another, the spirituality of one should aid in recovering the error or transgression of another:**

**Galatians 6:1-5:** (NASB) <sup>1</sup>*Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. <sup>2</sup>Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup>For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. <sup>4</sup>But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. <sup>5</sup>For each one will bear his own load.*

When we have strength and others do not, we *stand in the gap*. But in the second example - when we see others fall into sin and we *stand in that gap* - we need to humbly and carefully pull them back towards Christ.



This is prefaced by *you who are spiritual*. This is not for the faint of heart! This is not for somebody new in the way. This is for those who we can look at and depend on for their spiritual strength and maturity and knowledge in Christ.

This is a scary position to be in because it is easy to be tempted by pride, or maybe we understand their problems because we have HAD those problems and could fall back into our own patterns. We need to be careful. Spiritual maturity is required.

Jesus knew the hearts of his followers. He knew their strengths and weaknesses, and he supported them in their experiences in a spiritually-appropriate way.

**Let's look at what Jesus DID and what he DID NOT do:**

**Luke 22:28-32:** (NASB) <sup>28</sup>*You are those who have stood by me in my trials; <sup>29</sup>and just as my Father has granted me a kingdom, I grant you <sup>30</sup>that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

This was a beautiful invitation to the future because they stood by him. What an incredible opportunity!

**Listen to what he said next, though:**

<sup>31</sup>*Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; <sup>32</sup>but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.*

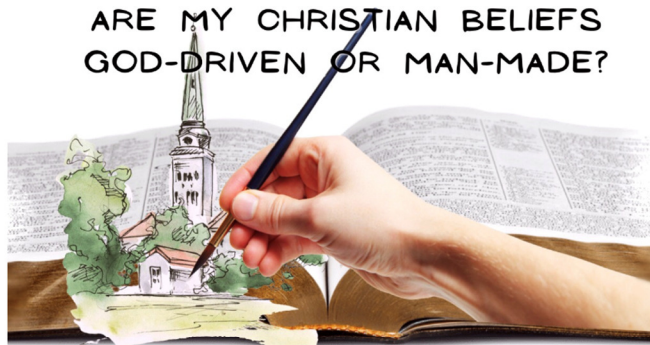
In other words, I have this amazing opportunity for you *to eat and drink at my table in my kingdom*. But then in the next breath he says, *Simon, Satan has demanded to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you*. Notice Jesus did NOT say: "But I am going to take care of Satan for you. I will stand in his way. I will not allow him to test you." Jesus allowed it. He let it happen, and he let it happen in a prayerfully-appropriate way. He spiritually supported Peter. Why?



Why didn't he get in the way? Because Peter needed to learn, and Jesus understood that he needed to learn, so it was allowed.

After Jesus was raised and he and the apostles were on the shore, Jesus would ask, "Peter, do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?" He asked three times to counter Peter's three denials of Jesus. He was reinstating Peter. There is a beauty in the spiritual appropriateness of how Jesus took care of this beloved follower.

When we look at our experiences and how we are helping one another, we need to ask:



Jesus and the apostles gave us everything we need to be a mutually-supportive brotherhood. To be successful in this support roll we need to be willing to be vulnerable. This requires prayerful humility, strength of character and a clear spiritual outlook.

AM I WILLING TO CHANGE MY ENVIRONMENT IF IT AVOIDS SUCH DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES AND DOESN'T ENCOURAGE SUCH HUMILITY, STRENGTH AND SPIRITUALITY? 

Are we willing to change our environment if we see that it is lacking in this kind of wisdom and profound clinging to scriptural guidance?

Being a part of the body of Christ is not for the faint of heart. It calls us to a stand that does not leave our brothers or sisters to suffer!

**Jesus was unmistakably clear about how the brotherhood should treat one another. What did he teach about God's kingdom?**

Many of Jesus' teachings were easy to understand and many of them were not. When it came to personal character and sacrifice, his messages were easy to follow intellectually, not necessarily in real life. We can follow that reasoning. But when it came to prophetic things about God's plan, Jesus' messages were far more mysterious. Jesus' teachings about the kingdom were in that very mysterious category.



**Is following Christ the same as following Christianity?**

**Jesus taught us to prepare for his kingdom. The question is, do we know what we are preparing for?**

Acts 1:4-8: (NASB) <sup>4</sup>Gathering them together, he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, Which, he said, you heard of from me; <sup>5</sup>for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the holy spirit not many days from now. <sup>6</sup>So



when they had come together, they were asking him, saying, Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel? <sup>7</sup>He said to them, It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; <sup>8</sup>but you will receive power when the holy spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

Notice Jesus' answer - *It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed... The time for what? For restoring the kingdom to Israel!*



But he is not really answering their question, is he? He does not deny the kingdom will come, but he is not telling them **WHEN** it is going to come.



Exactly. He does that on purpose because he knows their work needs to be done in faith, not by sight, as in "the kingdom is coming on 'X' day." He says we work through faith. He is validating the legitimacy of this *restoring of the kingdom to Israel*. That is the important part of Jesus' answer. And no, he did not directly answer their question.

Because Israel rejected him as Messiah, they would be rejected, only to later be restored to favor.

**Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees about Israel:**

Matthew 23:38-39: (NASB) <sup>38</sup>...*your house is being left to you desolate!* <sup>39</sup>*For I say to you, from now on you will not see me until you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*

Here is another hint that Israel - and even the Pharisees - will receive favor in the future. He is pronouncing serious judgment - *your house is being left to you desolate* - but with that judgment he is giving a future hope. The judgment was not the end; it was the beginning.

Jesus is talking here to the Jewish nation. Some Christians take these kinds of promises made to Israel and say they now apply to Christians - it is called "replacement theory." But there are separate promises made to Christians that DO NOT negate the promises and prophecies for the Jewish people.

There is a different set of promises, a different pathway, for the faithful Christian versus the faithful Jew. It is different, but it brings us to the same overall picture of this kingdom that we are looking at here.

*Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?* Before his ascension, Jesus verified there would be an earthly kingdom. He said Israel was not restored yet, that they (and we) will not know when - but it will happen. He also verified that it would be in the future because he said all these other things had to be completed first.

**This fits exactly with what he taught in the Lord's prayer:**

Matthew 6:9-10: (NASB) <sup>9</sup>*Pray, then, in this way: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name.* <sup>10</sup>*Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

What a simple statement. *Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.* This simple truth is easily and often missed by the majority of churches.



We can think, *how simple, how can you miss it?* That would be an easy question to ask, except for the fact that Jesus was explaining one piece of a very complex matter. God's kingdom according to Jesus has many moving parts to it. While Jesus did not make this simple, he did give us the pieces.



**Jesus himself carried the kingdom with him. This next text is right after John the Baptist was imprisoned:**

Matthew 4:16-17: (NASB) <sup>16</sup>*The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, and those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, upon them a light dawned.* <sup>17</sup>*From that time Jesus began to preach and say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*



This gets confusing. How is the kingdom of heaven *at hand* - very near - if it is coming in the distant future? Wherever Jesus went, the kingdom was with him. How?



The answer is, yes, it is very near and yet is in the distant future. We know the reason he said the kingdom of heaven is at hand is because the messenger, John, was in prison. John's work was done. Jesus was now the sole voice of the kingdom, and he was showing them this reality in these verses. We are at a different stage now and *the kingdom is at hand* because things have moved forward in God's plan. Jesus knows exactly what he is teaching and he withholds exactly the right information so that we will learn how to study and understand.



**Though unseen, the kingdom is in your midst, within those around you who follow Jesus:**

Luke 17:20-21: (KJV) <sup>20</sup>*And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: <sup>21</sup>Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.*

It is not only *at hand* - imminently near - but now it is inside people! But again, the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:10) tells us to pray for what is yet future - *Your kingdom come*, describing a time when His will WILL be *done on earth as it is in heaven*. We would not be told to pray for something that is already here.



**The kingdom is in the future - why would you pray for something to come that is in your midst?**

Matthew 6:10: (NASB) *Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

And notice, he gave two different answers to these different groups.

Remember we read when his disciples asked back in Acts 1:6, *Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?*

He implied, yes, it would be restored, but does not give them the timing.

Here the Pharisees ask him essentially the same question in Luke 17:20 and he tells them it cannot be seen because it is within us.



Why does Jesus give a different answer to the same question to the two different groups of people? When and where is this kingdom? It is within us? In front of us? Or yet future on earth and in heaven?



First, let's address the two different answers. Remember earlier when Judas (not Iscariot) asks: How is it that *you are going to* manifest or *disclose yourself to us and not to the world*? There's the big hint. Jesus builds upon that question and to say: Yes, that is exactly what is going to happen.

The Pharisees were on the outside looking in because they were not looking to believe; they were looking to criticize. They were looking to break down those who believed. The apostles and disciples were looking to believe. To those who are chosen and called, who are following the will of God, he would give greater insight. He is not going to give them the answers - just greater insight.



How is it that the kingdom is within, how is it that he carries it and it is still coming?



The kingdom is a group of many, many pieces. That is why he is answering different parts with different statements. We will expand on this as we go further.



**The kingdom was a message to be spread and was accompanied by healing miracles:**

**Matthew 4:23:** (NASB) *Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.*



The good news of the kingdom, the gospel of the kingdom - where and when is it and who gets that message?



So where is it? It is wherever the true gospel is preached. Who gets it? Whoever has *ears to hear*. Now the hearing ears may not absorb it, but they can at least gain the hope of it or hear that there is something about a kingdom. The point is that the kingdom message needed to be spread. When Jesus was ascending to heaven, he told his followers to go throughout the kingdoms of the world to preach this gospel because it is so important. It is the midpoint of God's plan. "What I am doing is what everything hinges on. I am the kingdom essentially. What I am doing is going to put all of this in place."



**The kingdom is difficult to enter, but holds positions of honor for the humble:**

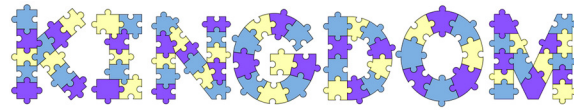
**Matthew 18:2-4:** (NASB) <sup>2</sup>*And he called a child to himself and set him before them, <sup>3</sup>and said, Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup>Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*



But we just read the kingdom is a message. How do you enter something that is a message in your midst and yet future? We need to think of this as a puzzle with little pieces. We must put the little pieces together in order to get the full picture.



It is as if we have a box with a puzzle in it, but we do not have a picture on it. It says KINGDOM on the box, but we have very little idea of what it is going to look like. We pour the pieces of the puzzle out. Some of them are upside down, and they are all mixed up. What do we need to do? Sort them out!



Many of Jesus' teachings, especially with doctrine, were puzzle-like. They need to be sorted out and put in

order. The like pieces needed to be joined to the like pieces. The pieces that show a different part are on a different part of the puzzle. This is what he is telling us about the kingdom. We can't see the big picture by just focusing on where this one little piece goes.



### Here the kingdom is associated with the resurrection:

**1 Corinthians 15:20-26:** (NASB) <sup>20</sup>But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. <sup>21</sup>For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup>For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. <sup>23</sup>But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at his coming, <sup>24</sup>then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when he has abolished all rule and all authority and power. <sup>25</sup>For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup>The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

Let's put the events in these verses in order:

- ✦ *Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.*
- ✦ *Adam brought death to the human race. For as in Adam all die, shows us Adam brought death into the picture.*
- ✦ *Jesus, many, many generations later, pays the price to take death away, and that brings the resurrection of the dead. Also in Christ all will be made alive.*

Jesus is building the case for the kingdom. He was the one who took death away! It did not manifest itself right when Jesus died, but that was the beginning of the kingdom. We see the kingdom in Jesus.

*As in Adam  
all die...*

*...So also in Christ,  
all will be made alive.*



THE  
RANSOM



This was the beginning of the kingdom

But then he says: "But wait. There is an order to that, too!"

- ✦ *Christ the first fruits.*
- ✦ *After that, the rest of everybody else:*
  - *Faithful ones, those who are Christ's at his coming, raised first because they have the ministry of reconciliation - work to prepare to reconcile the world to God.*



- The rest of the world is raised later because they need to be reconciled.

Then comes the end when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when he has abolished all Satan's rule and authority and power.

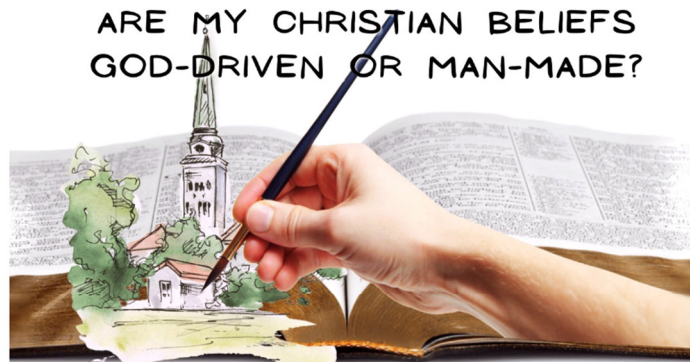
We chronologically come to the actual kingdom, which is now in place and all of the learning and all of the work that has to be done, is done.

That is the point to this puzzle. We are putting it together saying, what an amazing picture! The last "piece" is the abolishing of death entirely, and then all things are turned over to the Father. God can be *all in all*. The kingdom will be in full force on earth, overseen by heaven. It is God's kingdom through Christ, and all the goodness is now in place.

We can see the "kingdom" Jesus taught us about has many facets.

- ✦ It refers to Jesus himself in his first advent.
- ✦ It refers to the context of the development of the true "church" in this present time.
- ✦ It refers to the time of resurrection.
- ✦ It refers to the final reign of God after all enemies - even death - are destroyed.

These verses are a picture of all those pieces. Jesus was focused on God's kingdom, but am I? Is my faith focused on God's kingdom the same way Jesus' was?



Jesus taught us that God's kingdom has many parts to it, including present-day and future applications. This kingdom is the very core of the "good news for ALL people" announced at Jesus' birth. Somehow, many Christians seem to lose this broad application that Jesus taught.

AM I WILLING TO OPEN MY MIND TO THE FULL SCOPE OF JESUS' TEACHINGS?





The kingdom is a big part of Jesus' teachings, but he taught it in little, tiny pieces.

In our Christian lives with the experience of our Christian faith - wherever we might be, whatever church we may be attending - are we willing to look seriously at the words and actions of Jesus, and the words of the Bible in its entirety, and say, I need to follow this.

If my church environment is not offering it, what am I going to do? Am I going to be comfortable, or am I going to rise up and follow Christ?

*So, is following Christ the same as following Christianity?  
For Jonathan, Rick, Julie and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!*

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.



### Recommended additional study:

#### *Truth:*

Ep. 1267: What is Truth?

*Establishing the differences between "THE truth" and "my truth"*

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1267-truth/>

#### *Tithing:*

Ep. 1040: Do Tithes and Offerings Belong in Christianity?

*Understanding tithing and establishing Christian giving*

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1040-tithes-offerings/>

#### *Supporting Others:*

Ep. 1270: How Strong Are My Relationships? (Part III)

*Building strong and effective brotherhood relationships in Christ*

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1270-christian-relationships-part-iii/>



## Kingdom:

### Episode 883: How Did Jesus Describe the Kingdom of Heaven?

*Connecting four parables: the Field, Pearl, Dragnet and Scribe*

<https://christianquestions.com/parables/883-how-did-jesus-describe-the-kingdom-of-heaven/>

## Betrayal:

### Episode 1036: How Do I Strike Back at Betrayal?

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1036-betrayal/>



Check out our CQ Kids videos:  
**WHEN WILL GOD'S KINGDOM BE HERE?**  
[christianquestions.com/youtube](https://christianquestions.com/youtube)



Check out our CQ Kids videos:  
**WHAT WILL GOD'S KINGDOM BE LIKE?**  
[christianquestions.com/youtube](https://christianquestions.com/youtube)

## CQ Team



**Laurie:** My husband's cheating was a complete shock. The long divorce process left me in a constant broken, weak, devastated, zombie-like state. I was living hour to hour, in despair, in a kind of helpless fog. I had never experienced trauma like this before.

But after I testified in my church about my experience, my Christian fellowship rallied around me. Individuals I had never been super close to suddenly became confidants. One "tough" 90-year-old sister in Christ made it her mission every Sunday to build me up and give me strength with pep talks. She constantly checked in with my family on how I was doing. Other brethren sent me cards and emails, filled with heartfelt words and scriptures to give me strength.

When I was so far down in the muck that I couldn't see a light at the end anymore, my sister and I started a "Blessings List." This list reminded me of how the Lord was working behind the scenes. We had to stay focused on "the good" or we would drown in "the bad."

One cherished sister came up to me and said something very honest that I'll always remember: "I have no experience with cheating or divorce, so I don't know what you are going through. But I feel very bad that this happened and I'm praying for you." From then on, I've tried to be honest like that if I am trying to comfort someone. Instead of offering empty "I know what you're going through" words (when I really don't) - it's ok to say, "I have no idea what you are feeling because I myself have not experienced this particular trial. But I feel bad and I'm praying for you."

Rick jumped in immediately with scriptural counseling as well as managing finances. My sister was able to help navigate tons of legal documents and communicate with my attorney when I was too broken and in shock to do so. She called me every morning just to talk me through my day. I looked forward to those calls; they helped me get through the day. My parents tirelessly offered love and support even while in states of shock themselves. The love and support never stopped - it just kept coming.

I felt the prayers of my family and the brethren around me, especially on my final court date. It felt like I was going into the courthouse with not only the Lord, but with an army of praying warriors.

# Study QUESTIONS

## Ep. 1284: Is Following Christ the Same as Following Christianity? (Part II)

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1284-christianity-today-part-ii/>

See:  **CQ Rewind**  
SHOW NOTES

1. Review points from Part I:
  - Why did Jesus die? Why was this necessary? (See John 5:25, Romans 6:23)
  - What did Jesus teach about earthly abundance for his followers? (See Luke 9:22-23)
  - Why did the moneychangers in the Temple anger Jesus? (See John 2:15-16)
  - What is the formula for true Christian morality and ethics? (See Ephesians 5:3-4)
2. In what way do we show our loyalty and love to Jesus? What must we stand for despite others' reactions? How do we sanctify our lives? What was Paul saying in Acts 20:24-27? (See John 14:15, 22-24, 17:17-19)
3. What is the purpose of Jesus pointing out the widow giving her two tiny coins? What were the tithing laws in the Old Testament? Does tithing apply to Christians? Explain. (See Mark 12:38-44, Numbers 18:8-29)
4. What were some of the principles Jesus brought out about giving to the Lord's house and people?
  - What kind of giving are we supposed to do? (See Matthew 7:12, 10:7-8)
  - How does the parable of Luke 18:10-14 illustrate the attitude we should have?
  - What does Matthew 23:23-24 tell us about the Pharisees?
  - Explain whether Apostle Paul advocates making money on the gospel. (See 1 Timothy 6:3-5)
5. What is the standard for our relationship with our brotherhood? How did Jesus demonstrate this in Luke 6:17-19? Explain the list Paul laid out in Romans 12:9-13 to help us focus on this standard. Describe the expression to "stand in the gap." (John 15:12-13, Psalm 106:23, Ezekiel 22:30, Exodus 32:9-14)
6. What should we do if we see brethren fall into sin? What are the criteria for us to be able to do something like this? How did Jesus handle a difficult situation with Peter? (See Galatians 6:1-5, Luke 22:28-32)
7. What is Jesus talking about in Acts 1:4-8? Why doesn't he let those he is talking to know when this will happen? Since Israel rejected Jesus as their Messiah, do these promises no longer apply to the Jewish nation? Explain. (See Matthew 6:9-10, 23:38-39)
8. How do we explain all these facets of the kingdom of heaven?
  - How can the kingdom be "*at hand*" and yet future? (See Matthew 4:16-17, 6:10)
  - How can the kingdom be "*within*" us? Why would we pray for something "*to come*" when it is within us? (See Luke 17:20-21, Matthew 6:10)
  - Why would Jesus give two different answers about the timing of the restoration of Israel? (See Acts 1:6, Luke 17:20)
  - How is the kingdom a message to be spread? Who spreads the message? Who receives it? (See Matthew 4:23)
  - What is required of us to enter into the kingdom? (See Matthew 18:2-4)
  - How is the kingdom associated with the resurrection? How is it associated with the final reign of God? (See 1 Corinthians 15:20-26)
9. How do we know if we're seriously following the words and actions of Jesus and the words of the Bible and not just what a leader is telling us? What next steps or actions do we need to take if a leader is not following the words of Christ?