

Clarify Your Identity

Followers of Jesus

I. Following Jesus

Luke 18:18–23 (NIV®)

¹⁸A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁹“Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. ²⁰You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’” ²¹“All these I have kept since I was a boy,” he said. ²²When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. **Then come, follow me.**” ²³When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth.

A. Learning, Growing & Experiencing God’s Glory

Opposition?

Acts 4:18–20 (NIV®)

¹⁸Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹But Peter and John replied, “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. ²⁰For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

Wrong Motives Within Community

Acts 5:3–5 (NIV®)

³Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God.” ⁵When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened.

The Fruit of Success/Effectiveness

Acts 5:16–17 (NIV®)

¹⁶Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed. ¹⁷Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy.

Growing Pains

Acts 6:1–2 (NIV®)

¹In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, **the Grecian (Hellenistic) Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews** because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ²So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables.

Violent Hatred & Disruption

Acts 7:59–8:1 (NIV®)

⁵⁹While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ⁶⁰Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep. **8** And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

Unexpected & Unwanted Adherents

Acts 9:26–27 (NIV®)

²⁶When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. ²⁷ But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.

Internal Challenges

Acts 11:1–3 (NIV®)

¹The apostles and the brothers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, **the circumcised believers criticized him** ³ and said, “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

B. Fails — The Struggle of Allegiance

Luke 13:34–35 (NIV®)

³⁴“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! ³⁵ **Look, your house is left to you desolate.** I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

Luke 19:41–44 (NIV®)

⁴¹As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it ⁴² and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴ They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”

Luke 7:29–30 (NIV®)

(²⁹All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus’ words, acknowledged that God’s way was right, because they had been baptized by John. ³⁰ But **the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God’s purpose for themselves**, because they had not been baptized by John.)

Acts 1:6–8 (NIV®)

⁶So when they met together, **they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”** ⁷ He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

C. Separate & Together

Ephesians 3:6 (NIV®)

This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 11:39–40 (NIV®)

³⁹These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. ⁴⁰God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your great provision for my life. You have not left me alone or uncared for but have made me a participant in Your eternal purposes. You have called me out of darkness and provided for my justification. Help me to walk in the light and to choose paths of righteousness. Deliver me from evil and restore the joy of my salvation, in Jesus’ name, Amen.