

“Following from a Distance?” (Part 2)

by Dave Rogers

In part 1 of this article – published two weeks ago – we drew on the example of the apostle Peter in Luke 22:54, who followed Jesus to the house of the high priest after the Lord was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane. Luke is unique in pointing out that Peter followed “at a distance,” seemingly so that he would not be associated with Jesus and, perhaps, also arrested.

In that earlier installment, we noted that,

- Many people want to be “disciples at a distance,” but don’t seem too interested in the “inconvenience” and “embarrassment” of a *committed* Christian life! **In reality, their lives make it plain that they don’t really want to be disciples.**
- Trying to “follow at a distance” creates a FALSE sense of security. Many people seem to believe that as long as THEY feel “satisfied” with the way they live their lives, then that “ought” to be good enough for God! Yet according to Matthew 7:21-23, trying to “follow” Jesus “at a distance” is really not following Him at all.

The idea of “keeping some distance” between us and Jesus is contradicts the nature of our relationship: Christians are part of the **Bride** of Christ (Ephesians 5:22ff and Revelation 22:17). **To follow “from a distance” defies and denies the very essence of being a disciple** (a follower). When God sent king Saul and the Israelites to fight against king Agag and the Amalekites in 1 Samuel 15, He gave very clear, simple instructions. Saul, however, disobeyed; like many today, he did what HE thought “mattered” to God (verse 13), but Saul didn’t

actually obey God AT ALL: **He just did what HE wanted to do** (only SOME of which mirrored God’s commandment).

Those who follow from a distance are telling the whole world “I want God’s benefits, but I don’t want God.”

Now consider what Jesus actually asks us to do:

*“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him **deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.**”* Luke 9:23

*“**Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.**”* Matthew 4:19

*“**Do not fear** any of those things which you are about to suffer. *Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. **Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.**”** Revelation 2:10

Our goal should be to live as **close** to Jesus as we can, so we can live with Him in eternity! To really be His disciple, you have to let HIM direct the course of your life, let HIM direct your steps (Proverbs 3:6) instead of trying to “drag” Him where YOU want to go!

How “close” to the Lord do you really want to be? Are you willing to make the changes to YOUR life that are necessary for you to be a true “follower” of Jesus?

THE CYCLE OF UNBELIEF

Jeff Miller

Societies throughout human history have tended to cycle through the same patterns: acknowledging God, denying God, embracing moral depravity, receiving punishment and destruction from God, repenting, and then recycling again. The Israelites of the Old Testament repeated this cycle several times as recorded in the book of Judges. The pattern starts with human eyes looking upward, worshipping God. As time goes by, we tend to lower our eyes from God, gaze at ourselves, and proclaim that we are more wise and intelligent than God. Many decide that He's unnecessary and pretend that He does not exist. Humans are then idolized—Caesars, popes, Hollywood stars, American idols. This phase of the cycle commenced in America in the last half century and is illustrated in the world around us in a myriad of ways.

Society claims to be wiser than God in saying that spanking your children is bad because it teaches them to be violent and hurts their self-esteem. Yet God, through Solomon, said that “he who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly” (Proverbs 13:24). Society has arrogantly elevated itself above God. Many in society say that capital punishment is cruel and unusual, yet God required the Israelites to inflict capital punishment for over 15 different crimes, and stoning someone to death was a typical form of capital punishment (Miller, 2002). By de-luded human thinking, God is guilty of “cruel and unusual punishment.” Society says that God and government should be separate, but God says, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord” (Psalms 33:12). Society says that homosexuality and other forms of sodomy are acceptable lifestyles that should be endorsed, even encouraged. But God listed homosexuality as a crime worthy of death in the Old Testament (Leviticus 20:13), and said that homosexuals and sodomites will not “inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Society has elevated human beings to the status of gods capable of deciding what is morally right and wrong. Humans do not have to bow down to each other literally, to be guilty of self-worship. Elevating ourselves to the status of gods by disregarding the true God is sufficient. We are arrogant when we dismiss God's directives, as if we need to understand the reasons behind everything that God tells us to do or not do in His Word. He says, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9). We are expected to trust Him (Hebrews 11:6).

As the cycle toward spiritual depravity progresses, humans move their focus still further downward—away from God—to elevate the animal to a status higher than humans (who already are considered higher than God). The reverence bestowed on animals by the animal rights movement of the last few years, illustrates to the world that America has reached this phase of the cycle, too. Think about it—in the last few decades, activists have splashed paint on women who wear furs, devoted themselves to saving the whales, encouraged using human embryos for testing to promote human welfare while seeking to outlaw the use of animals for research purposes, advocated going vegetarian, etc. It is a crime to break a bald eagle egg before the eagle has hatched, but killing a human baby before it has left its mother's womb is acceptable to

society (“Bald Eagle,” 2002). “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). God's approach works. However, the end result of elevating animals is seen in many of the impoverished, primitive Hindu societies of the world, where people lie starving in the streets while healthy cows roam about freely because of their elevated status. Clearly, humans are incapable of making spiritual decisions effectively on their own. “O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (Jeremiah 10:23).

Often, within this repeated pattern of spiritual decay, human eyes move down even further from God, and the Earth itself becomes elevated to the status of god. America is there, too. Enter the environmentalists. “Mother Earth” must be protected at all costs. “Save the planet.” “Go green.” “No carbon footprints.” Some advocate killing off certain humans that they deem as less useful to society in order to save the planet and its resources (cf. Harrub, 2006). The cultures of the past, those that Christian peoples have always regarded as pagan, are now being extolled for their worship of animals and the Earth. The theory of evolution says that the Earth is responsible for our existence and development—i.e., the Earth is our god. We must save it to survive, and we have the omnipotent power to control its destiny. Society says that we should not arrogantly “lord over” nature, since they are our ancestors and have as much value as we have. We humans have just happened to accidentally evolve further than them. (Consider Hollywood's message to us about its view of nature and the sin of trying to control and have dominion over it in the movie *Instinct*). In stark contrast, God says that humans are to have dominion “over all the earth” (Genesis 1:26).

Should we be good stewards of God's creation? Certainly. However, the Earth should never be elevated to the level of respect that it is being given today. Humans should never think so highly of themselves that they presume to control the destiny of the Earth. Contrary to the teachings of global warming advocates, it is not the almighty human who will destroy the Earth in the end. It is Almighty God (2 Peter 3:10-12). It is not murder in God's sight to kill a plant, no matter how or under what circumstances it is done. God did not command capital punishment to be implemented on those who cut down a tree. Plants are not on the same value level as humans, regardless of whether a committee of morally confused humans decides such (cf. Willemsen, 2008).

On a positive note, if the typical pattern is repeating itself again, then the cycle may be nearing completion and may return to a sane, sensible appraisal of spiritual reality—returning us to the one true God, the Creator. America's worship of itself, the animal kingdom, and the Earth has been going on for several decades, while worship of God is expelled as primitive. Unfortunately, divine punishment and destruction always occur before the cycle restarts. Although written 2,000 years ago, Paul's words still hold true:

“Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the **creature rather than the Creator**, who is blessed forever. Amen (Romans 1:22-25, emp. added).

	2/24
Call To Worship	Greg Nash
Scripture Reading	Zeke Poskevich
Song Leader	Rory Bell, Sr.
Prayer	Curtis Hurt
Preside Lord's Supper	Jack Sorrell
Server	Rick Sharpe
Server	Keith Killingsworth
Server	Shirley Allender
Server	Garrett Dalman
Server	Cliff Nash
Server	Tim Durden
Server	Eric Hagen
Server	Anthony Ravenell
Sermon	Dave Rogers
Response Elder	Greg Nash
Announcements	Greg Nash
Shepherd's Prayer	Jim Garner
Evening Worship	
Announcements	
Song Leader	
Prayer	Progressive
Sermon	Meeting
Lord's Supper	
Lord's Supper	
Prayer	

Worship Assignment Coordinator for February:
Reggie Graham

2019 Progressive Meeting February 25 – 28, 2019

Theme: Making the Most of My Worship"

Speaker: Bro. Melvin Otey

Sunday, 4 P.M. "The Meaning of Worship" (East Point COC)

Monday, 7 P.M. "Why God is Worthy of Worship" (Fairview COC)

Tuesday, 10:00 A.M. Bible Study "Exegesis on John 4:" (Riverdale COC)

Tuesday, 7 P.M. "When Your Seat is Empty" (Tara COC)

Wednesday, 7 P.M. "Preparing for the Presence of God"

(Peachtree City COC)

Thursday, 7 P.M. "Preparing for the Presentation to God" (Shannon COC)

Thank You

Thank you for the beautiful spray, lunch and kindness to our mother.

Donna & Adrienne
The Family of
Annette Benefield

Thank You

A big Thank You to all of the young people and their parents for the Banquet Sunday night. You did a good job of making us feel very loved!

Love, Dave & Luann

The Fountain of Life With Larry Acuff
Saturdays at 7 am on channel 57

In Search of the Lord's Way with Phil Sanders
Sunday at 7am on channel 45

**Check Out
Our New Website and
Members Directory
If anything is not correct
email the office.**

Communion Preparation

Sandy & Kyndal Garner

Nursery

24 Leisa Allender

Care of Building

15-28 Keith Killingsworth/Larry Rose

Mar 1-15 Andy Johnson/Jim OBrien

Ushers

Media Center Helpers

2/24 & 3/3 Reggie Graham

3/10-17 Brad Hopkins

24 & 31 Ben Rogers

Wednesday Evening Devotional

27 Progressive Meeting

Mar 6 Gayle Pelfrey

13 Cliff Nash

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gsop-fayetteville-campus](http://gsoponline.org/gsop-fayetteville-campus)
Rick Sharpe, Campus Director

Elders:

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Jim Garner

(770) 461-3197

Greg Nash

(404) 455-1546

Jim Pelfrey

(770) 629-2061

Deacons:

Dennis Graham

Eric Hagin

David Hopkins

Hugh Kelly

Keith Killingsworth

Andy Johnson

Stan Mitchell

David Poskevich

Anthony Ravenell

David Riley

Rick Sharpe

Jack Sorrell

Our Missionaries



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Bethany & Elijah
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Westfield, Cumberland,
North Lanarkshire,
G68 9DB

Email: graham@gmcd.net

Skype: gmcd105 or www.gmcd.net



Scott, Rebecca & Violet Shanahan
Italy

scottshanahan@hotmail.com

Raintree Village
CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Assembly Schedule:

Sunday

9:00 am Bible Classes

10:00 am Worship Service

5:00 pm Worship Service

10:00 am Tuesday

Morning Bible Class

(September 4 - May 14)

7:00 pm Wednesday Night Bible
Study



February 2019

Response Elder: Greg Nash

"But He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." Luke 18:27

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																											
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Jan 2019</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr><th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>T</th><th>F</th><th>S</th></tr> <tr><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td></tr> <tr><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td></tr> <tr><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td></tr> <tr><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Mar 2019</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr><th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>T</th><th>F</th><th>S</th></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td></tr> <tr><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td></tr> <tr><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td></tr> <tr><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td></tr> <tr><td>31</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table> </div> </div>					S	M	T	W	T	F	S		1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31			S	M	T	W	T	F	S						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31							<p style="font-size: 24px; color: red;">1</p> <p>Anthony Ravenell</p> <p>Family Game Night at 6:30 pm</p>	<p style="font-size: 24px; color: red;">2</p> <p>Shirley & Leisa Allender Tori Stinson</p>
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