

# The Way

In deciding what direction to go in life, many people choose to “follow their heart.” Whatever *seems* good or *appears* to provide fulfillment is the course that they pursue. This can be done with sincere motives and the appearance of wisdom, but in the end this path will not provide the fulfillment that we expect or desire.

Determining the course we will take in life by following our heart is dangerous. The Lord said, “*The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?*” (Jeremiah 17:9). How many times have people *followed their heart* and ruined their lives, making decisions that brought harm to themselves and to others?

The prophet Jeremiah acknowledged, *“I know, O Lord, that a man’s way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps”* (Jeremiah 10:23). Pursuing the course that we decide upon is *“futility and striving after wind”* (Ecclesiastes 2:17). When people realize this, it becomes a source of consistent frustration. This is why Solomon wrote, *“So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind. Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun...”* (Ecclesiastes 2:17-18).

If our heart is deceitful and our way is not in ourselves, how do we determine the way we need to go in life?

Interestingly, there was a group that began in Jerusalem in the first century that was referred to as *“the Way”* (Acts 9:2). They were followers of Jesus who declared Himself to be *“the way”* (John 14:6). Could *“the Way”* – this way – be what people have spent their lives searching for? Yes!

The wise man wrote, *“[God] has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end”* (Ecclesiastes 3:11). In other words, there is within each of us a sense that there is something *more* – some purpose that is

greater than what we immediately see around us. However, having this “sense” in our heart does not mean we have the knowledge to tell us precisely what this might be. Remember what Jeremiah said, “*A man’s way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps*” (Jeremiah 10:23).

Paul spoke about this when he addressed the philosophers on Mars Hill in Athens. Seeing an altar to “*an unknown God*” (Acts 17:23), he told them about the God of heaven: “*And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us*” (Acts 17:26-27). We are here to seek after God. We can find Him, but only if we follow “*the Way.*”

In this series of lessons, we are going to be studying about “*the Way*” – what it is and why it is the path we must follow.

## Chapter 1

# Jesus Is The Way

*“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me’” (John 14:6).*

As we begin this series of lessons, we must start with the originator, author, and leader of *“the Way”* – Jesus Christ.

### ***Who Is Jesus?***

Many people have different ideas about Jesus. Some believe He was only a myth – either that He did not exist or that there were legends about Him that developed later that were not based in fact. Others

believe He was a wise man with valuable insight to impart to others. Some see Him as a prophet, but nothing more (this is how He is regarded in Islam). Other theories regarding Jesus could probably be added to the list, but these are the most common.

In the first century – during the time in which Jesus was alive on the earth – many different ideas existed about Him as well.

- Some believed Jesus was “*a good man*” while others believed He was “[leading] *the people astray*” (John 7:12).
- The Jewish leaders were amazed at His learning and understanding, because they saw Him as “*having never been educated*” (John 7:15).
- Some in the crowd said to Jesus, “*You have a demon*” (John 7:20).
- Some people thought Jesus could not be the Christ because “*no one [knew] where He [was] from*” (John 7:27).
- Some thought Jesus was “*the Prophet*” (John 7:40) – the one who would succeed Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15).
- Others thought Jesus was “*the Christ,*” while still others thought He could not be since He was from Galilee and not from Bethlehem (John 7:41-42). [Of course, Jesus was born in

Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1) as a fulfillment of prophecy (Matthew 2:5-6; cf. Micah 5:2); yet these people were unaware of this fact.]

- When Jesus asked His disciples what people were saying about who He was, they told Him, *“Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets”* (Matthew 16:14).

However, with all of the different ideas that people had then – and that people have now – about Jesus, the important question was the one Jesus asked Peter: *“But who do **you** say that I am?”* (Matthew 16:15).

Peter answered this question correctly: *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Matthew 16:16). In response to this, Jesus said to him, *“Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven”* (Matthew 16:17). The fact that this had been revealed from the Father in heaven meant that Jesus’ identity was a matter of divine truth, not personal opinion.

We must answer this same question today: *Who do **you** say that Jesus is?* This is not an inconsequential question that can be disregarded or forgotten. We *must* answer this question. The reason why we must answer this question is because if Jesus is who He is described to be in the New Testament, then we *must* obey Him

since He has been given “*all authority...in heaven and on earth*” (Matthew 28:18). Only those who “*believe in His name*” have been given “*the right to become children of God*” (John 1:12). Those who will not recognize the Lordship of Christ have no right to become God’s children.

So that we might believe who Jesus is, proof has been provided. Jesus mentioned witnesses that testified of Him – John the Baptist, the works that Jesus performed, the Father, and the (Old Testament) Scriptures:

*“You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth. But the testimony which I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me. And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form. You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. You*

*search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me” (John 5:33-39).*

Furthermore, there was proof given in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Paul said that Jesus *“was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead”* (Romans 1:4). The resurrection of Christ would explain the drastic change that took place in the apostles – they went from a state of fear before seeing the risen Lord (John 20:19) to a state of being willing to suffer for the Lord after seeing Him alive from the dead (Acts 4:18-21; 5:28-29, 40-42). This would explain how the gospel spread in the face of severe persecution (Acts 8:2-4; Colossians 1:23). Christians kept proclaiming that Jesus had been raised from the dead – even though, in many cases, they faced the threat of death – because they had seen or knew others who had seen Jesus alive after His death. There were *hundreds* of eye-witnesses who saw the risen Lord (1 Corinthians 15:4-8). All of this is evidence that confirms the fact that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God.

## ***Why Should We Follow Jesus?***

Once we understand who Jesus is – the Son of God who possesses all authority – the next matter to be

examined are the reasons why we should follow Him. There are a few reasons for us to consider.

**First, God said we must listen to Him.** When Jesus was transfigured on the mountain before Peter, James, and John, the Father said, *“This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!”* (Matthew 17:5). This charge to listen to Jesus was not just for those three men or even for the apostles exclusively; it was for all. As we have already noticed, Jesus has been given *“all authority...in heaven and on earth”* (Matthew 28:18). This was the basis for the commission given by the Lord to His apostles: *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you”* (Matthew 28:19-20). Since Jesus has the right to command us, we are expected to do what He has instructed.

**Second, Jesus set the perfect example for us.** Peter made this point: *“For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth”* (1 Peter 2:21-22). Jesus has not hypocritically instructed us to do something that He would not or could not do. He obeyed the will of the Father (Philippians 2:8; Hebrews 5:8) just as we are expected to obey His will. In coming to earth, He proved that He is able to *“sympathize with our*

*weaknesses,”* having been *“tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin”* (Hebrews 4:15). In every way, we can and should follow Jesus.

**Third, Jesus was willing to give up His life for us.** Jesus said, *“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep”* (John 10:11). What is especially significant about His willingness to die for us is that He did so when mankind was wholly undeserving of His love and sacrifice. Paul wrote, *“For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly”* (Romans 5:6). *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). There was nothing that man could do to bring about salvation from his sins. There was no reason why we should be worthy of the Lord’s *desire* to save us, let alone His suffering and death on the cross. Yet Jesus was willing to suffer and die on the cross in order to open up the way of salvation for all.

**Fourth, Jesus is the light who shows us the way.** Several times in the Gospel of John, Jesus was referred to as the light. *“In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men”* (John 1:4). *“There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man”* (John 1:9). *“Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life’”* (John 8:12). This

illustration was used because light shows a path that would otherwise have been hidden by darkness. Without the Lord to *enlighten* us (John 1:9), we would be hopelessly lost. The prophet Jeremiah wrote, “*I know, O Lord, that a man’s way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps*” (Jeremiah 10:23). We can escape the darkness, but only by following Christ. Jesus said, “*I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness*” (John 12:46).

**Finally, there is salvation in no one else but in Christ.** After being arrested for the first time, Peter explained to the Jewish leaders who had him arrested why he preached Jesus: “*And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12). Salvation is found *nowhere* but in Jesus.

## ***Where Is Jesus Leading Us?***

A *way* denotes that we are going in a certain direction toward some destination. If Jesus is “*the way*” (John 14:6), it is reasonable for us to wonder to what destination is He leading us.

**First, Jesus is leading us to the Father.** When Jesus said, “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life,*” He

explained what “way” He was talking about: “*No one comes to the Father but through Me*” (John 14:6). Jesus was not talking about us being able to come to the Father through Him in some figurative sense; rather, He indicated that we would be coming into the Father’s house: “*In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also*” (John 14:2-3). The place to which Jesus referred was heaven itself, where all of the troubles of life will be over. Regarding this place, John wrote, “*And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away*” (Revelation 21:4).

**Second, Jesus is leading us to eternal life.** After describing Himself as “*the good shepherd*” (John 10:11), Jesus said, “*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand*” (John 10:27-28). If we will hear Christ and follow Him, we can look forward to eternal life. Peter acknowledged that Jesus possessed the “*words of eternal life*” (John 6:68), so we must follow His lead in order to arrive at that desired destination.

**Third, Jesus is leading us to where He is.** This could go without saying – Jesus is at the right hand of the Father (Hebrews 1:3; 12:2) and lives forever (Hebrews 7:24-25). However, the point we should remember is that since Jesus is already there, we have real hope. The Hebrew writer noted this: *“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us”* (Hebrews 6:19-20). This hope is more than just “wishful thinking”; it is *“both sure and steadfast”* (Hebrews 6:19). Therefore, we can have *“confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world”* (1 John 4:17). As Jesus overcame the world and returned to heaven, we are also able to overcome the world and reach that eternal home.

## ***Conclusion***

We cannot afford to go through life simply following our heart. Instead, we must *“set [our] heart”* to follow the Lord (2 Chronicles 22:19). Jesus is *“the way”* (John 14:6). We must follow Him in order to have hope of eternal life.

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