

## **What does it mean to become a follower of Jesus?**

Following is different than being a fan. One can be an ardent fan of the Blue Jays when they're doing well, then all but forget about baseball when they are playing poorly. Being a follower is different.

The old word (that we still use) for follower is "disciple". This doesn't just refer to Jesus' 12 buddies. A disciple is someone who learns from another. So is a follower. When we follow Jesus, we learn from him, we imitate him, we live for him.

Essentially, it means that Jesus is Number One in our lives.

It's both an act of the will and a gift of God's grace that we make Jesus Number One in our lives. And it all starts way back when God made the world.

**God's original design** for humanity was that, having made us in his own image, we should live in full and complete relationship with him. But something keeps us from doing that now.

**We have been separated from God** by our sin. Sin – what we think and do that goes against God's will for us – creates a chasm between us and God. Because God is holy, the one thing he can't do is behold sin. It's hard for us to avoid sin because it is a nature we have inherited from our first parents, Adam and Eve. Even the apostle Paul, one of Jesus' followers who brought the good news to the non-Jewish people in the Roman Empire, admitted, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3.23).

On our own, we can't attain perfection, which is what God requires for us to be in full relationship with him. No amount of good work can make up for our sin. The good news is that God has solved the problem for us.

**God has provided a way for us to restore our relationship with him.** The Way is Jesus! Jesus is eternally God, and became incarnate, born of a virgin named Mary. He lived a full human life, while maintaining his divinity, and so lived a perfect human life. He was the only person who ever measured up to God's standard. When he was crucified, God placed on him the sins of every person who would ever live, so that by faith in Jesus' work for us, we could receive forgiveness for our sins.

Paul put it this way: "For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ" (2 Corinthians 5.21).

It is as if the cross of Jesus bridges the chasm of sin that separates us from God!

**How will we respond?** God's gracious gift of salvation in Jesus calls for us to respond and become followers of Jesus. Here's how:

- Acknowledge your inclination to sin.
- Turn away from sin (the Bible calls this "repentance").
- Turn to God in faith, and thank him for the gift of Jesus, believing that he died for *you* personally, to save you from sin, and rose from the grave to bring you eternal life.
- Talk to God in prayer, and invite Jesus to enter your life by the Holy Spirit to take control, and be Number One in your life. This is called receiving him as Lord and Saviour. Here's an example:
  - *Gracious God, I admit that my sin has kept me from a full relationship with you, and that I can't do anything to change that. But I believe right now that Jesus died in my place, and rose from the dead to bridge the gap in our relationship. Thank you! I confess my faith in Jesus, who has forgiven my sins. I dedicate myself to make him Number One in my life, that I will live in a complete relationship with you. Amen.*

When you've done that, find another follower of Jesus – a Christian – who can rejoice with you in your newfound faith! As a result of this, your eternity has been altered irreversibly! Welcome to the family of God!

There might be times when it seems like the excitement of your faith is waning, but that is why **getting involved in a church family** is so important. Community is key to fanning the flames of our faith. That's why we're here! Churches have small groups and worship gatherings that enable us to engage with God and strengthen our faith.

It's also a good thing to **read the Bible**, which is God's written word to us – a love letter, of a sort. There are reading plans readily available online, but one recommendation is to read the Bible in this order:

- The Gospel of John
- The whole New Testament
- The whole Bible

Those of us who like to do things in order might find this a bit crazy, but by reading John first, we get a taste for what the plan of God for humanity is like. Then, by reading its context in the whole New Testament, we learn God's plan of salvation for his people. Then, by reading the entire Bible, we can read the Old Testament in light of the New, which makes it easier for a Christian to understand. You can find a number of easy-to-read Bible translations online at [Bible Gateway](#).