

Do You Follow Like Peter?

Many people today are exactly like Peter was. At one point in their life they appeared to be strong and committed Christians. They once attended with the church every week. They even studied the Bible. But like Peter, this appearance lasted only as long as everything went their way with a minimum of personal sacrifice. Then something challenges their faith and they stop attending. From that point on, they follow Jesus “**secretly at a distance**”. They follow just close enough, to create a false assurance of heaven, yet just far enough away that they encounter no hardship for their faith. You can always identify these people because they are the ones who claim to believe in Jesus and expect to go to heaven, but rarely attend Sunday, read their Bibles, pray or do anything for the Lord. They maintain the absolute minimum amount of contact with their church in order to keep their name on the membership roll for the occasional wedding or funeral!

The Uncommitted Christian

Jesus said to the uncommitted Christian, “**I know your deeds, that you are neither hot or cold. So because you are lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth**” (Rev 3:15). Like Peter, but fail to follow Jesus **all the way** to the cross of hardship. Jesus said, “**If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me**” (Luke 9:23). Jesus expects us to deny ourselves and bear up with the daily struggles and sacrifices we face for Christ. First century Christians were so committed to the Christ that they allowed their property to be seized, were tortured and put to death for their faith. What will the Lord say to us on judgment day if our faith was so shallow, that we couldn’t even get out of bed Sunday morning to join in the worship with other like-minded believers? How can we claim to be committed followers of Christ when we spend hours watching TV every day, but can never find the time to read the Bible or pray?

What Kind Of Follower Are You?

“**Test yourself to see if you are in the faith, examine yourself...if indeed you pass the test**” (2 Cor 13:5). Would you pass the test, or fail like Peter did? It is important for you to evaluate where you stand with God. We ask, not for a show of hands, but a show of **hearts**. Are you as committed as Jesus expects? Is your moral life right with God? If you feel you do fall short, are you willing to obey Jesus? Is Jesus really your Lord?

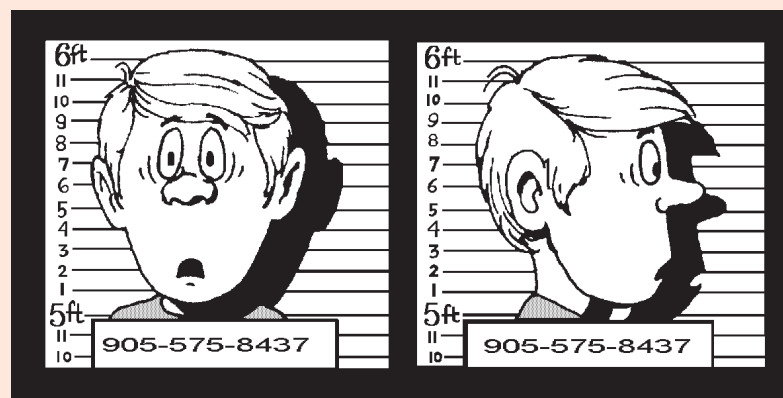
Listen to the words of the Lord Jesus

“If you love me keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

“Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.” (Mt 7:13)

“Not everyone who calls me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father” (Mt 7:21).

Is Jesus Really Your Lord?



If you were **arrested**
for being a Christian...

Would there be enough **evidence**
to convict you?

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Who Is Jesus?

If a Gallup poll was conducted by asking the public the question, “Who do you think Jesus Christ is?”, we would get a wide range of answers. Some would say Jesus was an ancient philosopher. Others, that He was a powerful religious leader or an influential social reformer. A few might even deny that He ever existed. The Lord conducted His own poll by asking his followers, “**Who does the public say that I am**” (Luke 9:18)? Not surprisingly, Jesus got a wide range of answers. But Jesus was most interested in what His followers thought so He next asked, “**But who do you say that I am?**” So we begin this lesson by asking you the reader, “Who do you think Jesus is?”

Jesus (God the son) has existed from eternity with God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit. John 1:1,14 says, “**In the beginning was the Word (Jesus) and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God...and the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory.**” Jesus made reference to his pre-earth existence, “**Father, glorify Me with the glory I had with thee before the world was**” (John 17:5). Right now Jesus is in heaven with the Father just as He was before creation.

No scripture gives us a clearer picture of who Jesus is than Phil 2:6, “**Although Jesus existed in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in the appearance as a man, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.**”

We are most familiar with the earth life of Jesus and how He was born into this world from heaven through the virgin Mary. Yet, even when Jesus walked the earth in a human body, He was fully divine, “**For in Christ all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form**” (Col 2:9). God bore witness to the fact Jesus was divine by raising Him from the dead, “**Jesus was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead**” (Rom 1:4).

Is Jesus Lord Of Your Life?

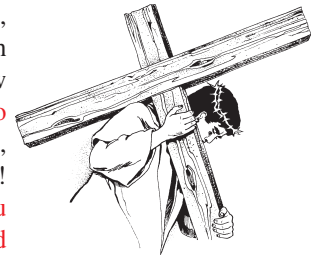
Jesus said, “**Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I command**” (Lk 6:46)? For Christ to be the Lord of our life, we must obey his commandments and imitate His conduct. Jesus said in Mt 7:13, “**Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.**” He then said, “**Not everyone who calls me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father**” (Mt 7:21). Jesus is saying that in order to be saved, it takes more than calling oneself a “Christian”. Jesus demands obedience! Anyone can **merely claim** to be a Christian. “**Prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves**” (James 1:22).



Sounds harmless, yet Jesus knew the man would **never** return. What he really wanted was a vacation from God, one last wallow in the mire, a temporary leave of absence wherein he could frolic in all his former sinful ways one last time. Jesus proclaimed the man to be unfit for the kingdom. Today, many people were once in the habit of weekly attendance and reading their Bibles. But like this man, they have drifted away from God and the furrows of their life are not straight but crooked and full of zags. They have let their faith slip. They know they are not doing their best for God. They know that Jesus is not happy with their lifestyles. For years they have said to themselves, “I really should get back to the church and make a fresh start with my life”. But they never change and the years roll by. The apostle Peter gives this advice to such well-wishing people, “**You have spent enough time in the past dozing what sinners do — living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and idolatry**” (1 Peter 4:3). If there is sin in your life, act now before it is too late. “**Draw close to God and He will draw close to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners and purify your hearts, you double-minded**” (James 4:8). For God will judge each man according to his deeds (Matthew 16:27; Romans 2:6)!

Following Jesus At A Distance

On the night Jesus was arrested prior to His crucifixion, the apostle Peter underwent the ultimate test of his faith and failed. At about 7 PM that night, Peter boasted how committed he was, saying, “**Lord, with you I am ready to go both to prison and to death**” (Luke 22:33)! To onlookers, Peter appeared to be a model Christian, a pillar of strength! But, Jesus knew Peter’s heart and replied, “**I tell you Peter, the cock will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me.**” Then around midnight, a big change took place in Peter when Jesus was arrested. Now we find Peter following Jesus, not boldly by His side, but secretly “**at a distance**” (v54). To onlookers, Peter no longer appeared committed at all, but a backslider that was unwilling to walk beside the Lord.



Finally, just before sunrise that same night, a second big change took place in Peter. Now we find Peter sneaking around for fear that someone would recognize him as one of Jesus’ followers. But, to Peter’s horror, one man did recognize him and said, “**Certainly this man also was with Jesus**” (v59). Peter, realizing that he, like Jesus, was about to be arrested, began to curse and swear, “**I do not know the man**”.

What an amazing change in such a short time! One minute, Peter said he was willing to die for Jesus. Just a few hours later, he denied he even knew Jesus! Why? Because Peter had never really faced any personal conflict for his faith. Peter denied the Lord in order to avoid personal hardship for his faith. Peter failed the test, but would **you** do better?

The Night Peter Failed The Test		
Time	Peter’s Actions	What Kind Of Faith?
7 PM	Willing to die for Lord	Faithful, committed Christian
Midnight	Followed at a distance	Backslider/Closet Christian
4 AM	Denied the Lord	Fallen Away From The Faith

The Ultimate Excuse

Imagine that you asked the boss for the day off to attend your father's funeral, and he refused. You might consider him so unreasonable that you might quit on the spot. Of any excuse in all of society, the death of a parent is always accepted. It is the *ultimate excuse*! It works every time...except on Jesus. One man actually used the death of his father as an excuse to put off becoming a Christian. Luke 9:59 says, "Jesus said to another, 'Follow Me,' but the man replied, 'Permit me first to go and bury my father.' Then Jesus answered back, 'Allow the (spiritually) dead to bury the (physically) dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God.'" Do you consider the Lord unreasonable for refusing to allow this man to bury his father? Jesus replied in other words, "If you are going to use the death of your father as an excuse to put off making me Lord of your life, then no, I will not allow you to bury your father." Jesus Himself attended funerals so He was not against funerals as such. This man was using the occasion as an excuse to *delay* becoming a Christian. Now, if Jesus didn't accept the "ultimate excuse" what do you think Jesus will say about your excuses when you forsake the assembly? The truth is that people who habitually forsake the assembly do not have Jesus as the Lord of their life. For Jesus to be our Lord we must obey Him in all things, not just those *we* choose.

12 Excuses why people "forsake the assembly" (Heb 10:25)

Too busy or tired with work or school	Weekly attendance is not important
Rather do some work around the house	Jesus doesn't expect me to attend
Rather go shopping or go to the cottage	Guests visiting for the weekend
Christ is important...Not the church	Hard to form the habit of assembling
Would rather sleep in	Organized religion is corrupt
I must work every Sunday	Attendance causes family tension

A Lifetime Commitment

When we talk about lifetime commitment, we usually think about marriage. Yet the national divorce rate is 50% in spite of the fact that both parties have vowed to stay together, "for better or worse, till death do us part." What Jesus requires of His followers **greatly** exceeds the commitment of marriage. Many today have broken their spiritual vows!



Jesus talked with a man who wanted to break his commitment to God. Luke 9:61-62 records the conversation, "Another man said, 'I will follow you, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home.' But Jesus replied, 'No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.'" When you plow a field by hand, you must not look behind you or else you will create a **zag** in the furrow. This man was already following Jesus. His hand was already on the plow of the kingdom, but he looked back to his former life before he became a Christian. Notice that the man didn't say he wanted to quit following Jesus forever, only that he wanted to quit long enough to say goodbye to his family.

Following Jesus For Wrong Reasons

We will now focus our attention on people who thought they were saved, but Jesus stated they were lost. Everywhere the Lord went, thousands followed Him. In John 6 we read the story of Jesus feeding the 5000 who were following Him for the **wrong** reason. Jesus charged them, "Truly, Truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate loaves, and were filled" v26. Here we have people who were following Jesus for totally wrong reasons. They were only interested in a free meal. Jesus tried to correct this problem by saying, "I am the bread of life who came down out of heaven" v41. This was too much for them to accept. Yes, they viewed Jesus as a great teacher, but how could He claim to be **divine**? How could he come having come down out of heaven? This they rejected. Jesus tried to teach them that the only reason they should follow him was not for bread, but because they believed He was the divine son of God. The end of this story is found in v66, "As a result of His words, many of Jesus disciples withdrew, and were not walking with him any more." 5000 left Jesus. Only about twelve remained. Today, if a minister caused a similar drop in church attendance, he would be fired on the spot. Yet Jesus deliberately repelled the 5000 because they were following Him for the wrong reasons. Unlike many religious leaders today, Jesus was interested in quality not numbers!

Attending For The Wrong Reasons

It is truly sad that modern churches use cheap gimmicks to get people to attend. The church service has been changed from heart-felt worship to Hollywood style entertainment complete with special effects. Churches that once focused on good Bible study classes, now compete against one-another like businesses for new members. In an attempt to increase numbers, they advertise pot-lucks, dinner theatres, bake sales, soup kitchens, bingo, camping trips, exercise classes and various support groups...things which have nothing to do with religion or the Bible. If it brings in the numbers, they will do it. Yes, these churches are full every Sunday, but most members would quit if the "cake and ice cream" that initially attracted them were no longer offered. There are many people today who attend church because they are "bread seekers" rather than genuine Christ seekers. **Is the reason why you attend with your church listed below?**

20 Wrong Reasons to Attend With A Specific Local Church

Pre-marital sex or homosexuality is OK	Ethnic, language or race similarities
You really like the preacher	Church building is large & beautiful
Support groups & exercise classes	Its where your parents attended
Its the church you got married in	Midweek daycare for your children
They have a popular TV program	Building is geographically convenient
Craft classes & ladies tea afternoons	Family social evenings & youth groups
Monetary & food gifts for members	They run a "Christian" public school
You agree with their political views	Summer camping retreats offered
You are dating one of their members	Opportunity for business contacts
Musical programs and dinner theaters	Bingo, raffles and bazaars

The Majority Will Go To Hell

Jesus' disciples understood that the 5000 bread seekers were lost and they asked, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" Jesus replied, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to" (Luke 13:23). On judgment day, the masses will want to go to heaven, but will be cast into hell instead. Jesus said, "At the end of time, the angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt 13:49). Many reject Jesus' teaching that hell exists, but the Bible clearly says, "God will punish those who do not know Him, and those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction away from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thess 1:8). God will sentence the majority to hell. Make sure you are part of the saved minority!

Do You Attend Every Sunday?

Being a Christian is the best lifestyle one can choose, but there are hardships and sacrifices. Attending worship every Sunday might cost you two hours of time. It might even interfere with your weekend plans, but Jesus Christ expects His followers to assemble together every Sunday. In fact, the Bible clearly commands us to assemble weekly:



"Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as is the habit of some..."
Hebrews 10:25

85% of the population is in the habit of not attending any local assembly of Christians. Many claim to love the Lord but never attend. Jesus said, "If you love me keep my commandments" (John 14:15). God says, "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph 5:25). Jesus thought the church was so important that He died on the cross for it. Are you one of the 85% who are in the **habit** of "**forsaking**" the weekly assembly? Those who think they can be pleasing to Christ without attending with the church for which He died, are sadly mistaken!

Jesus Accept No Excuses

When we are asked to do something we really don't want to do, we will make up some feeble excuse. In the same way, people make up excuses why they will not follow Jesus and attend weekly. The Lord condemned all such excuses in the parable of the great feast, "A man had prepared a great feast and sent his servants to invite the guests saying, 'Come; for everything is ready now!' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.' Another one said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.' And another one said, 'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come'" (Luke 14:16). As we examine the three excuses in the parable, we will notice that each excuse represents a different area of conflict that stands between the sinner and the Lord.

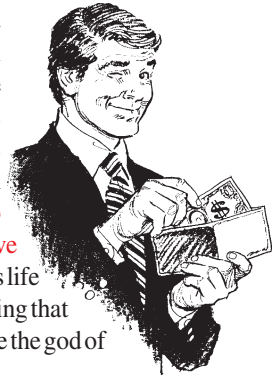
1. Conflicts With Home & School



The first man's need to "**look at the piece of land**" likely arose out of business necessity. Perhaps he was an investor. This man was saying he didn't have the time because of business commitments. Today, people say they are too busy with work or school to attend with the church. They say, "I work hard during the week, Sunday is my only day off." How can we claim that Jesus is Lord of our life if we are always too busy or tired to attend? It should be quite obvious that we are *too busy*!

2. Conflicts With Material Things

The second man had just "*bought five yoke of oxen and had to try them out*". He was more interested in playing with his "new toy" than obeying Jesus. It was a brand new set of oxen and he wanted to take them for a "spin around the block". Fasten your seat belt! What does Jesus think when we say, "Lord, please excuse me from attending this Sunday, I want to wash the new car and work on home & garden improvements." Jesus said in Mt 7:24, "**No servant can serve two masters; for he will always hate one and love the other. You cannot serve God and money.**" This man crowned material things, the Lord of his life and refused to follow Jesus. There will always be some material thing that catches the eye. The problem will only be solved when we dethrone the god of money in our lives and obey Jesus.



3. Conflicts With Your Family

The third man in the parable asked to be excused from following Jesus because he had just "*married a wife*". This is like the man who says, "Lord, I already know that my wife wouldn't approve of my following you, so please, for the sake of peace in my marriage, consider me excused". He chose peace with his spouse rather than peace with God. There are times when Christ expects us to do things our spouse objects to. Conversely, your spouse may ask you to do something that Christ says is sinful. Either way, the result is often marital conflict. Jesus said exactly this in Luke 12:51, "**Do you suppose I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two, and two against three.**"



When a husband and wife have two different levels of commitment to the Lord, conflicts will always arise. The spiritually weak says, 'Why do you have to attend this Sunday morning? Lets go out for breakfast and take the kids to the park instead.' The committed are always being asked to compromise and Jesus ends up losing out. If the faithful refuse to compromise, it can create great problems for the marriage. If they do compromise, they are guilty of sin before Christ.

Your Name _____
Your Address _____
City _____ ZIP _____
Phone Number _____

Please Enclose With My Next Lesson



Free, but check only one please

- ☐ Bible passages that show Jesus to be the divine creator.
- ☐ What does the Bible teach on heaven and hell?
- ☐ A unique daily Bible reading schedule.

Please Answer My Question...

Ask Yourself...

Is Jesus happy with your present level of commitment to Him?

- ☐ **Unsure** ☐ **No** ☐ **Yes**

How would you describe the way you presently follow Jesus?

- ☐ **Committed Christian** ☐ **So So** ☐ **Non-Christian**

“Let us not forsake the assembly as is the habit of some.” (Hebrews 10:25)

Your Mark _____ %



Mail Worksheet To

Is Jesus Your Lord?

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WORKSHEET

TRUE OR FALSE

All questions 4 marks each

- T F** 1. Jesus, being divine, lived in heaven long **before** the universe was created.
- T F** 2. To get to heaven we **only** need to believe in Christ.
- T F** 3. Jesus said the **majority** of mankind will go to heaven.
- T F** 4. If asked, the majority of mankind would feel quite **sure** they will go to heaven.
- T F** 5. People who do not try to attend with a church **every** week are pleasing to Christ.
- T F** 6. We will have the hope of heaven if we hear the words of Christ but do not **obey** them.
- T F** 7. Weekly church attendance alone will **guarantee** that one will go to heaven.
- T F** 8. One local church is as good as another.
- T F** 9. We show our love for Jesus by obeying His commandments.
- T F** 10. There are some circumstances where Jesus will permit us to **delay** purifying our lives of sin.
- T F** 11. God will judge each man according to his **actions**.
- T F** 12. Everyone who **calls himself** a Christian and **says** that they believe in Jesus as their Lord and saviour will be saved.
- T F** 13. Jesus promised that if we believed in Him that our lives would become conflict free.
- T F** 14. In the great judgement there will many people who **expect** to go to heaven but will be cast into hell instead.
- T F** 15. The most common reason why people don't attend weekly is because they are **not** very interested in spiritual things.

Multiple Choice

(Circle a,b,c,d)

1. When Jesus was raised from the dead it proved that He was

- a. a good man who selflessly helped others in need.
- b. a great philosopher with divine insight.
- c. the divine Son of God.
- d. a powerful social reformer.

2. A person will be cast into hell if they

- a. are part of the majority.
- b. believe in Jesus as Lord but do not obey His commandments
- c. could be described as a “lukewarm” Christian.
- d. All of the above.

3. The majority of people who say they are too busy to study the Bible right now because of work or school

- a. are usually dedicated and committed Christians.
- b. will find their schedules will lighten up as they get older.
- c. will find their spiritual interest will increase the longer they put off Bible study.
- d. need to change their priorities before it is too late.

4. You can identify those who truly have Jesus as the Lord of their life because they

- a. have their names on the membership roll of a local church.
- b. attend church services every Christmas and Easter.
- c. claim to be true Christians and are absolutely sure they are going to heaven if asked.
- d. obey every commandment of Jesus in both moral conduct and doctrine.

5. The right reason you should attend with a specific local church is because

- a. they provide more social benefits and activities than if you had joined the YMCA club.
- b. many of the members are of the same ethnic background and language as you are.
- c. their doctrine and worship is exactly the same as what the Bible teaches.
- d. it is the same denomination that your parents raised you in.

6. The Bible describes hell as

- a. a place of pain we will spend a short period of time before we enter heaven.
- b. a place where the disobedient will forever burn, weep and gnash their teeth away from the presence of God.
- c. a place of temporary pain, where we will cease to exist.
- d. the bad things that happen to mankind while upon the earth.

7. When apostle Peter secretly followed Jesus at a distance it showed that he

- a. thought of himself as a Christian but was not willing to make any personal sacrifices for his faith.
- b. was willing to stand up for Jesus even in times of difficulty.
- c. was a committed Christian.
- d. willing to die for Jesus just as he said he would.



8. Able people who habitually forsake the assembly of Christians every week will be lost because

- a. they would feel totally out of place in heaven, where Christian's will assemble to praise God day and night.
- b. it is merely one symptom of other more serious spiritual problems.
- c. they are violating the clear commandment of Jesus.
- d. all of the above.

9. If a person lives in the way which pleases Christ then

- a. he will rarely experience any trials and temptations.
- b. life will be a bed of roses.
- c. he must deny himself, and expect to suffer and sacrifice for his faith.
- d. none of the above.

10. Modern churches offer things like Hollywood style worship services, exercise classes and pot-lucks because

- a. Christians in the first century worshipped God in similar kinds of ways.
- b. church leaders know that attendance would drop without these artificial things.
- c. Jesus allowed the masses to follow Him for any reason.
- d. any method that brings in the biggest crowds is the best.