

# FOLLOWING IN THE STEPS OF JESUS

LIVING A CHRIST-LIKE LIFE IN THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY

- March 9* “Feasting on Scripture, Fasting from Fear”
- March 16* “Loving the Weak, Helping the Strong”
- March 23* “Carrying Crosses, Abandoning Burdens”
- March 30* “Walking like a Lamb, Roaring Like a Lion”
- April 6* “Standing on Earth, Looking to Heaven”

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The Collects of Holy Week and Eastertide invite us to walk in Christ's steps.

**O** BLESSED Saviour, who by thy cross and passion hast given life unto the world: Grant that we thy servants may be given grace to **take up the cross and follow thee** through life and death; whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit we worship and glorify, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (*Collect of Holy Cross Day, p. 321*)

**A** LMIGHTY and everlasting God, who, of thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should **follow the example of his great humility**: Mercifully grant, that we may both follow the example of his patience, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*Collect of Holy Week, p. 150*)

**G** RANT, O Lord, that as we are baptized into the death of thy blessed Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, **so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections we may be buried with him; and that, through the grave, and gate of death, we may pass to our joyful resurrection**; for his merits, who died, and was buried, and rose again for us, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*Collect of Easter Even, p. 180*)

**A** LMIGHTY God, who hast given thine only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an example of godly life: Give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive that his inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavour ourselves to **follow the blessed steps of his most holy life**; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*Collect of Easter 2, p. 191*)

Walking in the steps of Jesus means abandoning burdens ...

**C**OME to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

... and carrying crosses.

**I**F anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

“In the beginning ...”

(Genesis 1.1-3,5,6-8,9,11,13-14,19-20,23-27,31)

**I**N the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And there was evening and there was morning, the third day. And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day. And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

## Hebrew Wisdom

*“Skill in the art of godly living”*

*or*

*“that orientation which allows one to live in harmonious accord with God’s ordering of the world.”<sup>1</sup>*

### Biblical Wisdom Literature Includes Books from ...

#### The Old Testament:

- Job
- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Ecclesiastes
- Song of Songs (or Song of Solomon)

#### The Apocrypha:

- Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus)
- The Wisdom of Solomon

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<sup>1</sup> English Standard Version (ESV) Study Bible (Crossway, 2008), p. 866.

Divine Wisdom is personified in Proverbs.

(Proverbs 8.1, 22- 36)

**D**OES not wisdom call? On the heights beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand; beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud: "To you, O men, I call, and my cry is to the children of man. The LORD possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth, before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world. When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man. And now, O sons, listen to me: blessed are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD."

New Testament writers described Christ in ways that resemble Divine Wisdom.

John 1.1-4, 14

**I**N the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

Colossians 1.15-20

**H**E is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Hebrews 1.1-3, 8-12

**L**ONG ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. Of the Son he says, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end.”

**Like Wisdom, Jesus calls us to follow him and walk in his ways.**

Matthew 4.19; Mark 1.17	<i>Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.</i>	Jesus to Simon Peter and Andrew
John 1.37	<i>They followed Jesus</i>	Two disciples of John
Matthew 4.22; Mark 1.20	<i>Immediately they left their boat and their father, and followed him.</i>	James and John, Sons of Zebedee
Matthew 4.25; Mark 3.7	<i>And great crowds followed him.</i>	Crowds
John 6.2	<i>A large crowd was following him</i>	Crowds
Matthew 8.22; Luke 9.59	<i>Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.</i>	Jesus to an unnamed person
Matthew 9.9; Mark 2.14; Luke 5. 27	<i>Follow me.</i>	Jesus to Matthew (Levi)
John 8.12	<i>Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.</i>	Jesus to crowds.
Matthew 19.21; Mark 10.21; Luke 18.22	<i>Go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor ... then come, follow me.</i>	Jesus to the rich young man
John 1.43	<i>Follow me.</i>	Jesus to Philip
John 12.26	<i>If anyone serves me, he must follow me.</i>	Jesus to some disciples
John 21.19	<i>Follow me.</i>	Jesus to Peter
John 21.22	<i>You follow me!</i>	Jesus to Peter



The way of the religious leaders was to weigh people down with burdens.

(Matthew 23.1-7, 14)

**T**HEN Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others. But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.”

(Luke 11.37-41, 45-52)

**W**HILE Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table. The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. And the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you. One of the lawyers answered him, “Teacher, in saying these things you insult us also.” And he said, “Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. So you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs. Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,’ so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation. Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering.”

But Jesus offers a different way.

(Matthew 11:28-30)

**C**OME to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

## Jesus borrows from Wisdom Literature to describe himself.

### Sirach 51.13-14, 19-30

While I was still young, before I went on my travels, I sought wisdom openly in my prayer. Before the temple I asked for her, and I will search for her to the last. My soul grappled with wisdom, and in my conduct I was strict; I spread out my hands to the heavens, and lamented my ignorance of her. I directed my soul to her, and through purification I found her. I gained understanding with her from the first, therefore I will not be forsaken. My heart was stirred to seek her, therefore I have gained a good possession. The Lord gave me a tongue as my reward, and I will praise him with it. **Draw near to me, you who are untaught, and lodge in my school.** Why do you say you are lacking in these things, and why are your souls very thirsty? I opened my mouth and said, Get these things for yourselves without money. **Put your neck under the yoke, and let your souls receive instruction;** it is to be found close by. See with your eyes that **I have labored little** and found for myself much rest.

### Matthew 11:28-29

**Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me,** for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.**

Divine Wisdom is cross-shaped.

(1 Corinthians 1.18, 20-30)

**F**OR the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

(Matthew 16.21-25)

*(See also Mark 8.31-35; Luke 9.23-24)*

**F**ROM that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

(Matthew 10.34-39)

**D**O not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

(Luke 14.25-27,33)

**N**OW great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

(Luke 9:57-62)

*(See also Matthew 8.19-22)*

**A**S they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

**Matthew 19.16-22**

*(See also Mark 10.17-22 and Luke 18.18-23)*

**A**ND behold, a man came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, 19 Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The young man said to him, “All these I have kept. What do I still lack?” Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Jesus carried the cross to Golgotha.

(John 19.16-22)

SO they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

Simon of Cyrene carried the Cross.

(Matthew 27.32)

*(See also Mark 15.21 and Luke 23.26)*

**A**S they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross.



### Mary suffered her own Cross.

(Luke 2.22, 25-35)

**A**ND when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

(John 19.25-27)

**S**O the soldiers did these things, but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

Peter endured the Cross.

(John 21.15-19)

**W**HEN they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.”

*Acts of Peter (ca. 175 AD)*

*Chapter XXXV*

**A**ND as they considered these things, Xanthippe took knowledge of the counsel of her husband with Agrippa, and sent and showed Peter, that he might depart from Rome. And the rest of the brethren, together with Marcellus, besought him to depart. But Peter said unto them: Shall we be runaways, brethren? and they said to him: Nay, but that thou mayest yet be able to serve the Lord. And he obeyed the brethren's voice and went forth alone, saying: Let none of you come forth with me, but I will go forth alone, having changed the fashion of mine apparel. And as he went forth of the city, he saw the Lord entering into Rome. And when he saw him, he said: Lord, whither goest thou thus (or here)? (*Quo Vadis?*) And the Lord said unto him: I go into Rome to be crucified. And Peter said unto him: Lord, art thou (being) crucified again? He said unto him: Yea, Peter, I am (being) crucified again. And Peter came to himself: and having beheld the Lord ascending up into heaven, he returned to Rome, rejoicing, and glorifying the Lord, for that he said: I am being crucified: the which was about to befall Peter.

*St Jerome*

*On Illustrious Men (392-393 AD)*

**S**IMON Peter the son of John, from the village of Bethsaida in the province of Galilee, brother of Andrew the apostle, and himself chief of the apostles, after having been bishop of the church of Antioch ... pushed on to Rome in the second year of Claudius ... and held the sacerdotal chair there for twenty-five years until the last, that is the fourteenth, year of Nero. At his hands he received the crown of martyrdom being nailed to the cross with his head towards the ground and his feet raised on high, asserting that he was unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Lord ... Buried at Rome in the Vatican near the triumphal way he is venerated by the whole world.

## Take Up Thy Cross, the Saviour Said

1 Take up thy cross, the Saviour said,  
If thou would my disciple be;  
Deny thyself, the world forsake,  
And humbly follow after me.

2 Take up thy cross; let not its weight  
Fill thy weak soul with vain alarm;  
His strength shall bear thy spirit up,  
And brace thy heart, and nerve thine arm.

3 Take up thy cross, nor heed the shame,  
And let thy foolish pride be still:  
Thy Lord for thee endured to die  
Upon a cross, on Calvary's hill.

4 Take up thy cross, then, in his strength,  
And calmly every danger brave;  
'Twill guide you to a better home,  
And lead to victory o'er the grave.

5 Take up thy cross and follow Christ,  
Nor think till death to lay it down;  
For only those who bear the cross  
May hope to wear the glorious crown.

By Charles William Everest  
1814-1877