CCH 2025 November Times Ink Article

Admiring versus Following Jesus

> *"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like." James 1:22-24 (NIV - New International Version)*

In anticipation of the four weeks of Advent (beginning November 30) when our hearts turn toward the Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love available to us through Jesus, I'm reminded of a sobering sketch a friend recently forwarded to me. It pictured two long staircases—one was crowded with people and had a signpost that read "I BELIEVE IN GOD". The sign on the second staircase, which was being traveled by only a half-dozen people, read "I OBEY GOD". I think I was meant to spend time praying about and asking God how this applies to me. I wish I could say that I spend so much time reading the Bible that John 14 :15 immediately came to my mind, but actually another friend had to point this out to me. *"If you* [really] *love Me, you will keep* and *obey My commandments."* (AMP – Amplified Bible). A mere two days after seeing the "cartoon", I mentioned to a treasured friend that I needed to submit my next article to this paper on behalf of our church and I hadn't yet settled on a topic. It was then that she noted that there's a huge difference between the many Christians who *admire* Jesus and the fewer number of Christians who actually *follow* Jesus.

There's a world of difference between admiring Jesus and following Him. As I've prayed, and read, and prayed some more about this, it seems that believing in God can be similar to simply admiring Jesus. But following Jesus requires that we take action to obey His commandments. Admiring Jesus is easy—in fact, a recent poll confirmed that 85% of Americans admire Jesus and look to him as a significant and important historical person. Admiring Jesus means believing that He is a good person; it means respecting and appreciating His qualities of compassion, humility, forgiveness, love, courage, hope, and more.

But following Jesus is a whole different story. Following Jesus is work; it's messy; it requires study, prayer and action; it means striving in all parts of our lives to live as He did. Can any of us be successful in fully living our lives as a mirror reflection of Jesus? Absolutely not. Why? Because we're human. Even the most devout Christian will still fall short, will make mistakes, will need to continually study the Word of God, and will need to strive for the wisdom and fortitude to be and do better. When, as Christians, we faulter and fail to obey and live out everything that Jesus taught, are we simply hypocrites? Fortunately, through God's grace and mercy, and the sacrifice Jesus made for us, the answer is no. Why? Because if we are someone who actually follows Jesus and doesn't just believe in and admire Him, it means when we fall short of living as Jesus taught us to in any aspect of our lives we will get back up, brush ourselves off, read our Bible, pray for guidance and wisdom, and get back to the business of working to be obedient to Him. Striving to follow Jesus is an amazing, life-long, never-ending journey. It isn't easy. Trust me: at times it's very, very messy and hard. It requires that we make the sacrifice to continually work to be and do better. And in doing so the Hope, Peace, Joy and Love of Jesus can improve our lives and the lives of others.