

Last January, when Chief Justice John Roberts gave President Obama the oath of office, he got his words turned around and put the word faithfully in the wrong place. The words were correct, but the order wasn't. Because of the confusion that followed, the two repeated the oath the next day in private. They had to get it all right.

Get it all right! That is good advice. But how many people do it. 85% of Americans call themselves Christians. That sounds really significant until you realize that many of these people have no real idea what it means to be a Christian. They don't know the teachings of Jesus Christ, they don't confess Him as Lord and Savior and they don't follow His example in the way that they live. When the Barna Research Group did a comparison survey between people who call themselves Christians and the general population, they found no difference in either attitude or actions between Christians and non-Christians. That tells me that too many people who call themselves Christians don't have it right.

There has been a lot of confusion about Jesus and about being one of his followers ever since Jesus walked on this earth. A short time after the disciples helped Jesus feed over 4,000 people; He asked them a question as they travelled together without a crowd of people around. The disciples had the chance to hear what the people were saying and wanted to hear the results of their informal public survey. So Jesus asked, *"Who do people say I am?"* The disciples answered, *"Some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say you are one of the other prophets."* The people put Jesus in good company.

Then Jesus asked this all important question to His disciples, *"But who do you say I am?"* This is a question that each of us has to answer for ourselves. Peter was the first to respond and the first to publicly say, *"You are the Messiah."* Messiah is the Hebrew word for Christ, the title given by God in the Old Testament to the one chosen by Him to be the Promised Savior. Peter got the title right, but didn't understand what it meant or what the Messiah would have to do.

There was a lot of confusion in Jesus' day about who the Messiah would be and what he would do. Many, if not most of the people in Israel, hoped that the Messiah would be the one who would drive out the evil Romans and restore political power and economic wealth and stability to the nation. They wanted the Messiah to give them what they wanted. It appears that disciples had the same hopes and dreams because they wanted a share of Jesus' power when He established his kingdom.

They didn't have it all right. So Jesus began to explain to them what was going to happen. The Gospel of Mark tells us, *"Then Jesus began to tell them that the Son of Man must suffer many terrible things and be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious*

**law. He would be killed, but three days later he would rise from the dead.”** Jesus knew that He would have to face the cross before He would wear the crown. Jesus knew that he would have to die for sinful mankind before He could give us the crown of life. Of course Peter objected. He didn’t want Jesus to die. That wasn’t his vision of the Messiah. So He tried to get Jesus to change His plans, to avoid the cross. That is exactly what the Devil tried to do immediately after Jesus was baptized when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness. The three temptations were all the same: take the short cut Jesus, give the people what they want and avoid the cross. That is why Jesus said to Peter, **“Get away from me, Satan! You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God’s.”** Even though he didn’t like it, Peter had to see things from Jesus’ perspective and follow Him.

Jesus disciples are Jesus followers! When Jesus first called the disciples, He said to them, **“Follow me.”** In explaining what had to happen, Jesus said, **“If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me.”** It is not just enough to honor Jesus. It is not enough to realize who He is. James 2:19 (NLT) tells us, **“You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror.”** Knowing who Jesus is by itself is not enough! We also need to put our trust in Him enough to place our lives in His hands. That means following Him wherever He leads.

Jesus makes the difference in our lives when we follow Him. Following Jesus means a trip to the cross. It means putting our trust in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. It means believing that He not only died on the cross, but also that He rose from the dead.

We have choices at the cross. A Jesus follower learns from Jesus to serve, to love and to forgive at the cross. Jesus offered His live in service on the cross. He describes his followers as the good neighbors who go out of their way to help those around them in need. That is what Jesus teaches us in the story of the Good Samaritan. Jesus laid down his life in love for us on the cross. His is the greatest act of love the world will ever see. Jesus says people will know that we are His followers by the same kind of love. Christ like love shows itself in action. Christ like love requires that we put the needs of others ahead of our own. Jesus died on the cross to forgive the sins of the world. Jesus followers forgive others. We don’t have a choice because Jesus said, **“If you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.”** (Matthew 6:15 NLT)

One more thing, Jesus followers learn to follow Jesus regardless of where life takes them. Ernie Harwell, the Hall of Fame announcer for the Detroit Tigers, is a Jesus follower. He has recently been diagnosed with inoperable terminal cancer. When Harwell was interviewed by Paul W. Smith on WJR radio this past week, he said, **“I just don't want people to worry. I know we're all going at some time, and I'm ready for whatever God's got. I have a great feeling of peace about it. Serenity.”** A little later in the interview Harwell talked about confirming his faith at an

Easter service with Dr. Billy Graham in 1961. Harwell said, ***"I went to the service, and when he issued the invitation, I dedicated my life to Jesus and told him that he was in charge and I would surrender to him completely from then on."*** What a great description of Jesus followers, people who dedicate their lives to Christ, let Him be in charge and follow Him completely. Jesus has made a difference in Ernie Harwell's life. Let Him make a difference in your life, too. Don't just be a Jesus name dropper. Be a Jesus follower. Amen.