



SERIES: Spiritual Fitness: Christian Living

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Scripture: [Matt. 16:24](#) / [John 14:23](#)

TITLE: Saying No To Say Yes

How does a person recognize a Christian? Is it a fish sticker on the back of their car? Is it the profile on a social media platform? Is it based on their yard signs? Or is there a better way to know? There is, and that's what we're going to talk about today.

Here we are wrapping up two months on spiritual fitness: two months of looking at the essentials of Christianity. When we know and embrace these, we are consuming a steady diet of fitness, which leads to spiritual health. This week and next, we are looking at Christian living. What are the distinguishing characteristics of a Christian? Well, today's marks are essential and a bit controversial. What do I mean? Listen to Jesus' words in [Matthew 16](#).

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "[If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me.](#)" [Matt. 16:24, NLT](#)

Jesus' words are deeply problematic for us today. They were problematic 2000 years ago as well. "[Follow me,](#)" Jesus said. This goes against two influences: our own selfishness and bad theology.

We are really selfish, at least, I am. I want Salvation on my terms. I want the world conformed to my liking. I want to do what I want to do, when I want to do it. But Jesus says, "[You must give up your own way. Pick up the cross. Follow me.](#)" That goes against my selfish nature.

But then it also goes against bad theology. It's become increasingly popular to say, "Free grace is free, so do what you want." Bad theology says, "You're saved by grace, so you're forgiven. Live it up. You've got your ticket to Heaven."

But as Paul said in [Ephesians 2:10](#), we are saved for good works. Paul would also say, "We must not sin so grace can abound". ([Romans 6:1](#))

Jesus asks us to follow Him, which means to obey Him. That's why Jesus said, "[All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them.](#)" [John 14:23](#)

Jesus had many disciples, but eventually, they abandoned Him. In other words, they didn't love Him. They weren't saved. You see, you can be a disciple without being a Christian, but you can't be a Christian without being a disciple.

So here's my challenge for you today. Declare your love of God with your mouth and your life. People don't care about the sticker on your car, or your religious Facebook status. They care

about how you live. Jesus said people are identified by their fruits, so let's live and produce sweet fruits that attract others and glorify God.

So what is it in your life? You need to surrender to God, and let the Spirit change your behavior. We all have an area. He can change your greed into generosity. He can move your heart from fear to trust. He can transform your anger into compassion.

Jesus said, "[Follow me.](#)" so let's follow Him and win the day.