We are members of the Oak Ridge church of Christ. We call ourselves Christians ([**Acts 11:26**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=Acts%2011:26)) and we hold to the Bible as our one and only Truth. Church of Christ is a biblical description of Christians who work together for the cause of Christ ([**Romans 16:16**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=Romans%2016:16)). We are independent assemblies with no organization beyond our own number as described in [**Philippians 1:1**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=Philippians%201:1). There are Christians across the world working with local congregations of God’s people such as described in [**Revelation 2**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=Revelation%202)**-3**. Christians are members of Christ’s body, which is also known as His Church ([**Acts 2:47**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=Acts%202:47)**,**[**Ephesians 5:23**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=Ephesians%205:23)). Our mission is to stand for God’s truth (the gospel) and teach it to all people ([**Matthew 28:18-20**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=Matthew%2028:18-20)**,**[**Romans 1:16**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=Romans%201:16)**,**[**1 Timothy 3:15**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=1%20Timothy%203:15)). We are accountable to our one and only Head Jesus Christ ([**Ephesians 1:22-23**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=Ephesians%201:22-23)**,**[**Colossians 1:18**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=Colossians%201:18)).

**DON’T LOOK BACK**

In **Luke 9:57-62**, we read about an interaction with Jesus and some people whom He had been teaching. In this account one of them tells Jesus, “**Lord, I will follow you wherever you go.**” What a beautiful sentiment and commitment! This was a commitment that we all should make. However, there were others present who made this same commitment, but with conditions or caveats. They wanted to take care of some other things first and then they would follow Jesus. Jesus bluntly tells these people that if you put your hand to the plow and look back, you are not fit for the kingdom. What a strong statement! It is one we should consider very carefully. Jesus wants us to follow Him now, not later when we have done what we want to do. And He doesn’t want us to start following Him and then become encumbered and pulled down by our past desires, sins, problems, possessions, or responsibilities. He doesn’t want us to become choked by things in the world so that we cannot be productive for Him (**Matthew 13:22**).

Let’s look at some things that we need to leave behind in order to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

**A. Don’t Look Back At What You Must Leave Behind in This World**

1. After leaving Egyptian slavery, the Israelites looked back anytime things got a little tough. Looking back led to discontentment and complaining. It was a stumbling block to their following Moses and God into the promised land of Canaan. They tended to look back at their past life and practice revisionist history. They remembered the good but not the bad (**Exodus 16:2-3; 17:2-3**).

We can do the same. Maybe we keep thinking of sinful things or useless things of our past life, before becoming a Christian. Not stopping to think that without Christ, we were only living our lives for ourselves and in sin. Or on the flip side, we might become overwhelmed with guilt when we dwell on our past life. As a powerful, zealous Jew Paul/Saul committed many sins against Jesus and His church. When he thought about and remembered these sins, he did not let this overwhelm him with sorrow so that he could not move forward. Rather, he dwelt on the mercy, grace, and love of Christ to propel him to do great things for Christ (**1 Timothy 1:12-17**)!

2. Lot and his family were told not to look back when they left evil Sodom and Gomorrah; but, obviously Lot’s wife had trouble letting go of her past life there. She looked back and paid for that with her life (**Genesis 19:26; Luke 17:32**).

3. The apostle Paul tells us that we must leave sins of the world behind us and be cleansed if we want to be followers of Christ (**1 Cor. 6:9-11**). He describes it as becoming a new person (**Ephesians 4:17-32**).

4. The apostle Peter describes very vividly in a proverb what we are like when we look and turn back to the world. (**2 Peter 2:20-22**).

**B. Don’t Look Back At Physical Riches**

1. When we begin to follow Jesus, our priorities change. We may have to sacrifice personal possessions and riches that may be sinful or cause us to stumble. Jesus says that we must look ahead to the true riches that are found in Christ Jesus (**Matthew 6:19-21, 24, Luke 12:15**).

2. When following Christ, we realize that we must have the proper perspective of what true riches are. Paul learned this lesson very well (**Philippians 4:11-13, 19**).

**C. Don’t Look Back At What You Were Religiously**

1. The apostle Paul had been a devout, well-educated and influential Jew. After turning his life around and following Jesus, he did not look back and wish that he could still have the respect and power that he once had. He knew that all of that was garbage when compared with the truth and grace that Jesus gave him. Instead, he looked to the goal of reaching heaven (**Philippians 3:4-14**).

**D. Don’t Look Back At Past Sins or Mistakes of Family and Friends**

1. In this, we are talking about things in the past that have been repented of. We must forgive and move forward. We must forgive others and not dwell on the past. We must move on. Otherwise, Satan will take advantage of us and fill us with hatred and vengeance. We cannot follow a loving Christ with bitterness in our heart (**2 Corinthians 2:3-11; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13**).

2. A beautiful example of this is Mary, the mother of Jesus. It seems that she was a member of the church at Jerusalem (at least at the beginning). That congregation started on the day of Pentecost in **Acts 2**. Many of those who were converted were responsible for killing her son (**Acts 2:36**). How much forgiving and forgetting would it have taken for her to worship with these people?

**E. Don’t Look Back At Past Relationships**

1. When we become followers of Christ, we may have to leave certain friendships or family relationships behind; sinful relationships that would prevent us from putting Christ first or relationships that would bring temptation our way (**Mark 10:29-30**).

2. In the book of Ezra, we learn that some of the Jews who had gone into captivity had entered into forbidden (sinful) marriages. They had to give up these sinful marriages in order to turn away God’s wrath (**Ezra 10:14, 17-19**).

**DON’T LOOK BACK!** That is the theme we have focused on tonight. Rather look forward to the things the Lord wants us to pursue (**1 Timothy 6:11, 2 Peter 3:14**). **How about you? Are you living for Jesus tonight?** We encourage you to become a Christian by repenting of your sins and being baptized like those on the day of Pentecost. Then focus your life on looking forward to Heaven and not looking back at the things you need to leave behind!

Please check the scriptures we have covered tonight. We want to help you in any way we can. Contact us for Bible studies, by telephone, e-mail, or simply come to one of our assemblies. For our next program, next month and next year, we hope to be live, on **January 7, 2019, when we study “The Creator Died For You!”** We hope to see you next time on "**Speaking The Truth In Love**".