

Why we can't be "secret believers" anymore



By Philip Shields
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Summary: Many claim to be followers of Christ and yet their neighbors and work associates may have no inkling they believe so strongly in Christ. Is this an option? See how important this is according to Yeshua/Jesus himself. See and hear the examples of those who have gone before. And are you ready for the times of intense persecution coming in the years ahead that will hit all of us who do confess the Christ? So find out why you can't remain as a "secret believer".

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Welcome everyone to Light on the Rock. I hope our messages are helping you grow, making you think, and bringing you to a closer walk with Yeshua. I appreciate you coming to this website. I've SO appreciated those of you who have taken the time to get in touch with me and tell me what you need or want and given me comments on how this website has blessed you. Thank you.

Please turn to John 1:40-42. Can you see why I think it's interesting?

John 1:40-42

"One of the two who heard John [the Baptist] speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 *He first found his own brother Simon*, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus."

Both of these brothers became part of the 12 Disciples – and eventually the original group of apostles. Andrew was so excited about coming to see Yeshua (Jesus) and figuring out HE was the promised Mashiach (Messiah), that he just had to tell others about him.

Andrew did not want to be a secret disciple, or a secret believer or a secret follower of this man of God – so he told his brother about Him.

You or I may not have the speaking skills or talents to be a powerful preacher or writer. But sometimes God's grace uses you or me to bring others into the Family of God who do become a huge tool in God's hands. For example, Andrew was used to call Peter – who became a giant in Church history.

Are you an Andrew – who just *has* to tell his family about Yeshua? Or are you a secret disciple, a secret Christian or believer or whatever label you prefer? Are you secret about it?

Secret Disciple?

Let's start with WHY this topic is so vitally important:

Matthew 10:32-33

"Therefore whoever confesses ME before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. **33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.** (And Luke 12:8-9 says that also happens "before the angels of God.")

That sounds like Yeshua wants us confessing him openly.
(Prayer – asking God's blessing).

We can deny Christ like Peter did during the mock trial of our Savior – denying knowing him, denying being a Christian, denying to be a follower of Christ. Or we can also end up denying Christ by our actions –

Titus 1:16

"They profess to know God, **but in works they deny Him**, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work."

Can you admit that by your actions you've ever denied Christ? Can you? Whenever we do anything disobedient or "abominable" - - especially when we know better – that is denying our Lord. When we recognize that, we must quickly turn from our evil ways and start to live the new life in Christ. Then our confession of the Christ becomes even more powerful. That's for the next sermon. Please be sure to hear the coming sermon which I'm titling – "your Best Sermon Ever".

We can also deny him by not speaking up when it's critical to stand up for what Christ stands for. Silence is often understood as being complicit with the issues being discussed or actions being performed.

There were other followers -- but unlike Andrew, they were secret followers. Nicodemus – a Pharisee – started out as a secret follower, for example, but he ended well. Are you an Andrew, or a Nicodemus?

SECRET FOLLOWERS

John 3:1-2

"There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. **2 This man came to Jesus by night** and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

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Do we act like some of the religious teachers of Yeshua's day who believed him – but didn't want others to know about it? Maybe it would have cost them their standing in society. Maybe they would have been thrown out of the synagogue, like the blind man of John 9 - who was thrown out when he confessed the Christ. Maybe their family or village would disown them. Some of you have experienced some of those things.

John 12:42-43

“Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; *for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*”

Sometimes even I can be a secret disciple. I don't want to be any longer.

For example, on a recent flight, the lady sitting to my left seemed very somber. At some point I started engaging her in conversation and discovered she had just learned that morning that her daughter (27) had been in a head-on collision and thrown from the car. It was very sad. I have a son just a little older. The daughter was in a coma in the hospital. I immediately in my mind started praying for the woman and her daughter. But then I thought, “What am I doing? Let's give her the option of accepting prayer”. So I told her I would be praying. She thanked me. So then I asked, “would you mind if we pray together right now? Or if you prefer...” She interrupted me and immediately said, “Oh yes, I'd love that”. So we held hands right there, and the lady to her left took her other hand, and the three of us said a quiet heart-felt prayer where I called on the name of Jesus and invoked the promise that “by his stripes we are healed”, and asked for God's presence and strength to be with the lady and her daughter.

But I've got to admit: I hesitated at first. I didn't want to come across like a nut or something. But we prayed and I left it with that. I did NOT bombard her with anything else or have a long discussion about accepting Christ – but just left it with the prayer together. She obviously wanted to also have some quiet time with her thoughts.

So what's my point there?

When you learn about Christ, keep the focus on HIM. But instead, we have too many who immediately assail their loved ones with the new doctrines and new beliefs they have-- that frankly sound very strange to them. And frankly makes YOU look very strange if you bring up every doctrine all at once. Suddenly you don't love sucking on those pork ribs. Or won't accept Christmas gifts or come to the Christmas party. That information will come out in time. Or you're talking about sabbath, or the holy days, or tithing, or all kinds of things. Those things will come out in due time, but at first let them see the life of Christ in you FIRST, and then keep your focus on HIM.

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When Saul (Paul) was called by Messiah (Acts 9), immediately after receiving his sight back, what did he do? We can pick up the story in Acts 9:19-22.

Acts 9:19-22

So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.

20 Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.

21 Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?"

22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, **proving that this Jesus is the Christ.**

That's my point: talk about Yeshua/Jesus—and his impact on your life – and keep the focus on HIM.

LEVI –Matthew Party

And notice that he started right there with his own family. **We have another example of a sinner who was called by Yeshua to be a disciple. This man was a tax collector, a "Publican"** – people who regularly and notoriously overcharged the taxes and pocketed the difference. They were hated and despised by the general populace. This man went on to write the first of the 4 gospels – Matthew, also called Levi. But notice what HE did when he was called by Yeshua:

Luke 5:27-32

27 After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." 28 So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.

29 *Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house.* And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. 30 And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, "Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

31 Jesus answered and said to them, *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.* 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Matthew 9:12-13

When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. *13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire*

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mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

What did Levi do? He threw a "Levi-Party"! He invited all his sinful friends to a dinner with Christ. Christ was, after all, known to be a "friend of sinners" – sinners he was calling to repentance. But they felt amazingly comfortable around the God-Man Yeshua, the only perfectly sinless man to walk the earth. But my main point is that Matthew didn't keep all this good news to himself! He hosted a dinner party, invited all his sinful friends, to give them the opportunity to also meet this wonderful Son of God.

Why don't you and I throw a Levi-Party or a Matthew-dinner and let people meet some of the wonderful new friends we all have who are New Creations in Christ? Why not?

Now be sure to hear and read my follow-up sermon to this one -- "The Best Sermon Ever" because there's an important aspect to being effective about telling people about the Messiah: YOU. Your life – and mine (I always have to preach first to myself) – have to reflect the awesome *changes* that result when someone *really* comes to know Christ. Sometimes the REAL "coming to Jesus" happens even many years after we're baptized. Sometimes we get baptized in a wave of emotion, or because it's the thing to do, or because our friends are all doing it, or it's expected of us – but at whatever level we are at that point, we'll grow in our relationship with our Savior.

But that's another topic, which I will cover in that sermon. Combine both concepts: our LIVES must evidence the new creation we are in Christ, and our LIPS *must* also confess him openly. We cannot be, must not be, secret followers or secret disciples.

But nonetheless, Andrew was so excited he told his brother about the Messiah. Matthew/Levi was so excited that he had to let all his sinful friends also meet the Christ and so he put on a dinner. Great examples for us today.

Question: would your neighbors know you are a strong believer in Christ?

Would your work associates absolutely know you follow Yeshua/Jesus and your life clearly demonstrates you're a believer? Or do they think of you or me as a hypocrite, perhaps the one telling the dirtiest jokes or flirting with someone else's wife? That must not be our conduct anymore, if it was once like that. Does your family know you believe in Christ?

Notice I'm NOT saying to make a point to talk about some other things as the primary thing with others. I'm not asking do they all know you don't eat pork or keep Christmas. That will come. But don't make those things the main thing. The main thing is Yeshua and his life being lived in you.

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Is it EVIDENT you're a FOLLOWER of Christ?

Question: If it were a crime punishable by jail term – or even death - - to be a believer in Christ, would there be enough evidence to easily convict you?

That makes you think, doesn't it? In the "old days" – in Peter and Paul's day – you certainly could be jailed, beaten, persecuted, and later even tortured, crucified or fed to the lions in the Coliseum of Rome – if you were known to be a follower of Christ.

Those days are coming again, except they'll be even worse. We better get used to being an open follower of the Son of God – even if it means disgrace, losing a job or even death. I preach to myself. It won't be easy. Remember Yeshua's words: "He who confesses me before men, him will I confess before my father in heaven and the holy angels."

Story of when "Mike" started keeping sabbath. It would be best to hear this story on the audio, of how God used an open conversation about His word to open someone's mind to more truth – and now his whole family is keeping sabbath and holydays and much more.

- My broker – on flight together from New Orleans, probably around 2004 or so
- Asked me – why I didn't come to the Saturday morning meetings or Christmas party.
- Brought out his Bible. We had a 3-4 hour flight. Prayed quickly for guidance.
- Mike already believed in Christ. I focused on the fact those who are followers of Christ also must believe the WORD, follow what Jesus taught.

"Those who abide in my word are disciples indeed". John 8:31

- By the end, I asked him, "Are you seeing these things?" Yes, he said.
- Kidded about Sunday Sabbath – "at least "keep it" – and don't work on it, if you're going to keep Sunday"...
- Nothing more for at least a year, maybe longer...
- Phone call – lunch at Red Lobster... shrimp salad.... Proclaimed now a sabbath keeper
- From there it led to his wife coming along and his 2 daughters, and then his friends. Mike has been a dynamo of sharing the Word, and sharing Yeshua, to so many.

But what if I had just given a "safe" and secular answer as to why I didn't come to the Christmas dinners or Saturday meetings?

THE OPEN CONFESSION of our faith

Romans 10:9-12

"...That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one

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believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.
11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

1 John 4:15-16

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

Especially when God has done something powerful in your life – like a dramatic healing –
OF COURSE confess the Healer!

STORY OF John 9 BLIND MAN. He didn't back down in ascribing to Yeshua the healing.

John 9:1-10:1

Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. 2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, *but that the works of God should be revealed in him.* 4 I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

6 When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. 7 And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.

8 Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, "Is not this he who sat and begged?"

9 Some said, "This is he." Others said, "He is like him."
He said, "I am he."

10 Therefore they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?"

11 He answered and said, "A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and I received sight."

12 Then they said to him, "Where is He?"
He said, "I do not know."

13 They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. 14 Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. 15 Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see."

16 Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath."

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Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them.

17 They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?"

He said, "He is a prophet."

18 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight. 19 And they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?"

20 His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21 but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself."

22 His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. 23 Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

24 So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, "Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner."

25 He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see."

26 Then they said to him again, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?"

27 He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?"

28 Then they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. 29 We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from."

30 The man answered and said to them, "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes!" 31 Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. 32 Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. 33 If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing."

34 They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out.

35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?"

36 He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?"

37 And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you."

38 Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" **And he worshiped Him.**

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39 And Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, *that those who do not see may see*, and that those who see may be made blind."

40 Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, "Are we blind also?"

41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains.

STORY OF MY CANCER tests about 15 years ago. (hear it on the audio). Giving our Healer the glory. It's exciting to share when God performs a dramatic healing that gives LIFE to someone for years to come. We all have a purpose on this earth, and when God gives us more time – give him the glory.

Confess Christ. Confess our mighty Father, full of love. A time of GREAT persecution – worse than has EVER been – is coming, probably within the next 10-14 years. Be getting used to being open about your Savior NOW, while the times are easy compared to what they will be.

The coming PERSECUTION

Get used to this. You either will openly confess Christ – and possibly be killed for it in the years coming – or deny him, and face the wrath of God and be denied by Christ before the angels. Whoever takes the mark of the Beast incurs God's wrath, remember. And whoever refuses to submit to the Beast system coming and the mark of the Beast, will be beheaded by the Antichrist powers. So it's going to be tough either way – in this life – but if we do the right thing, we'll live forever in glory. See Revelation 13.

The early apostles and brethren prayed for courage and boldness to speak boldly – even in the face of beatings, being jailed or even being stoned to death, as Stephen was.

Acts 4:13-31

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. 15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name."

18 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 For we cannot but speak

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the things which we have seen and heard." 21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

23 And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the mouth of Your servant David have said:

'Why did the nations rage,
And the people plot vain things?
The kings of the earth took their stand,
And the rulers were gathered together
Against the Lord and against His Christ.'

27 "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. ***Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders*** may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."

31 **And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.**

Then the regular brethren too – even with the persecution—confessed Christ. They were forced out of their homes and their cities. That will come soon again. It's already happening to Christians in Syria and Iraq; they have to flee or be beheaded!

Acts 8:1-5

At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, ***committing them to prison.***

4 **Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.**

Acts 11:19-21

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Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. 20 But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, **preaching the Lord Jesus.** 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

The coming very end time – though some will very likely be protected from the terrible time of trouble, many believers won't! (**Check out my sermon on this website titled “the Place of Safety”, March 2012.** Just type in the Search bar: place of safety). But if all the saints are whisked away, from where come all those that Daniel and the book of Revelation say will be martyred, beheaded and persecuted?

I suspect those who will not be taken to a place of safety – wherever that is – could be the ones who at this time are SECRET followers. God may have to see if they are willing to take up their cross (which means death) and follow him (Luke 9:23; 14:27).

END WELL

If nothing else, end strongly, even if you find it hard now to openly speak of your Savior. Paul attacked the church before he had his “come to Jesus moment” in Acts 9. But he immediately, upon his calling, started preaching Christ. Boldly. Even though he was often beaten, chased out of town, imprisoned, stoned, left for dead... (read Ephesians 6:17-20). But it's not just for Paul or apostles, but for all of us.

Nicodemus got bolder and openly showed where his heart was.

John 7:50-51

Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?"

John 19:38-40

After this, **Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews,** asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. 39 **And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came,** bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.

Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea both ended well. They came out of the “Believer closet” and openly showed their belief in their Savior.

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So let me ask again:

If you could go to jail or even be beaten by mobs for confessing your true beliefs – would you deny them, would you deny Christ – or suffer for his name, take up your cross, and follow HIM to be crucified with Him?

Start practicing the open confession of your faith in Jesus/Yeshua – right now. When the end time of Greatest Trouble begins, you'll be well practiced!

Closing Prayer.

I'd love to hear from you. Any comments, any questions? Yahweh be with you all.

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Here are the scriptures about the saints

Revelation 13:5-8

And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. 6 Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. **7 It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them.** And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. **8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**

Revelation 14:9-11

Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

Daniel 7:21-22

"I was watching; and the same horn **was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, 22 until** the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.

Daniel 7:25

He shall speak pompous words against the Most High,
Shall persecute the saints of the Most High,
And shall intend to change times and law.
Then the saints shall be given into his hand
For a time and times and half a time. (3-1/2 years)