

“Come, Follow Me!”

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Introduction: Children playing “Follow the Leader”

A. One of the many ways in which Jesus often described Himself is as a shepherd:

1. In fact, Jesus distinguished Himself by saying, “I am the good shepherd” (**John 10:11, 14**)
2. Shepherds may be people we do not understand well because they are just not common around here; however we do know about shepherds and sheep that:
 - a. Sheep are not animals that are driven well... they must be led
 - b. Shepherds build a close relationship with His sheep & before long smells like them!
 - c. The shepherd will go to any lengths to protect his sheep... endangering himself!
 - d. Because of this, when the shepherd takes a lead position the sheep simply follow!
3. We need to see Jesus as being the “Good Shepherd” and ourselves as being His sheep

B. As the “Good Shepherd” Jesus never takes His sheep where He has not first gone!

1. Wherever He calls His sheep to go, He first goes Himself leading the way!
2. As Jesus leads us He often simply says to words, “Follow Me”
3. This morning we will look at four instances where Jesus said these words → Each time we learn a great lesson about discipleship – what it means to follow Jesus!
4. Discipleship is following Jesus! (**Song: “I have decided to follow Jesus”**)

I. When He Called His Disciples:

A. When Jesus first called His disciples, His words to them were simple: “Follow Me”

1. These men who later became His apostles initially left all to follow Him (**Luke 5:1-11**)
 - a. With Peter, all he had to do was confirm that this was the Christ and he followed!
 - b. He and the others left fathers and mothers, their homes, their livelihood, etc
 - c. Peter knew that Jesus would never lead him where Jesus would not first go!
2. James and John are even said to have left their father to follow Jesus (**Matt. 4:22**)
3. Later, Jesus crossed another man and had the same words for Him: (**Matthew 19:20-22**)
 - a. Some speculate that Jesus was calling this man to be a potential apostle
 - b. I don’t know about that, but I do know he was calling him to discipleship!
 - c. Jesus called him to forsake his attachment to his riches & follow Him; however, the sad reality is that this man would not pay the cost!

B. Jesus is still calling and looking for a brand of person who will forsake all and follow Him

1. If you choose to follow Jesus that there will be a cost, maybe even a great cost, involved:
 - a. There are different degrees of “cost” involved depending on where you are – some have to give up more and make more changes than others, but all face a cost!
 - b. If you are currently following Jesus and have not had to face having to give a whole lot, that day in which you do will likely come!
 - c. Some have to give up family, friends, relationships, jobs, their entertainment or recreation, and even an entire way of life that may be all they knew!
2. Throughout Jesus’ ministry He often spoke of “the cost of discipleship”
 - a. If not willing to forsake ALL to follow Him, we can’t be His disciple! (**Luke 14:33**)
 - b. Jesus spoke of the price that many would pay but said the reward was always well worth the cost! (**Mark 10:28-30**)
3. Why is it the this “cost of discipleship” matter is such a big deal to Jesus?
 - a. The cost of discipleship is about obedience: Whether or not we will truly and fully follow the Lord when other things are beckoning for our allegiance
 - b. The cost of discipleship is about our priorities: Whether or not Jesus is truly and fully the first and most important thing in our lives
 - c. The cost of discipleship is also about commitment: Because, we really can’t follow Jesus when there are other things standing in the way!
4. We would all do well to follow the example of Elisha (**I Kings 19:19-21**)

- a. Picture it: Elisha is just out plowing his field, an everyday occurrence, when an extraordinary thing happens – Elijah walks up and places his prophetic garment on him and simply says, “You are the man!”
- b. Elijah didn’t need all that other stuff anymore so he just left it behind
- c. Elisha burned the bridges behind him... Peter did this... so should we!

C. Jesus was not and is not calling anyone to do anything He has not already done!

1. Jesus says “Follow Me” because He left the majesty of Heaven to come here!
 - ➔ He forfeited in a sense all that Heaven had to offer in abiding there for a short time
2. Jesus also left for a time the presence of the Father and all those in Heaven!
 - a. He forfeited relationships in His leaving the direct personal presence of the Father, Holy Spirit, and angels in Heaven
 - b. He even suffered for a time a complete separation from the Father spiritually on the cross to pay the full penalty for our sins!
3. Not only this, but I believe the scriptures show that there was something Jesus gave up for eternity in His becoming the sacrifice for our sins: **(Phil 2:5-8)**
 - a. It wasn’t until Jesus came here that we see the Father to Son relationship
 - b. He willingly subjected Himself to the Father and this is a position that, after the resurrection, will continue throughout eternity! **(I Cor. 15:24-28)**
 - c. What difference does this make? It should greatly increase our appreciation for what Jesus did – What He gave up was not just for 30 years, it was for eternity
4. If we could ask Jesus right now, “Was it worth it?” He’d say, “Oh yah! Most definitely!”

II. When He Spoke Of His Voice:

A. When Jesus described Himself as “The Good Shepherd,” He also said a great deal about the relationship of the sheep to Him: **(John 10:2-5)**

1. Jesus’ point here is simple but profound: My sheep hear My voice and follow Me! **(vs. 27)**
 - a. Those that follow Jesus: (1) Know His voice; (2) Listen to and for His voice; (3) Listen to His voice alone; (4) Obey His voice
 - b. Are you really following Jesus by listening and following His voice?
2. Jesus was saying here that out of all the voices that call, His sheep only hear Him!
 - a. Illustration: Shepherds heading out and sheep are following behind them
 - 1) As the shepherds split up, the sheep will follow the right one
 - 2) If they didn’t, the shepherd would call and the sheep would come running!
 - b. Jesus’ sheep are listening for His voice ready and eager to line up and follow Him!
3. While Jesus doesn’t explicitly say, “Follow Me” He implies such a statement by saying, “...And the sheep follow him, for they know His voice.”
4. This is truly a beautiful picture: The shepherd who knows his sheep, calling them by name, and leading them in the ways of safety!

B. There are many in our religious world who claim to be following Jesus; however, they are not following His voice!

1. Sure, there are probably many aspects in which they follow His voice; however, they may not follow His voice in all things!
 - a. Some seek a “buffet style” religion in what they believe and practice
 - b. When some come across portions of God’s word that they do not like or they foresee as being unpopular, they may decide not to follow that particular thing
 - c. The Lord made clear His feelings on this matter **(Rev. 22:18-19)**
 - d. One cannot say, “I follow Jesus Christ” and not heed all He says! **(Luke 6:46)**
2. It may also be that they are not following Jesus’ voice and His voice only!
 - a. Many in the religious world want to take what Jesus says PLUS something else!
 - b. Some religious organizations have creed books and other doctrines of rules and regulations explaining God’s word, as if it needs help explaining it!
 - c. Some religious bodies have major conventions in which they assemble to determine what laws they would keep and not keep:

3. Jesus said that his sheep hear His voice and that they hear His voice ONLY!
 - a. A real sheep of “the Good Shepherd” he will not listen to strangers! **(John 10:5)**
 - b. If this is not true of you, you are not following Jesus!

C. Moving closer to home, ask yourself, “Am I following Jesus by following His voice?”

1. There are many voices that are bidding for us, the sheep that Jesus is calling:
 - a. There are the voices of the world’s philosophies and mindsets that can easily creep in & infect the way we think and our perception of the world & spiritual things
 - b. There are also the voices of our own wants and desires
 - c. We need to be careful as well because there are the voices of those who are false teachers, claiming to speak what Jesus spoke, but really are not!
2. You have to decide whether to follow Jesus or the best thinking of the world!
 - a. Jesus calls out with His message for us to follow His voice: **(I Cor. 1:18-25)**
 - b. The world says that is a dumb message from a dumb shepherd for dumb sheep!
 - c. When the world’s wisdom runs antagonistic to God’s wisdom we need to remember this passage and not allow the world’s thinking to muddy up our thinking!
3. If we’re following Jesus, our will should soon be lining up with what the Lord’s will is:
 - a. What I want, what I am seeking, and what my goals are in life will soon be looking just like what Jesus wants and seeks for my life!
 - b. This is a process that is part of discipleship... one that we must always be striving to develop in our lives! **(Rom. 12:1-2)**
 - c. **Question:** If when we come across a teaching from the Lord and we have to run it through our minds to see if we like it, whether we agree, or whether or not it makes sense, are we truly following the voice of the shepherd?
4. Out of all the voices in the world, which one are you lined up behind?

III. When He Spoke Of His Death:

A. When Jesus spoke of His crucifixion, He simply said, “Follow Me” **(Matthew 16:21-26)**

1. As Jesus explained more and more about His death on a cross the disciples meet the idea with great opposition:
 - a. Peter says to Jesus that such a death should be far from Him!
 - b. Jesus’ message to him is, “Not only do I have a cross, Peter, but so do you!”
2. I don’t believe that Jesus is necessarily telling Peter about the hardships that would come in his future, though that would happen, but this is rather something spiritual!
 - a. Jesus tells us that in order to follow Him we must each one take up our own cross... the instrument of death... and follow Him **(vs. 24)**
 - b. He indicates here that as a part of following Him a loss of life will occur; however, in losing one’s life, that person will find true life! **(vs. 25)**
 - c. He then speaks again about the cost of discipleship – If we gain all but lose our souls, then we have profited nothing! **(vs. 26)**
3. Jesus isn’t talking about persecution and trouble but about our death that every person must die in order to follow Him → A spiritual crucifixion where one dies to sin!
4. Again realize, Jesus isn’t asking them to do something He was not FIRST willing to do!

B. In order to follow Jesus we need to realize that this is going to be part of following Him!

1. **Illustration:** Song “Must Jesus Bear The Cross Alone” → “There is a cross for everyone, there is a cross for me”
2. Each one of us must bear the cross and die so that we might find life! **(Rom. 6:1ff)**
 - a. When you come to Jesus, becoming His disciple, you picked up a cross, you are killed, we bury you with Jesus, & then you are raised never to die again!
 - b. It is in this death that our relationship to sin and our attitude toward it changes
 - 1) Before this one’s relationship was that he was dead in sin and his attitude was that he was alive to sin
 - 2) When this death occurs one becomes dead to sin but alive to God in Jesus!

- c. It is in this death and resurrection that we can walk in newness of life and live in the resurrection of Jesus Christ!
- 3. In following Jesus concerning His cross we need to understand that the death that He died to sin, He died once for all:
 - a. Jesus does not have to die to sin over and over because the death he died was a complete and total death to sin! **(Romans 6:9-10)**
 - b. While we will stumble on occasions our general walk of life, our mindset, and our determination must be that I have died to the ways of sin! **(vs. 11)**
 - c. If we are truly dead to sin then the ways of sin and the world does not rule our lives... our entire life will be characterized by godliness & righteousness!
- 4. If we are truly disciples of Jesus Christ then we must follow Him in His death!
 - a. Are you living as though you are alive to sin or dead to sin?
 - b. If our actions and mindset is that we are alive to sin then there is no way that we can be following Jesus!

IV. After The Resurrection:

A. After having denied the Lord at His crucifixion, Peter must have thought it was all over!

- 1. Peter decided at some point, "I'm going fishing!"
 - a. They went back to where it all started in the beginning – Their nets and boats
 - b. I don't know for sure if they were giving up or what, but here they are doing what they were doing before Jesus called them to be His disciples
- 2. As they continue fishing, having caught nothing, a voice comes from the darkness and says, "Cast them on the other side"
 - a. Immediately they began catching fish! Can't you just see the looks on their faces and hear their thoughts, "Could it be? Surely not!"
 - b. John exclaims, "It is the Lord!" & Peter jumps out of the boat & swims to Jesus!
- 3. Now listen to Jesus' words to Peter! **(John 21:17-19)**
 - a. Is Jesus going to take Peter down a road He hasn't first been on Himself? NO!
 - b. Peter points to John and says, "But what about him? **(vs. 21-22)**
 - c. Sometimes we might go down a road others might not take, but Jesus never leads down a road He hadn't been before!
 - d. There is no divine record of Peter's death; however, history says that he was crucified after his wife upside down on a cross. As his wife was facing death Peter simply said, "Remember the Lord!" We can't be sure of this, but we know he did die in the same manner as the Lord!

B. Jesus will not allow us go down a road today that He has not first been down Himself!

- 1. When we suffer heartaches & hardships Jesus simply says, "Follow Me"
 - a. Jesus was not immune to the suffering that is simply part of being a human being!
 - b. He was also not immune from the heartache of losing a loved one! **(Jn 11:33-36)**
- 2. When we are tempted, Jesus simply says, "Follow Me!"
 - a. Because Jesus faced temptation from Satan and was tempted in all points as we are, He knows exactly what we go through! **(Hebrews 4:14-15)**
 - b. He led the way, He knows how we feel and knows how to help! **(Heb 2:18; 4:16)**
- 3. When we are persecuted by others, Jesus simply says, "Follow Me!" **(John 14:15)**
 - a. When it seems as though no one else knows and feels what we are going through, we can look to Jesus and know He knows and He cares!
 - b. He led the way though suffering in the ultimate sense!

C. His words, "Follow Me!" should provide us great comfort and strength today!

- 1. Jesus is watching & interceding for us knowing full well exactly what we're going through!
- 2. He truly is the captain of our salvation! **(Hebrews 2:9-10)**

Conclusion: Jesus speaks you this morning and says, "Follow Me!" – **(Matt. 11:28-30)**