

# Follow Me, Pt. 1

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**“Follow Me”** is both necessary and timely. We are going to explore the lifestyle and spiritual disciplines of Jesus, and see if there are ways we need to adjust the way we follow Him... by covering some amazing, life-giving topics! Repentance, renewal, refreshing will be coming to many!

**Convinced** — there is confusion over what a Christ-follower is and how one lives... a Christ-follower is NOT

- because born in America, raised in religious home
- said a prayer, baptized, agree with Jesus’ teachings
- those things don’t guarantee you’re a Christ-follower

**Take you back to the beginning** — to the first time the word *Christian* was used to describe followers of Jesus...

- **Antioch**- Syria/Turkey, 300 miles north Jerusalem, 30 miles inland from Mediterranean; Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch — all powerful, wealthy, and sinful cities; 12 years after Jesus’ ascension; believers are preaching, teaching, many conversions; need leadership, so sent for Paul, he arrives and reinforces teachings for a year, more conversions...
- **Acts 11:26**  
And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.
- *They didn’t call themselves Christians* — the world called them Christians when they observed their lifestyle.
- “called” literally means what business you’re in; it was used to describe who you are in relationship with, and the way you live your life — Caesar/Caesarian, Plato/Platonian, Christ/Christian... because they were noticeably about Jesus’ business!

**From the beginning**- Believers who followed Jesus were called Christians by the world!

**2,000 years later** — *we call ourselves* Christians with little to no evidence that we are actually following Him — we quit following Jesus, but kept the name of those who did — it’s time to start following Jesus!

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## Definition of follower of Jesus

- To be on the same road with Jesus
- To learn from Him
- To imitate Him
- And multiply Him in others.

**Recast some vision here** — following Jesus is where the...

- **Adventure is...**
- **Mark 16:15-20**  
And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those

who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

## If there is no adventure, excitement in your Christianity — you're not following Jesus!

- **Reward is...**

- **Mark 10:28-30**

Then Peter began to say to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You." So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life."

- **Affirmation, Reward, and Joy is Later...**

- **Matthew 25:19-21**

After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them. 'His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

## Truly following Jesus is where it's at in this life and in life to come — recapture that!

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### Jesus' constant invitation throughout His ministry was — "Follow Me"

- HUGE, IMPORTANT ISSUE!
- ALL gospel writers record His many invitations to follow Him.

- **Excuse Makers**

- **Matthew 8:21-22**

Then another of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

- this disciple made excuses, wanted inheritance, security, before really following Jesus! Are we making excuses?

- **Stuff Lovers**

- **Matthew 19:21-22**

Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."

- **Invited Disciples publicly and repeatedly**
- **Invited Peter Personally — at least 4 times**
- Beginning in Matthew 4:18-19; into John 13:36
- **John 21:18-22**

Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish." This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me." Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man?" Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me."

- "Peter, I've told you the whole time we've been together, follow Me in life, follow Me in death, don't worry about anyone else, YOU FOLLOW ME, and Peter did!

**Pattern here** — Jesus invites us to follow Him at the beginning of our relationship, then reminds us and reinforces it along the way, why?

**Because** — it's easy to take the off-ramp of religion from the road of following Jesus! We settle for dead cultural Christianity over the life-giving following of Jesus. It happens slowly, we start drifting, before we know it, we're on the off-ramp of indifference, lukewarm, and dead. No adventure, reward, affirmation in our lives... we can change that today!

## Jesus says...

- **Matthew 16:24-25**  
Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."
- desires to come after Me — sounds kinda cool, sins forgiven, heaven over hell.
- deny himself — deny selfish wants and demands of being served and not serving, comfort, ease, indulgence... saving is losing!
- take up cross — beyond denying, now dying to self... losing is finding!
- follow Me — My example, lifestyle, spiritual disciplines, be about My business, learn from Me, imitate Me, multiply Me in others... be a Christian, not by label, but by lifestyle!

## Question...

Does anyone **ALREADY** recognize their need to adjust their lives, to get back in line with following Jesus — may be blatantly obvious, may be subtly deceptive?

- I desire Jesus, but don't deny myself

- I'm surely not dying to self, I've been saving my life, losing in process
- Learning, but not imitating and multiplying
- Let's pray for ourselves personally and the church globally...

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## Discussion Questions

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1. Are there any areas of your life where someone in the world might not identify you as a "Christ-follower"?
  2. Have you ever thought of following Jesus in your daily life as "an adventure"?
  3. Share one of your "Jesus Adventures" with your Life Group.
  4. How are some of the ways you have been rewarded for following Jesus?
  5. How has Jesus invited you to follow Him lately?  
Have you followed Him — or made an excuse?
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