

“How shall we then live?” series #4  
BY FOLLOWING & OBEYING JESUS

**Today’s core teaching:** Jesus calls people to turn from their sin and believe in Him. But then He calls them to follow Him. In God’s eyes, to become a believer isn’t just for what WE will get out of this relationship. Rather above all else, God gives us to His Son, Jesus, as a beautiful bride as an eternal reward for His suffering.

**Key outcomes:**

- ◆ to understand what it means for us to live as Jesus’ followers
- ◆ to reaffirm or renew our commitment to follow Jesus
- ◆ to rejoice in the honour God gives to us to be known and to serve as Jesus’ followers

**Today’s topic focuses upon our LIVING as “followers of Jesus”.**

- ◆ We as Christians are “followers” of Jesus. See Luke 22:49; Acts 22:4; 24:14.
- ◆ This word speaks of a life-style, not just a title. Just as we are called “believers” and “disciples” =our lives are to be marked both by active, living faith and trust in JESUS, so we are to be known as “FOLLOWERS” of this God-Man, Jesus the Christ.

**Remember:** This is focused on YOU and ME. This is a “reality check” about our Christian faith and lives. But at the same time, these Wedn. morning sessions are also directly tied in with the message we share with others, the teaching we give. Will we believe and teach the truth? Or are we following and believing just our own ideas about the truth? We are only safe if we believe and follow the truth. Otherwise we will be like those early followers of Jesus who later

chose to desert Jesus when they couldn't agree any longer with His teaching.  
See John 6:66.

**What kind of "call" or "invitation" did Jesus give to His earliest disciples?** Was it just an invitation? A command? How are we to understand His "call"? Read and reflect on Matt.4:19; 9:9; Luke 18:22; John 1:43.

- ◆ The answer must be arise out of our understanding or recognition of the Person making this statement. Who was He? God, the Son – the LORD, Master, Shepherd.
- ◆ The answer must also be found in an understanding of this new moment in "Salvation History" – the dawning of this new day, the beginning of the end, of the last days – the arrival on the world's scene of the One who had been hoped for, who would then usher in the end of this age and bring about the long awaited messianic reign.
- ◆ The call was "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is near" – see Matt.4:17. With that comes the call to follow.
- ◆ This means that this call must be seen as a radical call – to identify with Jesus, not just as an invitation to join a club or to a party. It is rather a call, an invitation by this Person Jesus to belong to Him.
- ◆ It's a part of the new day – the new age – the old must pass away in order for the new to come. A call then to leave the old and to become a vital part of the new. The coming of Jesus from heaven will bring about the end of the old era or age and the coming in of the new age. It calls for radical action. That is one of the main reasons why Jesus was so strong against those who refused to welcome the dawning of the new and wanted to cling rather to the old. Cf. new and old wine – Luke 5:36-39.
- ◆ Let's pause a moment: Have we come to terms in our own minds and hearts with the fact that we belong to a truly radical Jesus? How radical is this One whom we follow in our thoughts? Our true identity is NOT first as members of a church but as followers of the Lamb/Jesus. The basis and foundation of our following Jesus must be this profound realisation of WHO HE IS. It is

HE whom we are following, not the Christian faith. It is the Jesus of the Gospels, not some milk-toast figure in history. There can be no true following of Jesus when this bridge is not crossed. WHO IS JESUS TO YOU? He is no “nice man”, not that man who smiles sweetly and always have such encouraging things to say to us, never rebuking, never hurting our feelings. The real Jesus is constantly hurting our feelings, constantly making us feel uncomfortable about our sins and our worldliness, about our selfishness. To become one of His followers is to enter into a relationship with this Person who is out to transform us and make us fit for the new, fit for heaven.

**How did Jesus’ early disciples respond to His call?** See Matt.4:20,22; Luke 5:11,27-28.

- ◆ Note the radical nature of their response. Focus on the key words in these verses that indicate the radical nature of their response.

**What kind of life-style was implied in Jesus’ call to follow Him?**

Write down on a separate sheet of paper different practical aspects implied in “following” someone. Think about examples from everyday life. For example, what is implied in the marriage covenant? Apply these and other thoughts to following Jesus.

- ◆ To leave other things in order to follow Jesus. To leave what you have been doing in order to give one’s self to following Jesus. See Mark 1:20. Cf. Eph.2:2,3; 1 Tim.5:15; 2 Peter 2:10,15; Jude 16,18.
- ◆ To be with Jesus wherever He is.
- ◆ To walk behind Jesus, allowing Him to take the lead.
- ◆ To have Jesus with us; not alone; rather Christ in us, in front of us, beside/alongside us, behind us.
- ◆ To follow means that we must keep our eyes on Jesus so that we don’t lag behind. It is possible to go off the track, getting distracted by fixing our eyes

not on Jesus but on something or someone that we see along the way. cf.  
Demas – 2 Tim.4:10.

- ◆ To keep our ears open to His voice. To hear and listen to the Master's voice. See John 10:27. Cf. Isaiah 50:4.
- ◆ To follow Jesus' teaching and instructions. To "follow" means "to obey", "to submit to". See Matt.28:19,20; 1 Tim.4:6.
- ◆ To follow at all times; for the rest of our lives. No part-time followers.
- ◆ To follow in His steps. See 1 Peter 2:21.
- ◆ To follow the Lamb; to follow Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ ascended, Christ returning – not just the Carpenter from Galilee or the Friend of children. To follow now in preparation for following Him upon His return when we will meet Him in the clouds and follow our King and Conqueror into heaven. See Rev.14:4; 17:14.
- ◆ To follow Jesus no matter what situation Jesus may face; to identify totally with Him; to experience what He experiences. See Luke 22:39; 23:27,49,55. Cf. Luke 22:54; John 13:36,37; 18:15.

### **What did Jesus say about the realities of following Him?**

His way is narrow and tough. See Matt.7:13,14.

- ◆ At first many people followed Jesus. Note the reference to the crowds: Matt.8:1; 14:13; 19:2; 20:29; 21:9. What does this mean? What does it say about the popular Jesus and following Him?
- ◆ Many people had mixed motives for following Jesus, but they weren't true "followers" of the Son of God.

Note in particular the **clear conditions** that Jesus laid down for those who would follow Him.

See Matt.10:38; Mark 10:21; Luke 9:23; 14:27; 18:28. What are they?

- ◆ deny self
- ◆ take up cross
- ◆ sell all

What is the message behind these verses? What is God's Word to us? What do each of these mean to us personally? Is there anything that we need to repent of (= "change our minds"), eg related to our motivation for following Jesus, even in mission?

### **What rewards does Jesus promise to those who follow Him?**

See Matt.4:19; John 8:12; Luke 18:28; Matt.19:28.

- ◆ He makes us "fishers of men".
- ◆ We will not walk in darkness but in the Light.
- ◆ We will sit on thrones reigning together with Jesus.

### **What is Jesus' response to His followers who go off the track for a time?**

Jesus calls people to follow Him. But along the way, it is possible to take a different course, to face some terrible challenge to following Jesus and to retreat temporarily. **Jesus renews the call** to those who have followed faithfully but fallen by the way.

- ◆ Consider Simon Peter and the early disciples of Jesus. See Mark 1:16-18; John 21:15-22.
- ◆ This speaks to us of the grace of God, that He knows our weakness and He wants us to return to Himself. He calls, and then calls again because He has changed our hearts and made us willing. See Phil.2:12-13.
- ◆ What does this mean to us? The key truth is that we aren't just called to follow Jesus but He Himself makes us able to follow Him, if we will but keep our eyes on Him and allow Him to. Cf. Col.1:21-23.

### **What is the link between our following Jesus, and our asking others to follow Him?**

See 1 Cor.11:1; Phil.3:17; 2 Thess.3:7,9. Here there is a clear link between our following Jesus and making disciples of all peoples/nations.

### **How does Jesus lead and guide us today? And what is our part in following?**

He leads – we follow! How?

- ◆ Through His Word – primarily through principles and foundational truths rather than through “proof-texts”. Hence the more we learn of God’s ways through His Word, the easier it will be to know His guidance. See Psalm 103:7. Since God will never contradict Himself, this also means that the way He has led His people in the past will never, ever conflict with the way He leads a person in the present, eg If a believer says that he/she is being “led” to marry an unbeliever, can this ever be considered guidance from God?
- ◆ Through His Spirit bearing witness with our spirit – that quiet “inner voice” that can only be experienced to understand what it means; with accompanying deep, abiding peace in the heart and mind.
- ◆ Through “listening prayer” – praying and listening with the ear of the heart, waiting for God to speak, but always with a reverent spirit, never demanding or even threatening.
- ◆ Through His people, especially our leaders and those who are mature in the faith. Our expectation should be that God will speak to us personally but that He will confirm any major change in life-direction to those over us in the church (and in our mission).
- ◆ Through His sovereign control as King over all the details and circumstances of our lives. Examples: Bringing people across our pathways, putting an immovable road-block in our way, etc. However, these cannot stand by themselves as we still need to interpret all such circumstances. It is very possible that a heart that is controlled by self-centred thoughts will give an interpretation to a circumstance that is not in keeping with God’s plan. Example: sometimes road-blocks are “obstacles” sent to test our perseverance and our determination to do what God has called us to do. In

such situations, we need to stand against such obstacles and keep moving ahead.

### What is our part in following Jesus?

- ◆ Dying to self – yielding up the control over all that happens in our lives; dying to our own selfish desires and ambitions (for our own glory, to get a name for ourselves), even to seemingly spiritual desires. Example: Correcting the ship's compass.
- ◆ An obedient spirit – will God show His way to people who want the option to obey or not obey? Living daily with an obedient attitude in small things is the only way to prepare us to know His voice speaking to us on bigger issues. If we do not receive or welcome His guidance on a particular issue, then we may find it far more difficult to hear His leading on other issues.
- ◆ Bold faith – we will always need to take a step of faith (= risk) – God never write down His guidance on silver paper brought down by angels from heaven.
- ◆ A patient attitude – never demanding that He respond to our desire to know NOW. Rather waiting until He is ready to show us His way. He will but it won't ever be just as we expect or desire (i.e. to make us personally feel good).

### Questions???

- ◆ Will His guidance always be clear? Is it possible or conceivable that there will still be some shades of doubt even after we have received some leading or direction?
- ◆ Will He show us His way when we expect to hear, or far in advance?
- ◆ Will God guide us with the complete picture of the way ahead? Or just the next step? We should always expect that He will require us to walk by faith and not by sight. We will always be required to step out in response to the amount of light He shows to us, not with all the details of the way ahead.
- ◆ Does God just guide us about “spiritual” or “ministry” matters? Or can we also seek His guidance about seemingly minor, insignificant matters of life?

- ◆ May we expect Him to guide us in life and ministry when we still feel so unworthy and conscious of our sins and weakness? (In other words, is God's guidance dependent upon our "good works" or upon His grace?)

**What then is the life-style of "followers of the Way"?**

- ◆ To identify with Jesus no matter what the cost.
- ◆ to follow Him with simple, wholehearted faith and trust.
- ◆ To follow willingly knowing who He is who leads us on.
- ◆ To follow with our eyes wide-open, counting the cost.