

The Emoji's of the Faith



Matthew 4:18-22

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Emoji's of the Faith—last week an Angel. We talked about the angel at the tomb. An angel is a messenger. We are to be messengers of the Good News. Today, Emoji's of the Faith---feet---Footsteps.

In the scripture read Jesus used 2 powerful words in the statement He made to the disciples Peter and his brother Andrew. He said, "Follow me." But oh, how difficult it is to truly follow.

Ever have been going somewhere and say, "I don't know how to get to that location." And another person says, "Follow me." Now hopefully they don't speed off and you keep them in your eyesight and you follow.

A couple of weeks ago my brother and his wife were visiting from Illinois as we celebrated Moms' 90th birthday. Dwain and Sheila came from the airport to the church. What a joy it was to show him the campus here and share some of the ministries taking place here and how you by God's grace and help are making a difference in the kingdom. This was my brother and wife's first time in Palm Harbor. So after I showed him the church I was going to take him to our house. I in essence said, "Follow me." I pulled out of the church went left on Belcher to Alderman then right on Alderman to US 19. I turned left, going North to held to Tarpon Avenue. Now, like you I LOVE US 19 traffic. I had to make sure I did not get too far ahead of my brother. He didn't know the way to our house. Now he could have used GPS. But, I told him to follow me. I had a responsibility to drive so he could keep up and he also had a responsibility as a follower to pay attention and be alert. He followed and we made it home.

Jesus says, "Follow me." He wants you to follow Him home. It is His responsibility, if you will, to lead us---to lead us in the paths of righteousness, to lead us to do the right thing, to lead us as we assist others----but we have a responsibility to pay attention and be alert.

So this Emoji of the Footprint represents that we are to follow Jesus.

Peter and Andrew were going about their regular business of fishing and casting nets into the sea. Scripture says they were fishermen. Jesus says He will make them "fishers of men." Huh? Confusing image----(**Image**).

But the Message Bible says: **Jesus said to them, "Come with me. I'll make a new kind of fisherman out of you. I'll show you how to catch men and women instead of perch and bass." They didn't ask questions, but simply dropped their nets and followed.**

So what does it mean to “catch men and women.” Well it means that we must so live our life so that others may “catch the bait” if you will take a nibble and well...be drawn in and hooked. It means to help them realize how much Jesus loves them.

Notice they didn’t ask questions but simply dropped their nets and followed. They IMMEDIATELY followed.

We celebrate our Confirmation students today---17 young people making a profession of faith and saying they are going to Follow Jesus, they are going to follow in His footsteps. (Aren’t you proud of them??? Xxxx) Now our confirmation students were not like Peter and Andrew and didn’t ask questions, but like all of us asked questions about the faith. And they should have and needed to ask questions....to make sure they were ready to stand and publically declare their faith for Jesus. They have made a stand and said, “I’m going to follow Jesus.” Are you proud of them? They want to walk in His footsteps.

An ancient Jewish blessing says, **“May you be covered in the dust of your rabbi.”** The idea is that a rabbi’s disciples were to follow so closely behind the rabbi that when they walked they would become caked in the dust he kicked up with his feet. Quite a blessing. Perhaps equivalent to the phrase “following in the footsteps of Jesus.”

We did a book study a couple of years ago at Lent entitled Renegade Gospel by Rev. Michael Slaughter. In that book Slaughter says this. “Following means we cannot remain stationary. When I confess that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Son of God, I commit to follow Jesus in a lifestyle of sacrificial service, walking in the dust of my Rabbi. Whatever my rabbi values, I value. Whatever my Rabbi thinks about God, I think about God. Whatever my Rabbi thinks about people, I think about people. Whatever my Rabbi believes about wealth, I believe about wealth. Whatever my Rabbi believes about the poor, I believe about the poor. Whatever my Rabbi believes about creation, I believe. I act like my Rabbi, talk like my Rabbi, love like my Rabbi, and give my life away for my Rabbi’s mission.”

And so I ask: Are we following Rabbi Jesus so close that we are covered with His dust? Following in the footsteps of Jesus.

Are we so close that we imitate what He does...act like him, love like him.

Forgive me for using a personal illustration I used in a sermon in 2014. When I was in early elementary school. I use to ride the wrecker (Tow Truck) with my dad when he would go pick up wrecked cars or would go on a service call in his business Baldridge Auto Repair. Dad used Skoal. That chew less tobacco with the extremely strong wintergreen smell that came in a round can. He would put the Skoal under his lip and then every now and then would spit. It was cool. Well, I got me some Sun-Maid raisins, that came in that little red box. And I would imitate my dad. Rather than Skoal, I would put 5 or 6 raisins between my tongue and lip, so I could get the

same effect. It was great, because saliva would even make the raisins juice and I would get that tobacco run down the corner of your lip look.

One day----what he was thinking, I don't know----but Dad said, "Here David, try a pinch." Lo and behold he took that silver lid off the Skoal box and I took me a pinch and put it between my lip and tongue. Man I was hot stuff. Problem.....I was so excited I forgot to spit....instead I swallowed.....I've never touched tobacco again. Oh, but the desire I had to follow what my Father did. Ah, how closely do we want to follow Jesus?

There is an old classic commercial that aired on TV between the years of 1967-1982. It was a Public Service Announcement entitled "Like Father Like Son." It's grainy and scratch and not the best quality, but I hope the point carries. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmzDLzqQ-A0>)

Think about it. Are we really following and imitating everything Jesus wants us to do. And now let me flip it around. You see if we follow Jesus, there are others, whether we realize it or not, that are watching us and imitating us. They are following us. Are we following Jesus? Like Father Like Son. We have others that are following our footsteps to see how to live a Christian life. They are going to do what we do. It is really scary to think that they may be imitating us.

Several years ago I shared a classic illustration. Please forgive me as I share it again. The light turned yellow, just in front of him. He did the right thing, stopping at the crosswalk, even though he could have beaten the red light by accelerating through the intersection.

The tailgating woman was furious and honked her horn, screaming in frustration, as she missed her chance to get through the intersection, dropping her cell phone and makeup. As she was still in mid-rant, she heard a tap on her window and looked up into the face of a very serious police officer. The officer ordered her to exit her car with her hands up. He took her to the police station where she was searched, fingerprinted, photographed, and placed in a holding cell.

After a couple of hours, a policeman approached the cell and opened the door. She was escorted back to the booking desk where the arresting officer was waiting with her personal effects. He said, "I'm very sorry for this mistake. You see, I pulled up behind your car while you were blowing your horn, flipping off the guy in front of you and cussing a blue streak at him. I noticed the 'What Would Jesus Do' bumper sticker, the 'Follow Me to Church' bumper sticker, and the chrome-plated Christian fish emblem on the trunk, so naturally....I assumed you had *stolen* the car."

Yes, people are watching---they are following. If you call yourself a follower of Jesus it means you are walking in His footsteps.

I love this phrase....**(Image)** "We are called to be fishers of men not just keepers of the aquarium." What that means is church is not just about us. To be fishers of men and women, to means that we put our line in the water. It doesn't mean that you are always going to catch a

fish. I am not a fisherman. So I am going to ask a pretty stupid question to those that fish. Here goes....Can you catch a fish if you don't put your pole in the water? Of course not. To be followers of Jesus---to walk in His footsteps---to be fisher's of men we must put our pole in the water. We must ask people to come to church. We must talk to people and share with them. We can't expect to be fishers of men and women if we don't ask people to follow....we then become keepers of the aquarium

Sign of the Fish **(image)** This is called Ichthus. Which in Greek means fish. Iota (i) is the first letter of Iēsous (Ἰησοῦς), Greek for "Jesus". Chi (ch) is the first letter of Christos (Χριστός), Greek for "anointed." Theta (th) is the first letter of Theou (Θεοῦ), Greek for "God", "Upsilon (y) is the first letter of (h)yios (Υιός), Greek for "Son". Sigma (s) is the first letter of sōtēr (Σωτήρ), Greek for "Savior."

According to tradition, ancient Christians, during their persecution by the Roman Empire in the first few centuries after Christ, used the fish symbol to mark meeting places and tombs, or to distinguish friends from foes: "According to one ancient story, when a Christian met a stranger in the road, the Christian sometimes drew one arc of the simple fish outline in the dirt. If the stranger drew the other arc, both believers knew they were in good company. Current bumper-sticker and business-card uses of the fish hearken back to this practice."

— *Christianity Today*, Elesa Coffman, "Ask The Expert"

Are you fishing? Are you a follower? It is hard to follow in His steps. I love my Fitbit **(image)**. I try to get 10,000 steps a day as recommended by the American Medical Association. Or at least I try to get 70,000 steps a week. Some days I do less than and some days more than 10,000 steps. As I look down at my Fitbit...there are those little feet...those footprints. It tells my step count at that particular moment. It's kind of like "How am I doing?"

I wish I had a spiritual Fitbit. Where I could look down and see if I were the making the right steps to follow Jesus. If I need to speed up. I certainly don't want to get ahead of Him.

Is Jesus way ahead of me or am I making steps so I am getting His dust on me. It's tough. I need help. Are my footprints matching His? Am I in step with Him?

And then to realize there are others watching my footsteps.

Oh Jesus we love you. We want to follow you. We want to give you our affection and devotion.

(Confirmation students----follow Jesus....walk in His footsteps---get His dust on you.)