

Following Jesus

John 1:35-42

Introduction

How many of you follow someone on social media? Maybe it's a YouTuber who reviews tech gadgets, a TikTok influencer whose dance moves you can't quite replicate, or perhaps a LinkedIn mentor whose career advice you find invaluable. In today's digital age, following someone often means subscribing to their updates, double-tapping their photos, and maybe even buying what they're selling—be it merchandise or a lifestyle.

There is one social media influencer that comes to mind when I think about someone trying to sell me a “lifestyle.” He goes by the name “Daniel Mac.” You may have seen him on TikTok or Instagram. He does other things, but the bit that has made him particularly popular is his “What do you do for a living series?,” which essentially entails Daniel Mac flagging down a luxury car and asking the driver, “What do you do for living?” The idea is that he wants his viewers to see the correlation between careers and cars. The reason that the series works is because there is an assumption that a lot of people are interested in or would love to own such luxury cars. By doing these impromptu interviews, Daniel Mac reinforces the message that if you “want to drive cars like these in my videos,” then you need to follow the career or lifestyle paths of the drivers. And apparently, it's a pretty hot message, given that Daniel Mac has over 2 million followers on Instagram alone.

Now, contrast this with what we find on the ancient shores of the Jordan River, where two disciples hear John the Baptist proclaim, “Look, the Lamb of God!” In response, there is no “subscribe,” “follow,” or “like” button to press, no image to double-tap. No, these two disciples physically follow Jesus, eager to learn from the man who would change the course of human history. They found themselves at Jesus' dwelling, their lives were forever transformed.

Our Scripture for today, from John 1:35-42, tells this captivating story of the first followers of Jesus. This isn't a 'follow' you can click on and forget about. This is a follow that led them down unfamiliar paths, into challenging teachings, and ultimately into a relationship with God himself who would redefine their identity and their lives.

What does it mean to follow someone—not just with a quick click, but with your entire life? Would you still follow if it meant leaving your comfort zone? Would you still follow someone if it meant giving up your Netflix subscription, your video games, or even your career?

Today, as we delve deeper into what it meant for Andrew and another disciple to follow Jesus, I invite each of you to consider what it would look like to accept that same invitation, right here, right now, in a world so different yet still so in need!

This morning, we are going to consider a 'follow' that promises more than any Instagram or Twitter feed can promise...

John 1:35-42

³⁵ The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" ³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.

³⁸ Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"

³⁹ "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. ⁴¹ The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ).

⁴² And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

Exposition

I. How John the Baptist Followed Jesus (Vv. 35-36)

John the Baptist was an interesting fellow. He wore garments made from camel skins and ate locust and wild honey. He also preached a message of repentance and had no problem telling self-righteous religious people to repent of their self-righteousness. He was regarded as a prophet of the Lord. And, from what we can tell, he had quite a following among many of the people. And yet, what does he do when he sees Jesus? He doesn't say, "Hey, over here! Look at me!" Instead, he **points away from himself and towards Jesus**, saying, "Look, the Lamb of God!"

John the Baptist is a profound example of selflessness and humility in his service to God. And I think we really need to see this, especially in our day and age. John knew that he "needed to decrease" in order that Jesus "might increase." He was not threatened by Jesus' ministry. In fact, he realized that the point of his ministry was to magnify Jesus' ministry. John the Baptist was not concerned with his own glory but rather, the glory of God. He was a "voice crying out in the wilderness" to point others to the "Word of God," Jesus Christ, who was God in the flesh.

In our service to God, we should embody the same attitude as John the Baptist. The goal is not to build our own platform. The goal is not for our community to think that Copperfield Church is "so great," but rather that "Copperfield church's God" is so great. That Jesus is great! In other words, it's about Jesus, not us! It's about his glory, not our own. This is a vital mark of what it means to be a true follower of Jesus!

T.S. – So far, we've talked about John the Baptist's extraordinary selflessness and humility, but as we work through our passage, we also encounter two other individuals whose actions have much to teach us: Andrew and the unnamed disciple...

II. How the Two Disciples Followed Jesus (V. 37, 38b, 41)

As followers of John the Baptist, Andrew and the unnamed disciple demonstrate the importance of having a mentor in their lives. Andrew and this unnamed disciple listened to John the Baptist as he pointed them to Jesus. Initially, they didn't really know what it would mean to follow Jesus, but John the Baptist had proven himself as a faithful, selfless, and humble servant of God. So, they humbled themselves to John's instruction and took a step of faith in the direction of following Jesus.

As they started to follow Jesus, they realized that in order for the relationship to be transformative, they would have to spend significant time with him. So, they asked him, "Where are you staying?" This reminds me of a quote from A. W. Tozer, which says, "The man who would truly know God must give time to Him." Following Jesus, as the example of Andrew and the other disciples demonstrates, takes time. It requires commitment.

But we say, "I just don't have the time to spend with Jesus." That's an interesting statement! But did you know that average amount of time that a person spends on the internet everyday is 6 hours and 54 minutes? Granted, some of this is for work, emails, and other things like that, but what about the fact that the average social media user spends about 2 hours and 25 minutes a day? Just on social media!

Now, I'm not suggesting that we are all "average." Instead, I'm suggesting that I just don't buy the idea that we "don't have enough time in our schedule to spend time with Jesus." We have the time, we just don't have the desire. We are not concerned, like Andrew and the other disciples, to learn "where Jesus is staying" so that we might "dwell with him."

Andrew and the other disciple listened to John and started following Jesus with the aim of spending time with him, learning from him. Is that your desire this morning? If not, why not take a moment to ask the Lord to work in your heart, right now, to reorder your desires around spending time with Jesus?

Now, consider how spending time with Jesus impacted Andrew. According to verse 41, the "first thing" he did was went and told his brother, Simon, about Jesus, and invite him to come and see for himself. Isn't that interesting? After spending time with Jesus, Andrew's first priority was to go and tell someone else about Jesus. Could it be that the reason that many "professing Christians" are so slow or scared to tell others about Jesus is because they spend so little time with him themselves? Could it be that we don't invite others to "build hope-filled homes in Jesus" because we, ourselves, do not experience Jesus' hope in our own lives on a regular basis?

I want to be like Andrew! I want my time with Jesus to spill over into my other relationships! And I believe, that if you are a true follower of Christ, you desire the same thing! So, where do we start? It's not with better strategies or plans about events that we can invite people to come to. Those can be good, but they are way down the list in terms of importance.

What we need to start with is spending significant time dwelling in Jesus' presence through prayer and meditation on His word. We need to be with Jesus if we are ever going to invite others to come be with Him too. But this shouldn't be surprising. Almost everyone one of us know what it's like to get excited about something, maybe it's a book, or a movie, or a restaurant, or a song that we recently heard. Even the most introverted people among us have things that they are passionate about and will share with others!

So, this begs the question, "Why is it that we don't invite more people to come and see Jesus for themselves?" I think we know the answer, but just to be clear, I believe it is because we are not experiencing Jesus much ourselves. We talk to others about the things that excite us. So, if we are not talking to others about Jesus, it's probably because we are not very excited about Him. And if we are not very excited about Jesus, it's probably because we spend so little time with him. For, as our passage demonstrates, just one afternoon with Jesus sent Andrew running to tell his brother Simon about who he had found!

T.S. – But what is it about Jesus that makes us want to invite others to meet him? We will consider that now...

III. How Jesus Responded to His Followers (Vv. 38a, 39, 42)

As Andrew and the other disciple approach him, Jesus does not begin by "barking orders at them," but instead, he begins with a question, "what do you want?" or "What are you looking for?" Jesus takes a genuine interest in the lives of those who approach Him. He invites them into a real relationship with him, by telling them to "come and see" for themselves.

The relationship that Andrew and the other disciple experience with Jesus, as we have already consider, provoked Andrew to go and tell his brother, Simon, about Jesus. He told Simon, "you know that person that we have all been waiting for? You know, the Messiah, the Christ, the one who will fulfill all the promises that we have been hearing our whole life as Jews? He's here! I've met him! Come and see for yourself!"

And what does Jesus do? Does He tell Andrew, "I don't have time or room for another follower. Let your brother find someone else to follow." No, of course not. Instead, Jesus responds by welcoming Simon into this new group of followers, but he does more than simple welcome him in. Jesus begins transforming Simon into "Peter."

Peter, who was also known as Cephas, which is the Aramaic name that corresponds to Peter (a Greek name), will eventually play an incredibly important role in Jesus' kingdom. Peter will be one of the disciples and apostles upon whom the early church would be built. But do you know what is interesting about Simon Peter? When he comes to Jesus, he is a work in progress. Even though he receives a new name, "Peter," which means, "rock," Peter can hardly be described as a "rock" throughout the gospels. Instead, "Peter" was a violent, cutting off the ear of a soldier later in the gospels. But "Peter" was also a coward, running in fear and shame when asked about his association with Jesus following the crucifixion.

So, why would Jesus rename “Simon” as “Peter” if he knew that Peter was going to royally mess up over the course of the next few years? It is because followers of Jesus like Peter, and like you and me, are not welcomed by Jesus based on our goodness or our competence, but rather on the basis of God’s grace in Jesus.

The only claim that we have on Jesus as His followers is that we are in desperate need of His grace, mercy, and forgiveness. But when Jesus issues his invitation for us to “come and see,” it is because He already knows us, our needs, our shortcomings, our failures, but He loves us and welcomes us anyway, because He knows, in time, by His grace, through the work of the Holy Spirit, He is going to transform us!

And it was this type of transformation of Jesus’ disciples that empowered them to “turn the world upside down” as messengers of His grace and forgiveness, which is provided by Jesus, as the Lamb of God!

Conclusion

As we conclude, I want to remind you of a crucial aspect of the story we’ve been pondering from John 1:35-42. After encountering Jesus, John the Baptist and Andrew did something that might seem odd but is profoundly significant: they told others about Him. John pointed his disciples toward Jesus, calling Him the “Lamb of God,” while Andrew hurried to find his brother Simon, announcing, “We have found the Messiah.” This wasn’t a flippant invitation to click on a ‘Share’ button or to forward a link. This was an urgent, heartfelt sharing of a life-changing encounter.

So here’s my challenge to each one of you this morning: First, consider the transformative invitation to follow Jesus in your own life, just as Andrew and that unnamed disciple did over two thousand years ago. Think about your next steps in this incredible journey of faith—whether it’s baptism, joining a small group, serving your community, or devoting time daily to prayer and Scripture. As this morning’s passage taught us, being a follower of Jesus means spending significant time with Jesus. It means “dwelling” or “remaining” with Him.

But don’t stop there. Be like John the Baptist and Andrew—tell others about Him. This might mean sharing your own story of how Jesus has impacted your life, or simply inviting someone to church to hear the message of God’s grace for themselves. At Copperfield Church, we say that our mission is to “invite all to build hope-filled homes in Jesus.” This invitation starts with each of us, calling upon our friends, family members, neighbors, and co-workers to “Come and See” Jesus for themselves!

In a world where we so freely share everything from memes to life updates, let’s not keep silent about the most transformational relationship we can ever have. And this isn’t just sharing for sharing’s sake—it’s sharing with the intent that others might also come to hear those powerful words, “Come and See!” and experience the life-transforming hope of Jesus.

So, as you step into the coming week, may you accept the challenge to not only follow Jesus but also to lead others to Him. May you experience the profound joy and deep purpose that come from being both a follower and a messenger of Christ.

Invitation

To those of you who might be here today—or watching online—and find yourself intrigued but not yet convinced about who Jesus is, I want to extend to you the very same invitation that Jesus offered to those first disciples: "Come and see."

You see, Christianity isn't about having all the answers up front or committing to something you don't yet understand. It's about taking a step of curiosity and openness, much like Andrew and the other disciple did when they decided to follow Jesus. They started with a day—just one day of being with Him—and it resulted in their lives being changed forever.

Perhaps you have questions, doubts, or reservations. That's okay. Jesus invites you just as you are, questions and all. Like those early disciples, you don't have to change who you are **to start this journey**. You just have to be willing to take that first step to "come and see."

Now, you may say, "I cannot imagine following Jesus. You just have no idea how some of his followers have treated me." First, let me say, "I hear you." I wish I could change how some people who claim to follow Jesus think and act. But alas, I cannot. But with that said, I want to ask you, "Do you really want to allow someone else's behavior to keep you from getting to know someone like Jesus? Even if they claim to represent him?"

Imagine that you are at a restaurant on a Friday night here in Houston, and the restaurant has a band playing live music. The band is a cover band, named "The No-Steve Perry Project." Obviously, they are a cover band that plays the hit songs of the band, Journey. You know, the band that wrote such ballads as "Don't Stop Believing," "Open Arms," "Any Way You Want It," and "Separate Ways (Worlds Apart)." You sit down to eat, and the cover band, "The No-Steve Perry Project," starts playing, and they are just horrible. I mean terrible. Like, you are going to get your food to go, it's so bad. Let me ask, "Would you stop listening to Journey, the real band, just because the cover band that is supposedly represents them is awful?" Of course, not! Instead, you would go back to the source, you would listen to the real thing!

In the same way, just because someone that claims to represent Jesus does a poor job, doesn't mean that we should disregard Jesus altogether. Don't settle for the cover band. Come check out the real thing. Don't let imposters derail you from having a real relationship with the original, the genuine Christ who invites you to meet Him!

So whether it's praying with someone as we close our service, coming to the guest hospitality table in the atrium to speak with me after the service, scheduling a time when you can sit down with one of our staff members to have a one-on-one conversation to address your questions, or simply coming back next week with an open mind and heart, I encourage you to take that step.

In the journey of faith, sometimes the most important step is the very first one. Don't miss the opportunity to "come and see" what following Jesus could mean for you. It's an invitation to a life of forgiveness of sin, deeper meaning, greater purpose, and a love unlike anything you ever imagined you could know in this life!

Who knows? This could be the beginning of your transformation! So why not take that step? As Jesus would say, "Come and see."