



Following the Way of Jesus (Mark 1:16-20)

Bottom Line: If we are going to call ourselves followers of Jesus, then we need to do the things Jesus did and live the way Jesus lived.

Share briefly about how you first heard and responded to the call to follow Jesus.

How has your understanding of what it means to follow Jesus grown or changed since you first became a Christian?

Discuss this statement: “Your current life is the by-product of your current lifestyle.” If this statement is true, then what must we do if we want our lives to change?

When we begin to follow Jesus, we begin a journey that transforms the very core of who we are. Or at least, we are *supposed* to. Sadly, that’s not the reality of many who call themselves followers of Jesus. The world, and America especially, is full of people who consider themselves followers of Jesus, but do not actually follow Him, meaning they do not actually live the way He did.

Read Mark 1:16-20.

We may look at this account and consider it outrageous that Simon and Andrew just immediately quit their jobs, and James and John even left their father, on the spot, to follow Jesus, but we must understand something important about the context this situation takes place in. In 1st century Judaism, only the best of the best were able to continue education past the age of 11. Those that were especially gifted would go on to be trained by a Rabbi, who was considered a master of the Old Testament and enjoyed a high status in society. The Rabbi would handpick those whom he wanted to train and would say to them “follow me.” The special chosen people would’ve looked forward to one day enjoying the same status as the Rabbi. Everyone else who didn’t make the cut went on to learn a trade and began working for a living. Simon and Andrew were fishermen, which meant that they were probably not very well educated and would have fallen on the low end of the social hierarchy.

Knowing this about the context, why do you think Simon, Andrew, James, and John jumped at the chance to follow Jesus? What would they have been looking forward to (pay special attention to verse 17)? Did you have to leave anything behind when you chose to follow Christ? How are you looking to grow as you follow Jesus?

When Jesus called the disciples to follow Him, they understood that they would be trained by Jesus to “become fishers of men.” No longer would they be using their expertise as fisherman to meet physical needs, but Jesus would teach them the skills needed to meet spiritual needs. In other words, everything that they failed to live up to, Jesus would teach them to do. The way He would teach them these things would be to model them for them. The invitation to follow Him was an invitation to, literally, not figuratively, follow Jesus and imitate Him in *everything*. The disciples, as you will read in the Gospels, spent every second of every day with Jesus,

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observing His behavior, His faith, His habits, His practices, etc. And they were expected by Christ to adopt these same rhythms of living. What Jesus showed the disciples was a **new way of living**. That's why the early Christians, before they received that name, were called "Followers of The Way" (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22).

Understanding this about what was expected of disciples of Jesus, what is expected of disciples of Jesus today? How has the command to follow Jesus changed from the 1st Century to the 21st Century? What are some practices of Jesus that disciples, then and now, should adopt?

So think again of this statement: "Your current life is the by-product of your current lifestyle." After our discussion, do you understand this in a new way? What areas of your life are you unsatisfied with? What is it about your lifestyle that has produced those results? What aspect of the Way of Jesus can you adopt to correct this?

The Way of Jesus is at odds with the Way of the World. Following Jesus for Simon and Andrew meant leaving their financial security behind. For James and John it meant leaving their father. For us today, it may mean living more simply, not working as much, a career change, or perhaps a change in relationships. For some of us, it may require a drastic reorienting of our entire lives. But the good news is following Jesus is a journey that changes us over time, some little by little, others more quickly (Matthew 13:8), but the assurance of change and growth is promised to us (Philippians 1:6). What matters is that we choose today, tomorrow, and every day thereafter to follow Jesus.

Some habits that Jesus practiced include silence and solitude, fasting, Scripture reading and memorization, building relationships with those far from God, disciple-making, sabbath resting, simple living, etc. Which one of these practices that you are not currently engaging in can you take steps to incorporate into your lifestyle? If need be, what do you need to eliminate from your lifestyle to create the margin needed to do this?

Reflection: Read these aloud, using your discretion about which questions should be pondered and which questions should be discussed.

How well are you doing at truly following Jesus? Do you even have the desire? Has Jesus truly called you to follow Him? If you're not sure of the answer to that question, you can know for certain that the offer to follow Him is available to you at this moment. The life you were intended to live is within your reach if you will repent of following the Way of the World (sin), place your faith in Jesus Christ as the only sufficient payment for your sins, and commit yourself to following His Way. He's inviting you to become His disciple, to learn from Him, to commune with Him, and one day soon, to be with Him in His presence forever. Will you respond to His call to follow Him?

Do you know that you are saved, but you feel that there should be more to the Christian life than what you are currently experiencing? If so, a more devoted commitment to following the Way of Jesus is the answer you're looking for. Will you put this to the test? Will you re-examine your life, acknowledge what's preventing you from following Jesus, and pursue Him and His way more diligently?