



One truth shared: Following Jesus is not just words, but action. It's not a duty, but it's a direction. It's not when I feel like it, but my life—my all.

As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

He said to another man, "Follow me." But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

Luke 9: 57-62

What it means to follow Jesus

In Luke chapter 9, Jesus meets three men who are eager and willing to follow him. The first man enthusiastically says, "I will follow you wherever you go!" How surprised he must have been when Jesus replied, "Animals have a home and enjoy its comforts, but I don't. If I lack good things in life or endure a tough time occasionally, my followers can expect the same. Are you willing to follow me if it means suffering? If it means losing someone or something?"

Jesus said, "Follow me!" And the next two men answer, "We will! But *first*" The second man says, "*First* ... let me go and bury my father." The third man says, "*First* ... Let me go back and say good-bye to my family." In both cases they said, "Lord, *first*, let me do this." In both his responses, Jesus makes clear what it means to follow him. There can't be any other first. He says, "Either I'm your first priority or I'm not."

What does it mean to follow Jesus? Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

- The call to follow Jesus is to *deny your precious self*. Peter once denied Jesus and said, "I don't know him!" To deny yourself is to say to yourself, "I don't you. I don't want to know your desires."
- The call to follow Jesus *comes with a cross*. Since he carried one, Jesus promised you will too. No cross? No Christian.
- The call to follow Jesus *is not a choice* you get to either opt in or opt out. It is *daily* following, *daily* cross carrying, and *daily* denying of yourself.

Does that sound impossible? Exhausting? Do you hate the thought of having to carry a cross? That's the discipleship challenge. When you struggle in your commitment, or beat yourself up and wonder why your attitude, behavior, and habits of life seem to display a skin-deep faith, Jesus says, "Stop trying to save yourself through *your* commitment." Then he makes clear *his* commitment to seek, save, and give his life as a ransom for you.

The call to follow is embedded in Christ who says: "I want my disciples to know they're saved by grace. Jesus doesn't say, "*If* you follow me, I'll go to the cross for you." He says, "I went to the cross for you, so follow me." You're not saved because you're a disciple who often struggles and fails. You are a disciple because of your baptism. That means the only thing that matters today is that your name is written in the book of life. May the power of the Word work to show you that! Now... follow him!

Prayer: Dear Lord, your call is simple, but following is often my great struggle. I carry burdens too heavy to bear and fight inner desires too strong to overcome. Thank you for your promise to help carry my crosses, take my burdens, and fight for me. With you by my side, I follow you today! In Jesus name. Amen.

Foundations Teen Facilitators Guide

Year C – Proper 8

God's Word Possess God's Power

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What it means to follow Jesus

Starting the Discussion: *This first section is intended to be light and easy, to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun with these questions.*

Share your favorite person to follow on social media, how often you check their updates, and why you love following their posts. (Youth leader: participate in this too!)

Connecting: *This section serves as a bridge between the opening conversation and the body of the study/discussion. It should get the group thinking about the topic/text even before they've looked at it.*

We follow people whose life we desire to have. How does that translate into following Jesus?

Digging In: *Here we want to dig into some texts or the text for the day and see what Scripture says. The questions are meant to be open ended to give a beginning of a scriptural conversation. These are a guide for a spiritual and scriptural conversation.*

- **Read Luke 9:57-62.** All three men wanted to follow Jesus. What got in the way of their following? How is that the same for us?
- **Read Luke 9:23.** Following Jesus is different from the people we follow on social media. In what ways? What makes following Jesus so difficult?
- *True or false:* The call to follow Jesus is a personal choice you get to opt in or opt out of.
- How does following Jesus *to the cross* influence our following of him?

Conclusion: *Here we want to wrap up the discussion, perhaps circling back to the “connecting question” above.*

Assess the time you spend “following” people on social media and “following” Jesus. Identify at least one way your following of Jesus can bring you a step closer to him this week.