

... Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place...
(Mark 6:31)



FOLLOW ME...

In the Old Testament, the call to follow God was a call to follow and obey God's commands and it was a call to follow wholeheartedly (see Numbers 14:24). It was also a call to follow him into the unknown, into the wilderness, or into battle. It was a call to courage and wholehearted commitment.

The Israelites followed God in the wilderness by following the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. Later, they followed God by following his anointed leaders (warriors, prophets, kings).

In the New Testament, God was made visible in Jesus and following God meant following Jesus, often literally. His ministry begins and finishes with this call to follow him.

In Jesus' day, it was considered an honour to be invited to follow a Rabbi (teacher) and for some it meant leaving behind all else to walk in the footsteps, (literally in the dust), of the one they were called to follow.

What does it mean to us today, to follow Jesus?
How and where does he want to lead to you at this time?

Here is the video link if you would like to follow this on-line:- https://youtu.be/s2wH_ousaLs

Follow me...

“Come, follow me...”
Matthew 4:19

Call to Worship

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.
Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the LORD is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Let us, the sheep who follow the voice of our Shepherd,
enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.
(from Psalm 100)



Prayer

O Lord, our Shepherd, you know each one of us and call us to follow you
to green pastures and quiet waters, where you refresh and restore our whole being.
We hear your voice and you guide us along pathways that bless us and encourage us.
You walk with us in times of darkness and despair,
and in knowing your voice and following you, we find the healing and wholeness we seek.
May we always hear and know your voice above all other voices.
(from Ps 23 and John 10)

Scripture

⁷ I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to
explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions,
⁸ but my fellow Israelites who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt in fear.
I, however, followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.
⁹ So on that day Moses swore to me, ‘The land on which your feet have walked will be your
inheritance and that of your children forever,
because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.’
Joshua 14:7-9

Prayer

I heard a voice so gently calling:
Take up thy cross and follow me.
A tempest on my heart was falling,
A living cross this was to be;
I struggled sore, I struggled vainly,
No other light my eyes could see.

I'll follow thee, of life the giver,
I'll follow thee, suffering redeemer,
I'll follow thee, deny thee never,
By thy grace I'll follow thee.¹

I heard his voice unto me saying:
Take up thy cross and follow me.
My heart is thine, now thee obeying,
Speak all thy will, dear Lord, to me.
Make weakness strength, thy power now give me,
And from this hour I'll follow thee.

¹ I'll Follow Thee, Agnes Heathcote. Public Domain

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” ²⁰At once they left their nets and followed him. ²¹Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, ²²and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Matt 4:18-22

When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake.

¹⁹Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.”

²⁰Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”

²¹Another disciple said to him, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”

²²But Jesus told him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

Matt 8:18-22

Reflection

“May you be covered with the dust of your Rabbi“

In Jesus’ day, it was not uncommon to see a Rabbi followed closely by his disciples, by those who wanted to learn from him and to live like him. Being invited to follow a Rabbi was considered an honour, and it meant the disciple (the follower) had unlimited access to the one he followed.

A disciple walked the dusty roads with his Rabbi – which gave rise to the saying:

“May you be covered in the dust of your Rabbi“.

Such a follower walked so closely behind his Rabbi that he would literally be covered by the dust kicked up by him. Disciples lived with their Rabbi – waked with him, learned from him, ate and slept with him and desired to become like him.

This was the world of Jesus – so when he called people to follow him, they knew that it meant a turning away from all they had known, leaving all they had, giving up their all to live and learn from Jesus, their Rabbi.

Jesus, however, wasn’t just a Rabbi - he was the Son of God, Redeemer and Messiah. He called people to follow him – and such following had a cost to it.

Then Jesus said to his disciples,

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.“

Matt 16:24-25

Jesus never sugar-coated his call to follow. For some disciples, following Jesus meant leaving behind family, occupation, security and stability. For some it meant an uncertain future, and certain sacrifice.

Following Jesus, however, means so much more than that.

It means an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus,
living in his presence,
walking the same direction as him,
and experiencing ever more of his love.

Jesus says, “Come, follow me...”

What does it mean to you to follow Jesus?

*Is there something you need to change in your life, or let go of,
so that you can more closely follow Jesus?*

Silence

Scripture

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."

John 1:35-39

Prayer

Thanks be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ
For all the blessings you have given me,
For all the pains and insults you have carried for me.

O most merciful Redeemer, friend and brother,
May I know you more clearly,
Love you more dearly,
Follow you more nearly.²



Scripture

⁶⁶ From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.
⁶⁷ "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.
⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.
⁶⁹ We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."

John 6:66-68

Benediction

May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face;
the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again,
may God hold you in the palm of His hand.³

And as you follow the call of Jesus,
"May you be covered in the dust of your Rabbi"

² Richard, Bishop of Chichester – adapted (1197-1253)

³ An Irish Blessing

GOING DEEPER: Here are some suggestions that may help you to engage more deeply with this theme.

- **The Bible** has many accounts of God calling people to follow him. Frequently this calling meant following God into unknown places or an uncertain future. For some, it meant great sacrifice as well as great blessing. Each account of someone choosing to say yes and follow God has something to say to us. There are some passages about following God on the next page.

Choose one such Bible passage and read it through slowly. Reflect on the circumstances around this story and what it tells you about God and about you. Think about what God might be saying to you in your circumstances through his words.

- **Reflect** on how God has called you to follow him in the past and what that was like for you. Think about the circumstances and how you responded. What have you learnt about God (and yourself) and how has that impacted your relationship with him? Are you facing a situation now where you need to follow in a new way, or in a new direction? What is God saying to you about this?
- You could use one of the Bible passages or prayers provided in the material to practise **Lectio Divina**. (see page 7)
- **Visualise Scripture!** Choose a Bible passage where God has called someone, or a group of people, to follow him. (It may be helpful to use a concordance). Read it through slowly – all of it or some selected verses. Close your eyes and picture what is being described. What do you see, smell, hear? How is God revealing himself to you through this? How could you act out these verses? You could either record this experience in your journal or share it with someone.
- **Meditate** on a verse or passage of Scripture that might encourage you to follow God, even though you may feel uncertain about it. A concordance may also be helpful here.
- If you enjoy being **creative**, find some way to express your experience (or someone else's experience) of following God. What does that look like for you? What does it feel like? How would you describe what it is like to someone else? You can create a collage, or draw, paint, use clay, write a poem or compose a song. If you enjoy working with clay (or plasticine) take a piece of clay and knead it in your hands. As you feel it moving beneath your fingers, let it move into the shape of something that speaks to you about following God.
- Go for a **walk**. As you walk, be open to what God may say to you, or reveal to you, about your relationship with him at the moment and how he might be calling you to follow in new ways. Look around you...what do you see? Is there anything that challenges or inspires you to respond to his work or his word in you in a different way?
- If you are **sharing** this retreat day with someone else, spend some time sharing your experiences. Pray together.
- If you like to **journal**, make a note of what you have experienced during this retreat time in your journal. A simple way to do this is to:
 - Thank God** for Who He is and what He is doing in your life
 - Notice** what is happening around you and in you
 - Respond** to what God has shown you, by thanking Him, repenting, or recommitting yourself to Him
- **Simply sit in His presence.** We don't have to do anything to enjoy being in His presence! We are in His will when we are fully and completely in His presence, with our hearts focussed on Him.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.
John 10:14-16

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.” John 10:27-30

¹⁸ Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” ¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.

Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

²⁰ Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”)

²¹ When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?”

²² Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.”
John 21:18-22

²¹ Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth, ²² not one of those who saw my glory and the signs I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times— ²³ not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their ancestors. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it. ²⁴ But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it.
Num 14:21-24

Teach me, LORD, the way of your decrees, that I may follow it to the end.

³⁴ Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law and obey it with all my heart.

³⁵ Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight. Ps 119:33-35

“This is what the LORD says:

“‘I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the wilderness, through a land not sown.

³ Israel was holy to the LORD, the firstfruits of his harvest; all who devoured her were held guilty, and disaster overtook them,’” declares the LORD. Jeremiah 2:2-3

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth.

“Follow me,” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

¹⁰ While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples,

“Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

¹² On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³ But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” Matt 9:9-13

“Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.
Matt 10:37-39

¹⁶ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.¹⁷ “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”

¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him.

¹⁹ When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him. Mark 1:16-20

EVEN DEEPER

LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is an ancient spiritual practice from the Christian monastic tradition. Its title derives from the Latin words meaning reading and divine/holy. In Lectio Divina, we seek to experience the presence of God through reading and listening, meditation, prayer, and contemplation.

1. Text

Begin by choosing a section of Scripture that you would like to read and pray. You can choose the text randomly or use a liturgical book, such as The Book of Common Prayer. Try not to set a goal for how much content you will cover; the goal is to listen for God and to experience his presence.

2. Preparation

Do what you must to quiet and prepare yourself to hear from God. If you need to find a quiet room, sit in silence for several minutes, or sit in a comfortable chair, take whatever posture will help you prepare to receive and experience God’s presence.

3. Reading/Listening

When you sense that your heart is prepared, begin by slowly reading the passage of Scripture that you have selected. Move slowly through sentences and phrases. As you read, pay attention to what word, phrase, or idea catches your attention.

4. Meditation

Begin to meditate on the word, phrase, or idea that has captured your attention. Repeat it again and again.

Consider:

What thoughts come to mind as you meditate on this word, phrase, or idea?

What are you reminded of in your life?

What does it make you hope for?

Meditation is no easy task—as you try to concentrate don’t be disappointed if random thoughts enter your head. As they do, offer them to God.

5. Prayer

Now begin to speak to God. Tell God what word, phrase, or idea captured your attention and what came to mind as you meditated upon it. How is God using this word, phrase, or idea to bless and transform you? Tell God what you have been thinking and feeling as you’ve listened and meditated. Tell God how you hope this word, phrase, or idea will change your heart to be more like His.

6. Contemplation

Finish by focusing your attention on the fact that God’s presence is with you. If as you try to focus on God’s presence you sense a need to read the text again, to continue meditating, or to simply continue talking with God, allow yourself to do so. As you do, know that you are in the presence of God.

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THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN - Finding the movement of the Spirit in our daily lives as we review our day.

This is something that can be done throughout the day or at the end of the day. It helps us to become more aware of and focused on the presence of God in the midst of everyday life.

1. Recognize the presence of God

Be still and know that you are with God.

2. Look at your day with gratitude

Acknowledge God in the big and small things of life.

3. Review your day

When or where in the past 24 hours did you feel you were cooperating most fully with God's action in your life? When were you resisting?

Ask yourself

- What habits and life patterns do I notice?
- When did I feel most alive? Most drained of life?
- When did I have the greatest sense of belonging? When did I feel most alone?
- When did I give love? Where did I receive love?
- When did I feel most fully myself? Least myself?
- When did I feel most whole? Most fragmented?

4. Reconcile and Resolve

- Seek forgiveness
- Ask for direction
- Share a concern
- Express gratitude
- Resolve to move forward

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