

# Following the Footsteps of Jesus

## Introduction; Many have disciples.

- A. They may be politicians.
  - 1. Those who run for politics want disciples. They want followers who are dedicated to them and/or their cause;
  - 2. The dictionary defines a disciple as a, *follower of person or idea: somebody who strongly believes in the teachings of a leader, a philosophy, or a religion, and tries to act according to them* —MS Encarta.
  - 3. Teachers and preachers have followers. Philosophers and poets do too. Even business leaders and criminals have followers.
- B. Many try to make their followers better and have them do good things.
  - 1. Many political and social leaders want to make the world a better place. They try to get their followers to do things that will accomplish this. They really care for those who believe in them and their cause
  - 2. Others use their followers to get what they want. They abuse their trust for their own ends. They do not really care about the people who follow them.
- C. There are many leaders in religion.
  - 1. Some follow preachers. Some follow elders. Some follow a church or a denomination. They accept whatever their church or denomination teaches or asks of them.
  - 2. Many church leaders are honest and sincere. They do the best they can. However they still men and make mistakes.
  - 3. Others are hypocrites and use the church and church members for their own ends. They take advantage of them to have wealth and power.
- D. We need leadership in this world.
  - 1. Without some leadership very little would get done. Many would do nothing and many would do the wrong thing.
  - 2. Leadership is needed in the nation, in the home, in businesses, in clubs and groups and in the church.
  - 3. However it needs to be the proper leadership or things can go badly. We need to be able to question our leaders.
  - 4. There is only one whom we should follow without question. There is only one whom we should fully and completely turn ourselves over to. That is the Lord, Jesus Christ.
- E. Today; “Following in the Footsteps of Jesus”.

## I. We must follow Jesus Christ.

- A. Jesus came to be a leader. He came to be the ‘Good Shepherd’.
  - 1. A shepherd is a leader. He leads a flock of sheep. A good shepherd provides for them and leads them to safe places —Psa 23.
  - 2. *John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."*
  - 3. *John 10:27-28 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand."*
  - 4. The good shepherd protects the flock. If one is lost he goes to find it —Luke 15:1-7. He will even give his life for the flock.
  - 5. Jesus gives His flock eternal life. If we want eternal life, we must follow Him and Him only. The two go together. Only the ones following the good shepherd will be given eternal life.
- B. Jesus lived His life as an example to His disciples to follow.
  - 1. Many leaders say, “*Do as I say, not as I do.*” Jesus does not say this. He says that He sets the example for us and that we should then be examples for others —Matt 5:16.

2. *Matt 11:28-30 "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*
  3. We must 'learn from Him'. He is our teacher. He wants to help us. He does not want to load us with burdens as many leaders among men do. He wants to take our burdens away.
  4. *Heb 2:17-18 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.*
  5. Jesus does not ask us to do what He Himself would not do. He faced every temptation we face and suffered more than we suffer. He is understanding in that He has set the example to help us.
  6. *1 Pet 2:21-23 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 22 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;*
  7. Jesus suffered and was tempted. Yet He committed no sin. He is an example for us. He showed us it can be done. We need to think about Him more.
- C. Many have made observations about the commitment being a disciple of Jesus Christ.
1. *"I will make the place of my feet glorious-among the poor, the devil-possessed, the mean, the decrepit, the selfish, the sinful, the misunderstood—that is where Jesus went, and that is exactly where he will take you if you are his disciple."* —Oswald Chambers (1874-1917)
  2. This says that following Jesus takes a lot of commitment. We must count the cost before we follow Him.
  3. *James the brother of Jesus and James the son of Zebedee preach and are killed by mobs in Jerusalem; Matthew is slain with a sword in Ethiopia; Philip is hanged in Phrygia; Bartholomew flayed alive in Armenia. Andrew is crucified in Achaia, Thomas is run through with a lance in East India, Thaddeus is shot to death with arrows, a cross goes up in Persia for Simon the Zealot, and another in Rome for Peter. Matthias is beheaded; only John escapes a martyr's grace.*
  4. *Jesus Christ didn't commit the gospel to an advertising agency; he commissioned disciples.*
  5. *Luke 14:33 "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple."*
- D. We see that we should follow Jesus Christ, despite the difficulties.

## II. Consider where Jesus' steps lead.

- A. Since Jesus is our good shepherd, we must follow His leading.
1. Jesus leads if we will follow. We must look to the scriptures to see where He leads and then go that way.
  2. If we do this then He will give us rest and eternal life. This is why we follow Him.
- B. His footsteps begin in the *waters of baptism*.
1. **Matthew 3:1-17**; We see that Jesus' ministry begins by Him being baptized. Even when John does not want to baptize Him Jesus insists on being baptized.
  2. Even though He has no sin, Jesus is baptized. It is in baptism that the Father recognizes Jesus as His Son before men.
  3. Many do not want to be baptized today. They see no real reason to do so. Yet Jesus did it as an example. He taught it. It is in baptism that our sins are washed away. We **are** sinners.
  4. *Mark 16:15-16 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."*
  5. *Acts 22:16 'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'*
  6. All N.T. Christians were baptized into Christ (Rom 6:3-7). If we want to be a Christian and follow Jesus' example, we begin in baptism.
- C. Next Jesus' footsteps lead to the *wilderness of temptation*.
1. **Matthew 4:1-11**; Jesus is led by the H.S. to the wilderness. Jesus must prove He is indeed the Son of God and that He can defeat the devil. Even though He is the only begotten Son of God, He must face temptation.

2. Many today do not want to be tempted. They complain by asking, "Why does God let Satan lead me astray?"
3. God does not take the temptation away. But He does provide a way of escape. Looking for it shows if we are a real disciple or not.
4. *1 Cor 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*
5. There is a blessing for those who endure temptations. Temptations prove who we really are. They show if we are really disciples of Jesus Christ or not. Overcoming shows who we are following.
6. *James 1:12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

D. Jesus' steps lead to the *house of worship*.

1. Worshipping the Father was a common and constant part of Jesus' life. He did not ask, "Do I have to go?" It was something He did.
2. *Luke 4:16 So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.*
3. The Jews were not commanded to assemble and worship on the Sabbath day. It was a day of rest. During the Babylonian captivity and later they developed synagogues and worship on the Sabbath day. It was an extra time of worship they made up.
4. Yet Jesus approved it. He did not ask if He had to go. Today, He would not ask if Sunday night and Wednesday night were necessary. Jesus worshipped with the saints. That was who He was.
5. *Psa 122:1 I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the LORD."*
6. *Rev 5:11-14 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!" 13 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!" 14 Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.*
7. Some have noted that heaven will be a place of worship. The worship in heaven is always congregational. It is all heaven singing, praising God and worshipping Him. We need to follow Jesus' example of worship now.

E. Jesus' example leads to the *fields of service*.

1. Someone has said, "Service is the price we pay to live in this world." Too many today want to be served instead of serving others. However Jesus lived a life of service.
2. *Acts 10:38 "...how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him."*
3. Many ask, "Do I have to do good deeds?" They do not want to serve others. Jesus never asked this. He did what He did because He could.
4. We must likewise do what we can. We can't heal the sick and raise the dead. But there are still things we can do. We need to do them without complaining because we know we will be blessed.
5. *Matt 10:41-42 "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. 42 And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."*

F. We next follow Jesus to the *mountain of prayer*.

1. Jesus knew God face to face. He did not need faith because He came from the Father. Therefore He prayed often. He is our example.
2. *Luke 6:12 Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.*
3. Many find it hard to pray. Or they find it hard to find time to pray. Prayer is important. We need to lead

prayerful lives.

4. *1 Thess 5:16-18 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*
5. Many ask, "Why do I have to pray? Doesn't God know what I need better than I do?" He does but He still teaches us to pray.
6. *Matt 7:7-8 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."*

#### G. Next we go to the *garden of suffering and despair*.

1. **Matthew 26:36-46**; Jesus prays in the garden of Gethsemane before His death. He prays fervently that He might not have to die. Yet He did and He accepted that.
2. Many ask, "Why are there sorrows and sufferings in this life?" There are no specific answers. We must learn to trust in God.
3. *Heb 5:8 ...though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.*
4. *Matt 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
5. Suffering teaches us to trust in God. Sometimes it shows that we are children of God. We learn that this world is not our home. We have a home in heaven awaiting us.

#### H. We must follow Jesus to the *cross of death*.

1. *John 19:30-31 So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. 31 Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.*
2. Jesus died on the cross of suffering at a young age. He died that we might live. He died willingly as the sacrifice for sins. He did this out of love.
3. *John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."*
4. Many ask, "Does God really expect this much of me?" The answer is 'yes'. Jesus died for us. We need to be willing to die for Him.
5. *Rev 2:10 "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."*
6. If we die for Him or with Him we will live with Him eternally in heaven.

#### I. We see that following Jesus is not often easy.

### III. Finally Jesus' footsteps lead to the throne of God.

#### A. Jesus is not at the right hand of God in heaven.

1. Jesus' death was a victory. He overcame sin and reigns with the Father in heaven now. He has all power over everything and everyone.
2. *Heb 1:3 ...who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...*
3. *Matt 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."*
4. Jesus is reigning now. He will return to judge the world in the last day. We need to be ready for that great day.

#### B. If we follow Jesus in this live we will also follow Him into eternity.

1. Many are ready to follow Jesus to heaven. They say, "I want to go there!" Many, many religious people expect to follow Jesus to heaven.
2. Yet many will not make it. They are like the barnyard animals in the story of the **Little Red Hen**. They do not want to plant the seed or water it or weed it. They do not want to reap it or grind it or cook it. Yet they are ready to eat it. Then the hen says, "No!"
3. *Matt 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who*

*does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"*

4. We cannot enjoy the benefits without doing the work. We cannot win the prize without running the race.
- C. Heaven is for those who really follow Jesus in this life.
1. *Rev 3:21 "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."*
  2. Anything worth having is worth working for. If we want heaven we must work for it. Heaven will be worth all the effort we make to go there.
  3. *Matt 25:21 "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'"*
  4. If we want to go to heaven when life is over, we must follow Jesus today.
- D. We must work to make it to heaven.

## **Conclusion; There are many we may follow in this life.**

- A. There are many who want to lead.
1. We do need leaders. We need organization to get anything done.
  2. The one we must make sure we are following is Jesus Christ. We must follow Him wherever He leads.
    - a. Waters of Baptism
    - b. Wilderness of Temptation
    - c. House of Worship
    - d. Fields of Service
    - e. Mountain of Prayer
    - f. Garden of Despair and Suffering
    - g. Cross of Death
  3. Only then can we follow Him to the throne of heaven.
- B. We begin following Jesus by becoming a Christian.
1. We do this through faith, repentance and baptism. We accept Jesus as the Son of God who died for us. We turn from our sins and decide to follow Jesus. We are buried with Him in baptism to become a Christian.
  2. *Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*
  3. *Gal 3:26-27 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*
  3. See also Matt 28:18-20, Luke 24:44-48, John 3:3-5, Act 17:30-31, 1 Pet 3:21, etc.
- C. If we can help anyone in their obedience to God and Jesus Christ, please let us.