

I. Jesus' Public Ministry began, following His baptism by John, and 40 days in the wilderness where He was tempted by the devil. (Matthew 4)

A. Jesus' favorite invitation to people, *"Follow Me."*

1. Jesus spoke those words to Peter and Andrew, then James and John, by the sea of Galilee (Mat 4:18-22)
2. To Matthew, sitting at the tax office, He said, *Follow Me.* (Mat 9:9; Mark 2:14)
3. *The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me."* (John 1:43)
4. To a hesitant person He said, *'Follow me; and let the dead bury the dead.'* (Luke 9:59)
5. To the rich young ruler, He challenged, *'Sell what you have and give to the poor... and come, follow Me* (Luke 18:18-23)
5. To all His disciples, He said, *'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.'* He chose the 12 disciples *'that they should be with Him.'*
6. Jesus' invited 'the people' to Himself: *When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.* (Mark 8:34)

B. There were differing responses...

1. Peter and Andrew *immediately left their nets and followed Him.* (Mat 4:20)
2. James and John *immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Him.* (Mat 4:22)
3. The 'rich young ruler' did not follow, but went away sorrowful, for his wealth was more important to him than following Jesus.
4. Some said, *I will follow You anywhere,* but quickly changed their minds. (Mat 8:19-22)
 - a. *The Son of man has nowhere to lay His head* – There is no physical advantage to following...
 - b. *Let the dead bury the dead* - leave the business of the world to them who are dead to God...

II. What Following Jesus is, and is not...

A. Following Jesus does not mean...

1. It does not mean that you have all the answers or 'have it all together'...
2. It does not mean that you are loved more by God, and given a license to judge others...

B. When Jesus says, Follow Me...

1. He is inviting us to relationship with God and with others, to receive His life, and turn away from all other gods.
2. It is a call filled with grace, a call to surrender our will and align our lives with the attributes and activities of God.
3. Jesus is inviting followers to 'walk along side Me. Just be with Me, and the doing will come naturally.' Following Jesus is just that. It is following Him, being with Jesus.

C. Followers are more than 'believers.'

1. The devil and the demons believe in Jesus. (Even the demons believe--and tremble! - James 2:19)
2. Followers are people who are in love with God, and live out that love in relationships.
3. *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.* (John 10:27)
4. *If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.* (John 12:26) (Be where Jesus is and do what He is doing)

D. Lesson from Peter on following Jesus (John 21 – after His resurrection, before ascending to heaven)

1. After Jesus' tender restoration of Peter (John 21:15-19), Jesus said, *Follow Me.* (v.19)
2. Peter's attention immediately turned to John... *What about him?*
3. Jesus' response and directive to Peter is a lesson for each of us to embrace.